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Linguistic Aspects of Humor in American Stand-up Comedies about Arabs: A Multimodal Analysis of Digital Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Humor in stand-up comedy has long been studied where humor is disputably attributed to the incongruity theory or to some linguistic tools such as pun or hyperbole. This study investigates humor in American stand-up comedies that tackle Arabs' issues. More specifically, the study tries to determine the features of such comedy; whether this humor is verbal or nonverbal, whether stereotypes play any role in it, and whether the comedian's ethnic background has any influence on it or not. Moreover, the study aims at testing the compatibility of the theoretical framework used. The study employs Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual design to analyze the data_ 1:53 hours of videos, collected from the YouTube platform. The data comprises videos for American comedians who do jokes about the Arabs. Russell Peters is Indian American, Maz Jobrani is Iranian American, and Nemr Abou Nassar is Lebanese American. This study applies Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) within a qualitative approach to carry out deep linguistic analysis of the data. Results indicate that comedians try to create laughter using ten comedy tactics (expectation breaching, misconstruing, exaggerations, fear, disproportionate reactions, contradictions, stupidity, fooling, irony and mockery) which are realized by a shift between verbal and nonverbal techniques. Verbal techniques involve pauses, voice modulation, word elongation, accent mimicry, incorrect language, word choices, laughs and sounds. Nonverbal strategies include body movement, gestures, gazes, and facial expressions. It is also revealed that all the comedians tackle almost the same stereotypes and topics about the Arabs, but their shows differ due to their ethnic variation. Thus, each comedian proves to be highly critical of his own people, but addressing the Arabs, they show various perspectives. Results also prove that the theoretical framework adopted is well-suited for the analysis, but the study proposes a more robust framework. Such findings are useful for any future research involving stand-up comedies, and for helping comedians construct their shows.

1. Introduction:

Humor has been an intriguing question that received inconclusive responses. Therefore, the current study aims at examining the characteristics of the humor present in American stand-up comedy shows that do jokes about the Arabs. The study tries to find out how comedians generate humor and whether they draw on verbal or nonverbal resource or a combination of both, if comedians draw on stereotypes or not, and if the comedians' ethnic backgrounds affect the show or not. Finally, the study evaluates the compatibility of the theoretical framework. The data for this study comprises seventeen videos that star three different comedians, namely Russell Peters, Maz Jobrani, and Nemr Abou Nassar. The comedians belong to different ethnicities; Russell is Indian American, Maz is Persian American and Nemr is Lebanese American. All the comedians share the American culture, but with different Middle Eastern origins. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) methods are used to analyze the multimodal text under investigation (videos). More specifically, the study employs Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual design to account for the visual nonverbal component of the videos, and Halliday (2014), diction analysis, to account for the verbal component of the videos. The research seeks an in-depth qualitative analysis of the data to examine thoroughly the characteristics of the humor adopted in American stand-up comedies.

1. Rationale of the Study

Aiming at linguistically exploring humor in videos, the study adopts Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model to account for the visual modes. Stand-up comedy shows are interactive in nature that is why the study tries to investigate the ideational and interpersonal dimensions of meaning. In so doing the study has selected two semiotic modes of analysis from Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model, namely the representational mode (corresponding to Halliday's ideational function), and the interactive mode (corresponding to Halliday's interpersonal function). Analyzing various modes of language is intended to ensure objectivity. Moreover, the data involves different videos that belong to different comedians in pursuit of objectivity. In other words, the findings of one language mode or one video analysis are supposed to objectively support or refute those of the others. This study incorporates two dependent variables, the genre (stand-up comedy) and the topics addressed about Arabs, and one independent variable, the comedians. This way the features of the stand-up comedy's humor are traced in the practices of the three comedians, and the Arabs' issues and their image are depicted from three different perspectives.

2. Research Questions

In regard to the characteristics of the stand-up comedy's humor, research results are so far inconclusive. Some researches attribute humor to the incongruity concept and some others to hyperbole and pun. The current study aims at investigating the characteristics of the humor used in stand-up comedy, whether it verbal or nonverbal, the role of stereotypes and the influence of the comedian's background on such comedy. Moreover, the study questions the efficiency of the theoretical framework adopted since earlier studies have employed different approaches to investigate it. More specifically, the study aims at answering the following questions:

1. How far do stand-up comedies draw on stereotypes? Do comedians' backgrounds influence the show?
2. Which types of strategies are used to create humor verbal, nonverbal or a combination of both?

3. Whether Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) visual grammar is an adequate model for analyzing stand-up comedy or not?

3. Corpus & Methodology of Analysis

Humor in American stand-up comedy shows is investigated linguistically in this study. The data of this study comprises seventeen videos for the following stand-up comedians: Russell Peters, Maz Jobrani, Nemr Abou Nassar. A total of 1:53 hours of videos are collected from the YouTube platform. All the videos address Arabs' habits, issues, language, and involvement in intercultural communities. This research is a qualitative one that uses Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) approaches to attain an in-depth analysis of the corpus. Regarding the nonverbal component of the videos, the corpus is analyzed using Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual design. The model involves three modes of meaning. The study only adopts two modes, namely the representational mode and the interactive mode since they can account for the ideational meaning and the interactive meaning of the stand-up comedies. The verbal component of the videos is examined using diction analysis, which explores word choices, and word meaning as well as the connotations, implications, and presuppositions of words. According to Halliday (2014), diction analysis tackles the ideational meaning of the discourse.

4. Theoretical Framework

The investigation of the aspects of humor in American stand-up comedy shows is not an easy task. Such research endeavor poses two challenges. First, the corpus is a multimodal text that requires processing of verbal and nonverbal messages at the same time. Second, the data revolves around humor and comedy which should be competently addressed while conducting the analysis. Addressing the first challenge, the study adopts Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual design to tackle the nonverbal component of the videos, in addition to diction analysis to deal with the verbal component of them. Addressing the second challenge, the study explores stand-up comedy as a genre as illustrated in the next section.

5.1 Stand-up Comedy

Stand-up comedy as a genre of comedy is characterized by being an interactive performance that involves the audience in action. That is why Brodie (2014) considers stand-up comedy as a form of an intimate spontaneous talk in which the audience contributes to laughter creation. He also maintains that comedians use intimacy to come close to the audience while expressing their shocking ideas or while addressing the incongruities of life. Brodie (2014) concludes that it is difficult to provide a definition of stand-up comedy as a genre and that it is better to identify it by its characteristics. He underscores three main characteristics of that genre. First, it is performed in a dialogue form in which the audience has a role. Second, comedians draw on their personal experience to construct the show topics. Third, it is recorded and circulated as any other product. Most important is his perception of stand-up comedy as a communicative event which involve encoded messages that are communicated though audio-visual channels between the performer as encoder and the audience as a decoder, using linguistic and paralinguistic means. (Brodie 2014, pp. 5-15, 46-51)

Dean (2019) perceives stand-up comedy as the art of making Jokes and he also finds the definitions of jokes unsatisfactory. He believes that jokes are better discerned by their structures rather than a definition.

He argues that jokes in stand-up comedy share the same structure. In any joke, there are two stories that are linked with a connector. The first story is used as a setup to set the audience's expectations and the second story is used as a punchline to shatter those expectations. The connector is the linking idea that has different interpretations in each story. So, when the second interpretation in the second story is revealed, the audience are shocked and cannot resist laughing. For instance, a comedian may tell his audience a joke drawing on his life experience by mentioning a conversation between him and his mom as shown in example one below.

1. Telling my mother that I've broken my leg in three places, she said never go to these places again. (My example, M. E.)

The joke in example one has the following structure:

-Setup Telling my mother that I've broken my leg in three places

1st story: A kid says that he has three fractures in his leg.

-Connector: Places can be interpreted as spots on his leg or place where he has been beaten up.

2nd story: The mother reveals that the kid is a sissy who has been bullied and broke his leg.

-Punch: she said never go to these places again.

In this example, the kid's words tell the mother that he has three broken spots on his leg or three fractures in the bone. The mother's words give the audience the punchline as they change the meaning of the kid's message in an unexpected way, using the word 'places' in a different sense. The three spots on the bone are turned into three places where the kid is used to being bullied and beaten up. Thus, the audience's expectations are violated, and the shock leads into inevitable laughter. In other words, the mother's words turn the kid's ordinary message into a funny one by scoffingly presenting him as a sissy boy who has been bullied and broken his leg. This, of course, shocks the audience when their expectations formed by the first story of the boy are violated by the second mocking story of the mother.

Dean (2019) agrees with Brodie (2014) that comedians draw on their personal experience for ideas, but he stresses that humor lies in the details of the story. They also agree on the fact that comedians must deliver their shocking opinions, but Dean (2019) highlights that the opinion should come at the end with the punchline or the reveal (Dean, 2019, pp. 1-48)

Champion & Kunze (2021) pinpoint out that stand-up comedians are not just joke-tellers, they have a very crucial role in social reform. Stand-up comedy shows aim at correctness and social change. Therefore, comedians always draw on their personal experiences that have to do with the sociopolitical events. Like Brodie's (2014) they believe that intimacy is an integral part of stand-up comedy, arguing that tackling critical sociopolitical issues requires a high degree of intimacy and fun. (Champion & Kunze 2021, pp.1-4)

Digging deeper into stand-up comedy, Dean (2019) provides a list of the thing that any comedian must do and another of the thing that any comedian must avoid while performing stand-up comedy. For example, he recommends that jokes should be brief and end by the punchline which will breach the expectations. Comedians are recommended to stick to common knowledge or personal experience to guarantee that the joke is clear. Moreover, comedians are advised to use incorrect language and to take care which part is better said and which part is better acted. The list of the things that must be avoided includes cliché greetings or any cliché practices. He also warns comedians from carrying on the joke, while the audience are laughing. (Dean, 2019, pp. 50-63, 135, 141, 134-147)

5.2 Discourse, Digital Discourse and Social Practice

Jones et al. (2015) distinguish between social practice and digital practice. They maintain that social practice is the behavior or action of the members of society to claim membership of a certain group. Members of society enact their identities and relationships through means such as written texts, computers, or cell phones. Hence, digital practices are located somewhere between the virtual and the physical dimensions, and between the social systems and technological systems. Therefore, traditional analytical models of discourse that focus on written or spoken language are inapt. (Jones et al., 2015, pp. 1-3, 81)

Fairclough (2010) maintains that the definition of the term 'discourse' is unsettled since many disciplines use it such as linguistics and sociology. He even tends to use it in multiple senses. He uses it as an abstract noun to signify language in use as part of the social practice and as a count noun to indicate the ways experiences are expressed as a result of the different perspectives (e.g., patriarchal discourse and feminist discourse). According to Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2019) discourse is mainly concerned with social practice rather than language in use. Accordingly, they view discourse analysis as the monitoring of the ways people use semiotic systems to construct their social world. In this sense, the analysis of digital discourse focuses on the way multimodal or multisemiotic resources are adopted to articulate identities, activities, and ideologies in the digital world, which in turn is embedded in the larger social world. Digital discourse is characterized by being multimodal, combining writing, images, sounds, and other semiotic modes to create meaning. Therefore, analysis of digital discourse needs to consider the linguistic and paralinguistic feature of the text, society, and technology at the same time. (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019, pp. 3-5; Fairclough, 2010, p. 92)

O'Halloran (2004) points out that Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) deals with multimodal texts that use multiple semiotic resources. Accordingly, language and the other semiotic systems are considered in this approach. Jones (2019) maintains that MDA is an approach that focuses on how non-linguistic modes of communication such as images, facial expressions, and gestures work together with the language to build meaning. Jones underscores the fact that nowadays the written texts involve photos, graphs and charts that influence the meaning of the text and thus should be considered. The current study examines videos of stand-up comedy shows as a kind of digital discourse to unearth the characteristics of such humor by exploring the different modes that generate the humor. Hence, the study employs Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual grammar to examine the visual modes of communication such as gestures, gazes, facial expressions. (O'Halloran 2004, p. 1; Jones, 2019, pp. 36, 37)

5.3 Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) Model of Visual Grammar

The corpus of the current study involves video clips of American stand-up comedy shows. Therefore, the study adopts Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model of visual design to carry out the analysis of the nonverbal component of the videos. Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) believe that the same meaning can be expressed by language or by visual communication, but the two modes operate in different and independent ways. Their model is based on Michael Halliday's (1978) functional grammar. That is why Halliday's (1978) three metafunctions have three parallel modes in Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model. So, Halliday's (1978) ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions are satisfied by Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) representational, interactive, and compositional modes. The theoretical framework for this study is limited to the representational and interactive meaning of the videos since the third mode is concerned with the coherence and organization of the text. In addition to their model the study will conduct

diction analysis to account for the verbal component of the videos (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 16-18, 39-43)

5.3.1 The Representational Meaning

According to Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021), the way the world is presented is called the representational meaning. Different people with various perspectives are expected to present objects and their relations in different ways. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) believe that any semiotic action involves objects or people connected by processes or what they call 'vectors'. They refer to the objects or people involved as 'participants' and they distinguish two types of them, namely 'represented participants' and 'interactive participants'. The former describes participants who are represented in a text, while the latter refers to the participants who produce and consume text. There is a third peripheral participant that does not affect the main proposition. This secondary participant is called 'circumstances' and Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) focus on one type of it, 'setting'. The setting relates other participants, such as the landscape or background, to a specific participant. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 44-50, 70)

Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) identify two types of representational structures; narrative and conceptual. The former refers to the unfolding actions, events, processes of change and transitory spatial arrangements, and the latter describes the participants in terms of their class, analytical structure, or symbolic meaning. This study tackles only the narrative structures. Narrative structures are distinguished by vectors or processes (verbs). The process of the narrative may be action, reactional, speech or mental. The study will focus on the first two process types, namely the action and reactional. In an action process, there is an Actor that performs a vector to influence a Goal. In a reactional process, a Reactor forms a vector by an eyeline while looking at a Phenomenon. In both cases if the other participant, the goal or the phenomenon, is identified the process is called transactional, but if it is not identified the process then becomes non-transactional (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 44, 55-64)

5.3.2 The Interactive meaning

Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) argue that images can indicate relationships between participants. They identify three levels of relations; one between the represented participants; another between the interactive and represented participants; and a third between the interactive participants. They point out that interactions can be explored by considering gazes, social distances, angles, and modality. This dissertation examines all the features except modality as it is more related to images than videos. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 113-115)

Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) mark two types on gazes, demand and offer, where the former demands the viewer to engage in a relation with the represented participant, and the latter dispassionately offers a represented participants as an object for contemplation. It is worth noting that gazes can be defined in part by facial expressions or gestures. For example, a gaze with an antagonizing gesture is not like one with welcoming a gesture. Social distance is determined by the 'size of frame' which is measured against the human body. For example, a close-up shot shows the head and shoulders of a person, a medium close shot shows from head to waist, a medium shot goes down till the knees, a medium long shot demonstrates the full figure, and a long shot presents the human body in a space that never exceeds half the height of the frame. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 115-129)

According to Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) angles reflect attitude. For instance, the horizontal angle shows the degree of involvement, and the vertical angle projects power. Hence, if the horizontal angle is frontal the viewer is totally involved, but if it is oblique the viewer is detached. In a similar manner, the high vertical angle indicates the inferiority of the represented, and the low angle shows the superiority of the represented. While the representational meaning of images communicates the ideational function of the images, the interactive meaning portrays the interpersonal function of them. In regard to the verbal messages, diction analysis is adopted to account for the ideational meaning of the verbal content of the videos. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, pp. 129-140)

5.4 Diction Analysis

Fairclough (2010) distinguishes between word meaning and word choice arguing that there is a difference between the various meanings of a word and the way meaning is expressed in words. In other words, a word may have more than one meaning but the author chooses to emphasize one. For instance, describing a speech as being 'plain' may indicate that it is easy to understand or boring. Also, a man who bombed himself can be referred to as a 'terrorist' or 'freedom fighter'. It is worth noting that emphasizing one meaning rather than another or packaging meaning using a word rather than another is not ideologically free. According to Saeed (2009), there are no true synonyms because words vary in terms of denotations and connotations. (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 36-7; Saeed, 2009, pp. 65, 66)

Erlinda (2014), Kreidler (2014) and Nagy (2017) point out that word meaning is partly denotational and partly connotational. While the former refers to the cognitive aspect of word meaning that people collectively agree on, the latter refers to the individual and emotional aspects of meaning which differ from one person to another. For instance, a word may have emotional connotations (daddy/father), stylistic connotations (buy / purchase), evaluative connotations (group/cliq), or intensity connotations (love/adore). (Erlinda, 2014, pp. 9-11; Kreidler, 2014, pp. 43-59; Nagy, 2017, pp. 18-23, 111-118, 139-144)

In some cases, word meaning may not be stated directly, but rather assumed as done with presuppositions or implied as done with implications. For example, on hearing the utterance '*Ali's sister is smart*', anyone can assume that Ali has a sister. Both Saeed (2009) and Erlinda (2014) point out that presupposition can be triggered by 'presupposition triggers'. For instance, the use of names or definite descriptions to refer presupposes the existence of that entity. So, '*Ahmed is nice*' presupposes that Ahmed exists. Other lexical presupposition triggers include factive verbs such as '*regret*' and '*realize*', non-factive verbs such as '*dream*', '*imagine*' and '*pretend*', state verbs such as '*start*', '*begin*', '*stop*', and verbs of judgement such as '*blame*'. For example, the utterance '*Salwa regretted eating the tart*' presupposes that Salwa ate a tart, and the utterance 'he dreamed that he was tall' presupposes that he is short. Also, '*Mai stopped smoking tobacco*' presupposes an earlier state, that Mai used to smoke *tobacco*, and '*Alaa blamed Maha for telling her*' presupposes that Maha has already told her. The word 'again' indicates that an action occurred before. Also, WH question words trigger presuppositions. For example, the question '*when did you buy the bike?*' presupposes that he bought a bike. Another type of presupposition triggers is the structural one in which a grammatical structure is responsible for the assumption, as in the cleft and the pseudo-cleft construction and the counter-factual if construction. For instance, '*If you were my daughter, you would have been a legitimate heir*' presupposes that she is not his daughter. Time adverbial clauses and comparative clauses are good examples of presupposition triggers. For example, '*I was flying aircrafts before Sam learned to walk*' presupposes that Sam learned to walk, and '*Lina is even more naive than Sandy*' presupposes that Sandy is naive. (Saeed, 2009, pp. 99-110; Erlinda, 2014, pp. 67-73)

According to Saeed (2009) and Erlinda (2014), implications or implicatures are related to presuppositions but different as the message is implied rather than stated. Implicatures can be conversational and conventional. conversational implicature is established by the context of the conversation, but conventional implicature is created by some linguistic forms. In a conversation for instance, answering the question ‘can I get some money?’ by saying ‘my wallet is on drawer’ implies that the person answering don’t mind giving the money. Independently of the conversation context, words such as but, therefore, anyway, actually, also, besides, however, though, yet, still and too, imply messages. For example, ‘but’ in ‘he is young kid but clean’ implies that young kids are not clean. Also, ‘therefore’ in ‘She is a woman therefore she cannot drive well’ implies that women are not good drivers. Another related type of implicatures is ‘generalized implicature’ or ‘scalar implicature’. This type is independent of the context and has a default interpretation. Such implications can be generated by lexical items such as most, many, all, some, few, often, always, and sometimes. For instance, ‘most’ in ‘*most of the birds can fly*’ implies that not all of them can fly. (Saeed, 2009, pp. 213-216; Erlinda, 2014, pp. 83-88)

5. Sample Analysis of the Data

In this part, the data is analyzed using Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (2021) model of visual design to detect the representational and interactive meanings of the nonverbal content of the videos and diction analysis to account for the ideational meaning of the verbal component of the videos. The corpus involves three videos for three comedians; Russell Peters (Indian American), Maz Jobrani (Iranian American), and Nemr Abu Nassar (Lebanese American). The proportionate video lengths for the comedians are respectively 5:19 minutes, 4:14 minutes, and 4:10 minutes. These three comedians are specifically selected since they tackle Arabs’ issues and they have Middle Eastern origins. Hence, they share the American culture, the Middle Eastern origins and they do the same genre, stand-up comedy, tackling the same topics. Holding these common factors between the comedians, the study monitors their comedy practices to depict the features of the humor of stand-up comedy.

6.1 Russell Peters' Video Analysis

In this part, analysis runs across two sections, section ‘a’ and section ‘b’. Section ‘a’ examines the representational meaning of the nonverbal component of the video and section ‘b’ tackles the interactive meaning of the nonverbal component as well as the verbal component of the video.

a. Visual Representational Meaning

In a typical stand-up comedy show, there is a performer and an audience that interact in a theatre. The eye lines between the reactor (the audience) and the phenomenon (Russell) in figure 1 forms a transactional reactional process and a non-transactional one in figure 2 where the reactor, Russell, is only spotted without the phenomenon.

In addition to the reactional process between the interactive participants, Russell and the Audience, in figure 1, there is a transactional reactional process between the represented participants, Russell and an imaginary Arab guy who is represented by the microphone stand. In this figure Russell plays the role of an Arab guy who looks at his imaginary Arab friend to ensure him that he will talk to the comedian after the show regarding his jokes about the Arabs.

In figure 3, Russell decides to leave the theatre on noticing a big number Arabs among the audience, arguing that they will hurt him if he tells jokes about them. This process is a non-transactional action one that shows only the actor (Russell) without a goal. In figure 4, Russell as an actor plays the role of an American that threatens a goal, an Iraqi citizen. This process is a non-transactional action process that is marked by Russell’s hand gestures.

Figure 5 demonstrates a reactional process as the reactor, the Arab guy, looks indignantly at the implied phenomenon, the comedian. The reactional process focuses solely on the look and the facial expressions of the indignant guy creating laughter which highlights the contradiction between the smile and indignancy in figures 5 and 6. Figures 5 and 6 involve non-transactional action processes where Russell imitates the Arab's way of laugh about his jokes that involve Arabs and the ordinary people's way of laughing about the same jokes. His hand, as the actor, does something to the goal, his chest. such action is meant to reflect grinning and happiness. Representing narratives in such ways deliver the message to the audience with strong visuals that help them imagine the situations recounted in certain ways, influencing the audience's perception to create laughter.

Figures 7,8,9 involve action processes where Russell's hand gestures indicate the action by the vector it creates. In figure 7, the vector is directed towards the goal, the audience, and in figure 9, the vector is directed towards an imaginary friend which functions as the goal of this process. However, in figure 8, the vector is directed towards Russell's body, making it the goal. The actor, in figure 7, is Russell, but in the other two figures, the actor is an Iraqi guy who faces the American threats defiantly.

b. Visual Interactive Meaning and Verbal Realization

Figure 3 demonstrates a long shot of Russell while leaving the stage for fear of the Arab audience. The comedy lies in the sudden change of opinion due to fear. In other words, Russell was going to start his show but after receiving loud responses for his question "Any Arabs in the house tonight?" (Peters, 2016b, 0:01), he escapes, saying "Alright, thank you, good night! Alright" (Peters, 2016b, 0:03). The big frame and the fact that he turns his back and waves his hand at the audience increase the distance between Russell and his Arab audience. Russell underscores that distance visually by veering away from them and verbally when he thanked them and said good night. It is worth noting that the whole situation is based on the stereotype of Arabs as terrorists and it is acted as a personal experience since Russell experiences this on stage before the audience. The humor intensifies when Russell goes into the details about the Arab's fake laughs and their attitude towards the comedians who make jokes about them.

Mocking the Arab audience way of speaking, Russell produces an unrecognized sound twice, "hul-hula laah-laah" (Peters, 2016b, 0:15), that generates laughter. When Russell produces the sound, he makes sure that he faces the audience. So, Russell first tries to interact with the Arab interlocutors on his left side using a direct gaze, where viewers are offered information since the dimension is oblique. Then he gazes away from his interlocutors, facing the viewers to tell the joke at a horizontal frontal angle. Now he directly gazes at the viewers to demand their interaction and laughter. The frame alternates from long shot to medium close to bring Russell closer to the audience, while telling the joke. Thus, jokes are told in a frontal dimension and at a close distance where interaction is less formal and more intimate.

The frame continues to be medium close, and the angle is frontal at eye-level. These details are intended to put Russell at the same level with the audience, while talking about the Arabs' intolerance of jokes and criticism, to augment involvement and interaction. It is noticed that Russell's laughter at 43rd second of the video without any words stimulates the audience's laughter. Also, Russell's imitation of the Arabs' way of laughing to his jokes about Arabs generates laughter, especially when he mimics the Arabic accent. The Arabs' way of laughing is laughter inducing because of the contradictory adjacent sullen face. Then again Russell plays the role of the Arab audience putting on that stern face, while talking to an imaginary guy saying that he'll talk to the performer after the show (signifying that some violence will take place). Moreover, the contradiction in figures 5 & 6 between the way Arabs laugh and the way others laugh at his jokes brings irresistible laughs. While the Arabs way of laughing seems like a fake one that hides anger, the peoples laugh is more like a pure hearty laugh.

Arabs fake laugh and their anger are indicated verbally when Russell says, "I do a joke about Arabs, and they'll look like they are laughing, but it is not the same laugh you're doing"(Peters, 2016b, 1:05). The expression 'look like' indicates pretense. Also, the word 'worry' in "Don't worry. I will talk to him after"(Peters, 2016b, 1:38), presupposes that the imaginary Arab guy is upset and worried about the joke. It is noticed that Russell switches his accent from American to Arabic while saying these utterances to impinge an authentic air on the performance and thus bring stronger laughs.

The shot is medium close, and the angle is frontal while Russell is criticizing the media for propagating the existing stereotypes. Such frame is meant to bring Russell closer to the audience and to keep them involved in the interaction. In figure 7, Russell puts on a puzzled confused face while asking the audience the question "what do you think?" (Peters, 2016b, 2:21) with a high rising tone to make the audience highly interactive and blast in laughter because the answers to the questions are already known. All questions draw on stereotypes; a photo of an Asian guy and car accident (Asians are bad drivers), a photo of Indians and 7-eleven (7-eleven stores are full of Indian employees), a photo of Arabs and bombs (Arabs are terrorists). Although Arabs are represented as terrorists in this stereotype, Russell does not state so. On the contrary, Russell criticizes and renounces this stereotype as discussed later in the verbal analysis below.

Verbally, Russell makes use of very significant words that state his viewpoint as illustrated in the examples below:

1. They kind of just perpetuate stereotypes about people. (Peters, 2016b, 1:58)
2. They enforce all this. (Peters, 2016b, 2:07)
3. They convince us that things are what we think. (Peters, 2016b, 2:48)
4. All they show you is like, all this violence. They never show you normal Arab people just doing regular Arab things... (Peters, 2016b, 2:54)

In extract 1, the word 'perpetuate' denotes an eternalized prolonged process. So, the media is interested in an everlasting reproduction of stereotypes. Also, words such as 'enforce' and 'convince' have imposition connotations. Thus, the media try to force us into believing these stereotypes. Moreover, convincing people that what they think as true is true involves a process of fooling which sounds funny. Finally, Russell highlights the fact that media spotlight "violence" rather than "normal Arab". These two expressions run across two consecutive sentences where the second is just the negated form of the previous. Such structure presupposes that the normal Arabs are not violent.

Russell assumes the roles of both the American invader and the Iraqi victim while acting the American invasion in Iraq. It is noticed that Russell uses both verbal and nonverbal tools to create laughter, and that the nonverbal cues have stronger comic effect. For instance, the American threatens are skillfully projected by prolonged serious intimidating facial expression and intimidating slow body movement as demonstrated in figure 4, as well as the elongated pronoun 'your' in "We are going to come to your country and kill you." (Peters, 2016b, 4:14), which is meant for emphasis. All these strategies exaggerate the intimidation making it funny. Also, the Iraqi people's fearless reaction is presented by indifferent facial expressions accompanied by silence in one instance, and by a smiley mocking face in another, as displayed in figure 8. It is worth noting that the Iraqi people's reaction to the threats, saying just "okay" (Peters, 2016b, 3:43), is also funny as it breaches expectations. Also, the exaggerated intimidation looks disproportionate to the simple reaction of the Iraqi people which adds up the humor.

In both the angle is frontal, but the frame changes from medium close to long shot to depict Russell's entire body movement. Also, the dimension alternates between the horizontal oblique and the horizontal frontal while talking to the imaginary friend and back to the frontal as shown in figure 9. So, Russell gazes away as he talks to an imaginary friend offering himself as a character played and then he interacts with the viewers using a direct gaze to demand their attention and tell his joke. In figure 8, Russell looks towards the audience, but he gazes away to offer himself as an object for observation while playing the Arab guy, who at this moment is looking at the American guy threatening him. Verbally, Russell uses some Arabic words, and he imitates the Arabic accent while speaking a deformed variety of English as in "I kill me" (Peters, 2016b, 4:29). All these linguistic features go hand in hand with paralinguistic features such as gazes, facial expressions, and body movement to enhance the effect of his jokes.

6.2 Maz Jobrani Video Analysis

Analysis in this section is divided into two parts; part 'a' which explores the representational meaning of the visuals in the video and part 'b', which addresses the interactive meaning of the visuals and the verbal realization of both the representational and interactive meanings.

a. Visual Representational Meaning

During the act of stand-up comedy, there is a reactional process going on between both the performer, Maz, and the audience since there is mostly an eye-contact interaction. such reactional process is clear in figures 10 and 11. While in figure 10 the process is non-transactional, in figure 11 it is transactional showing both the audience as a reactor and Maz as the phenomenon.

The rest of the images collected reflect action processes. All the remaining figures involve transactional action processes showing both the actor and the goal except figure 12 which encompasses a non-transactional action process, showing only the actor, Maz. The fact that there are many action processes projects an active and engaging narrative setting that adopts paralinguistic tools to enrich the performance and help provide live visuals of the narrative. For example, figure 12 displays the funny way Persians chant their country's name, and figure 13 demonstrates Maz taking a heroine shot to show extreme relaxation while pronouncing the word 'Persian'. In both images Maz is the actor and the action is indicated by his hand movement. Thus, in figure 12 his arm goes upward indicating some sense of directionality, and in figure 13 his right hand injects the left arm as the goal.

There is a contradiction between figure 13 and Figure 14, where the former shows relaxation while pronouncing the word 'Persian', and the latter shows intimidation on hearing the word 'Arab'. Such contradiction generates tremendous laughter. Also, the intimidation in figure 14 looks disproportionate to a mere word, and thus generates laughter. Figure 15 features Maz while playing a Persian authority's representative (the actor) who delicately and emotionally hugs a citizen (the goal) after blowing him up. Such contradiction between exploding a person and hugging him is laughter-inducing. Figure 16 which shows Maz as a Middle Easterner happily pumping discounted gas. In this transactional action process Maz as the actor holds the gas pump handle and pumps gas into the goal, the car. The action is so funny since the idea of getting a discount due to being a Middle Easterner is so naive.

b. Visual Interactive Meaning and Verbal Realization

Maz's video starts with an oblique angle and a vertical high shot of Maz and the audience which reveal the whole setting of the theatre and indicate that the viewers are not involved in the performance yet. Then the angle changes into an eye-level frontal one to involve the viewers in Maz's performance while chanting the Persian chants and then the frame changes from medium close to medium long to depict his body movement as shown in figure 12. Maz manages to turn the serious chants into a funny dance generating laughter.

Maz distinguishes between Arabs and Persians, claiming that, Iranians are white like Americans, but Arabs are darker. Iranians are not Arabs, so "stop shooting" (Jobrani, 2012a, 0:50). When misconstruing Iranians to be Arabs causes shooting, it brings up laughter. While mimicking the accents of the Arabs and the Iranians, Maz's body movement mirrors his way of speaking. Thus, his relaxed way of talking with the Iranian accent is accompanied by a backward chilling body bend and a smiley face as shown in figure 17, and his tense Arabic accent is performed with a nervous forward slant similar to attackers as illustrated in figure 18.

Verbally, Maz prefers using "Persians" to Iranians to name his people saying that it sounds "nicer and friendlier". 'Iranian' with two nasal stops [n] sounds heavier than 'Persian' with a fricative [s] and one nasal stop [n]. In addition, Maz elongates the word 'Persian' with a very relaxed tone to project his people as cool peaceful people. On the contrary, the word 'Arab' is pronounced tensely with a higher pitch to reflect the Arabs as violent. He even claims that Arabs say the word 'Arab' in "very violent" way that sounds "guttural". Hence, Maz seems to reproduce the stereotypes about the Arabs as terrorists by putting the word 'Arab' and the word 'violent' at the same context. Physically, he shows intimidation by taking two steps backward while hearing the word 'Arab' as shown in figure

14. It is noticed that the contradiction between the tensivity in the word 'Arab' and the relaxation in the word 'Persian' cracks up the audience.

While comparing the Arabs to the Persians, Maz reconfirms the terrorist Arabs stereotype as he stresses that Persians are not like the terrorist Arabs.

5. Persian, it sounds nicer and friendlier ... I am not dangerous. I am Persian. I am Persian like the cat, meow... Arab...when they say the word 'Arab' they got very guttural, very, you know they're very proud to be Arab, and his way is very violent. (Jobrani, 2012a, 1:50)

In extract 5, Maz compares the Persians to cats, by making 'meow' sound, to indicate that they are harmless and nice. The cat sound brings about numerous laughs. It is worth noting that when Maz emphasizes the fact that as a Persian he is not dangerous, while comparing Arabs to Persians, he presupposes that the Arabs are dangerous.

Maz assures the audience that the Iranian nuclear program is peaceful through repeating the word 'peaceful' twice in a prolonged and relaxed way. Physically, he leans backward in a relaxed manner, similar to the one in figure 17. The frame changes from the long shot which captures Maz's relaxed body movement to a medium close one with a frontal angle and a direct gaze to bring him closer to the viewer while intimately stating that the Iranian nuclear program is peaceful. Then, he delivers a satiric note as he says that "They [Iranian authorities] blow you up then they hug you" (Jobrani, 2012a, 3:10). His words indicate the perilousness of the peaceful program. It is worse noting that putting the two paradoxical words 'blow' and 'hug' in one context generates laughter, especially when combined with Maz's body movement and compassionate facial expression shown in figure 15. Also, hugging someone after blowing him up shatters all the expectations generating laughter. Moreover, the idea of a peaceful program is presented as lethal and thus involves a fooling process. Interestingly, Maz tries to fool the audience the same way the government does.

The shot continues to be medium close with a frontal angle to keep the viewer involved, while Maz is talking about the "stupid" stereotype of the Arabs and Persians as oil experts. Humor does not only lie in the stupid stereotype, but also in the fact that it is a personal experience. Such stereotype is even exaggerated when Maz's friend believes that he is an OPEC expert on gas and that he enjoys a gas discount as Middle Easterner. Such extreme exaggeration creates laughter since his friend looks so much naïve and stupid to embrace such ideas. It is worth noting that Maz's direct gaze while pumping gas keeps the audience engaged. It is also noticed that Maz acts out the pumping of gas in a moment of silence. Such pause spotlights his funny acting rather than the words for stronger comic effect.

6.3 Nemr Abou Nassar Video Analysis

The analysis of the third comedian's video is presented along two sections. First, section 'a' provides the representational meaning of the nonverbal component of the video. Second, section 'b' delivers both the interactive meaning of the nonverbal component and the verbal component of the video.

a. Visual Representational Meaning

The representational meaning reflects setting of the performance and the participants involved in it to provide the background of the narrative going on. It also shows the world as constructed or presented by the comedian.

Figure 19 involves a non-transactional action process that is indicated by Nemr's hand gesture. Although Nemr just talks about the victory of the Lebanese people over the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) troops without acting, the process is not reactionary but rather an action process which reflects Nemr's excitement. Figure 20 also involves a non-transactional action process that is marked by Nemr's body movement and directionality. In figure 20, an ISIS soldier, as the actor, runs towards the implied goal, the Lebanese people. Nemr's acting out of the narrative contributes to laughter creation as Nemr runs in a funny way. Figure 21, in which Nemr describes the army structure, displays an action process that is signified by Nemr's hand gesture. The funny thing is that Nemr spends some time distinguishing the army forces in categories such as the air force and the naval support then he assures the audience

that the Lebanese army does not include any of these types of military support and that emotional support is the only support available.

Figures 22 and 23 show a typical phone call between a Lebanese mother and her son during the fight against ISIS. The whole situation is out of context and thus laughter inducing. Action processes are evident in both images since Nemr's hand, as the actor, does something to his face as the goal. Laughter is inevitable since the serene smiling facial expressions of the mother are incongruent with the battlefield atmosphere. Finally, figure 24 displays a non-transactional action process where a Lebanese mother, as the actor, serves food to her son, the implied goal.

b. Visual Interactive Meaning and Verbal Realization

In figure 19, the frame is medium close to bring Nemr close to the audience while bragging about the Lebanese army's victory as it crushes three thousand ISIS soldier at the borders. Such close distance allows the audience a good chance to capture Nemr's words, gestures, and facial expressions. The angle is oblique detaching Nemr from the viewer, and he gazes away from the audience to offers him as subject for contemplation in a statue-like figure of pride. Such glory posture is amplified by Nemr's pointing gesture which shifts interest from Nemr himself to the Lebanese people which are indicated by Nemr's arm. In figure 20, Nemr mocks ISIS by simulating the soldiers' attack accompanied by slippers sound 'ishta'. The frame changes into medium to capture Nemr's body movement and the angle continues to be oblique to interrupt Nemr's interaction with the audience so that he can start acting. Also, Nemr's gaze contributes to that effect as he gazes away from the audience to offer himself as a performer playing a role rather than a comedian interacting with the audience. These bragging and mocking notes are also underscored verbally as shown in extracts 6 and 7 below.

6. We fought the militarily first and we crushed them at the borders. (Nassar, 2019, 0:01)

7. We never talk about it because it is not a big deal... I don't know why in America the media hype up ISIS, like it was this incredible military force with divine power, that would never be defeated. These are people who fight in flipflops... how you gonna sneak up on your enemy. You're like; let's go ishta ishta ishta ... three thousand of 'em try to get into Lebanon. We heard 'em all the way from Syria. What is that? thunder? No, their f**kin' slippers. (Nassar, 2019, 0:15)

In extract 6, the verb 'crushed' is used rather than 'fought' or 'beat' to project the Lebanon's solid victory, since 'crushed' signifies a total defeat and destruction. When this destruction is done to a well-trained military force at the 'borders', the Lebanese power and the ISIS's weakness are highlighted. In excerpt 7, Nemr confirms that Lebanese people perceive that great victory as insignificant incident by using the lowest end of the scale of the adverbs of frequency 'never' to indicate a zero chance of mentioning it. Also, the categorical modality, present in verb 'to be' in "it is not a big deal", confirms the insignificance of the incident. In addition to this, the proposition 'don't know why' suggests that Nemr is unable to find any valid reasons for America's exaltation of ISIS. Nemr's account of ISIS sounds funny especially after he bragged about defeating them.

Americans' reaction to ISIS is indicated by the verb "hype up" which signifies unremitting rounds in media about their power rather than a casual interest. Nemer points out that ISIS power is described as a "divine power" that "would never be defeated". The adverb 'never' gives the impression that it is a God-like power with zero chance of defeat. Such exaggeration sounds funny especially after Nemr mocks them by acting out their attack which is accompanied by slippers sound 'ishta'. Adding more exaggerations, Nemer compares this sound to thunder that the Lebanese people heard "all the way from Syria". Unlike the verb 'listen' the verb 'heard' indicates an effortless recognition of the sound. Also, the whole proposition is expressed in categorical modality which impinges more credibility. Such stupidity contradicts to the context of a military assault. Another contradiction is clear in the Lebanese and American way of perceiving ISIS. It is worth noting that the exaggerations and contradictions create strong laughter.

In figure 21, the frame is medium to capture Nemr's body movement while talking about the Lebanese army and the angle is frontal to maintain the audience's involvement and to be able to capture Nemr's gestures. Nemr's gaze towards the audience demands their interaction. Nemr's description of the army is funny as he enumerates the

different types of military support that any soldier can have in the army in detail. Then he shocks the audience stating that such support is not available for the Lebanese soldiers. Nemr's hand gesture makes the description more vivid and tangible.

Verbally, Nemr draws on exaggeration to generate laughs. For instance, the use of the end of scale superlative expressions 'the most' and 'the best' in extract 8. Also, the high value modal expression 'have to' makes it an inevitable obligation to be the most powerful warriors, the adverb 'anywhere' does not leave out any place, and the pronoun 'all' indicates that this option is the only one left. The density of exaggerations urges Nemr to mitigate the overstatements, to gain some credibility, by modifying his statement using the modal adjunct 'probably' in "probably the most powerful warriors". Moreover, Nemr repeats the expression "that's a fact" twice for emphasis and the adjective 'emotional' to assure the audience that emotional support is the only available option. In extract 9, Nemr uses categorical modality, verb 'to be', to assure the audience that the Lebanese mothers is the backbone of the Lebanese military force. The word 'backbone' indicates that the mothers form the main support of the Lebanese body and without them the whole body will fall apart.

8. The men and women in uniform in our military are probably the most powerful warriors you'll ever see in your f**kin' life anywhere in the world. That's a fact, that's a fact ... They have to be, because that's all we have... we give 'em emotional, emotional support. That is the best we can do. (Nassar, 2019, 1:20)

9. Lebanese mothers are the backbone of our military might. (Nassar, 2019, 1:59)

Thanks to the medium close shot in figures 22 and 23, Nemr's facial expressions are manifested clearly to create tremendous laughter. This is further supported by the frontal angle which focuses solely on Nemr. Nemr gazes away from the audience to offer himself as an object for observation while acting out a typical phone call between a Lebanese mother and her son during a battle. Figure 22 features the serene smiling facial expressions of the mother, and figure 23 displays the calm peaceful facial expression of her son. These facial expressions are accompanied with a relaxed softhearted tone of voice and an affectionate motherly verbal content as revealed in extract 11. All these emotional visuals look at variance with the violent context of a battlefield. Such contradiction brings about a loud laughter applause.

10. Lebanese mothers will call their sons on battlefield here and do what every good Lebanese or Arab mother is supposed to do_ put pressure on their child to perform better. (Nassar, 2019, 2:31)

11. **Mother:** Hello! Habibi. How are you today? Did you kill anyone today?

Son: No, mama I couldn't. They were hiding.

Mother: No, [short pause] I thought you better than this. [short pause] My neighbor, her son kill three. Is she better than your mother? Is she? Listen! kill two, kill two ... just two, just two, two and then ... come home. I have made your favorite food. (Nassar, 2019, 2:48)

The verbal content also contributes to laughter. In extract 10, the word 'pressure' indicates that the Arab mothers raises kids inappropriately by pushing or urging them to do things, which could damage the kids psychologically. Exaggerating the proposition, Nemr uses the determiner 'every' which does not exclude any Arab mother. In excerpt 11, the soft and intimate conversation between the mother and her son sounds disproportionate to war and out of context and thus funny. For instance, the mother uses the expressions 'hello!', "how are you today?" as a greeting, and the pampering word 'habibi'. These words are uttered in a serene way as if directed at a young kid. This soft tone of voice is also incongruity with the word 'kill'. In addition, the verb 'kill' in "kill two" sounds anomalous with the noun phrase "favorite food" which generates strong laughter. Moreover, the string "kill two" is repeated more than once for persuasion, and the proposition is presented like an easy task that can be accomplished before dinner, which creates laughter and implies that the Lebanese people are used to such horrible bloodshed. Also, the mother's words are followed by short pauses to put some pressure on her kid while reproaching him. It is noticed that Nemr's American accent changes into an Arabic one with some structural mistakes such as the missing verb in

“I thought you better than this” and the unconjugated verb ‘kill’ in “her son kill three”. This way the words sound more realistic and hence funnier.

In figure 24, the medium close shot of Nemr and the frontal angle are meant to depict Nemr’s facial expressions and gestures while acting as a mother serving her son what she thinks is his favorite food ‘Mujaddara’. Nemr’s gaze veers away from the audience to offer himself as a character in a scene looking at another while serving him food. The mother’s fully stretched arm indicates her unwavering conviction that her son likes that kind of food served, which is far from truth. Such enthusiastic way of serving food looks funny since the audience are aware of her son’s distaste for that food. Such visual humor is supported by funny vomiting sounds and some overstated propositions.

Verbally, Nemr exaggerates all statements to ensure strong laughs as revealed in excerpt 12. For instance, Nemr presents the mothers’ misconception about their children’s food as a global issue when he uses the word ‘world’. His proposition is also supported by a high statistic figure “nine times out of ten”. The categorical modality, present in “it’s not”, confirms that what the mother considers as her son’s favorite food is for sure not his favorite. He even goes further to indicate the mom’s food choice is detested by their children. Thus, Nemr’s mother choice, Mujaddara, is described as “The go-to food in the Middle East to disappoint your children”. The expression ‘the go-to’ designates Mujaddara as the most sought option to disappoint anyone and he reconfirms this exaggerated disappointment by using ‘the most’ in “this is the most disappointing”. Using two exaggerations to confirm the same idea, Nemr sounds funny as he exaggerates the exaggerations.

Finally, Mujaddara dish is compared to vomit through the expression ‘throw up’ to reflect his detested feelings towards it. This proposition is further supported by vomiting sounds, ‘ho’ and ‘yoho’, which greatly contribute to humor. Nemr even accentuates humor by his final punchline, where he shatters all the audience’s expectations. After setting expectations about the Lebanese people’s patriotism and warriorship, Nemr concludes that they won the fight because of the Lebanese mom’s pressures and their misconceptions about their children’s favorite food. The misconception of his food preference is funny since it impacts his stay home.

12. It doesn’t matter where you’re from in this world. When your mom says, “I have made your favorite food”, nine times out of ten, it’s what she believes your favorite food should be, but it’s not your favorite food. The go-to food in the Middle East to disappoint your children, specifically in Lebanon, is Mujaddara. This is the most disappointing f**kin’ thing. It literally looks like somebody throw up in your plate. Ho’ would you like some Mujaddara yoho’... that is how we won a mixture of Lebanese moms and Mujaddara. (Nassar, 2019, 3:23)

7. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this dissertation are discussed in the light of the research questions. The study tries to answer three questions; the first one is about comedians’ ethnicity influence on the show and the role of stereotypes, the second one is about the features of the humor in stand-up comedy, and the third is about the theoretical framework’s compatibility.

In regard to the first research question, results show that comedians construct their shows around stereotypes and their personal experiences. Personal experience turns absurdities and illogical narratives into reality generating stronger laughers. Stereotypes are excessively adopted in stand-up comedy shows since they are commonly known, and they tend to be false and thus funny. All the stereotypes depicted in the videos are illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1

Stereotypes in the three videos

Stereotype	Illustration	Clip
Asians are bad drivers	An Asian guy and a car accident	(Peters, 2016b, 2:24)
7-Eleven stores are full of Indians employees	An Indian guy and a seven-eleven	(Peters, 2016b, 2:33)
Arabs are terrorists	An Arab guy and an explosion	(Peters, 2016b, 2:39)
Arabs are terrorists	The contradiction between Figures 7 and 8 are meant to highlight the terrorist nature evident in the Arabs' way of Laughing	(Peters, 2016b, 1:20) (Peters, 2016b, 1:17)
Arab are terrorists	In figure 52, Maz talks tensely while doing the Arabs' accent	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:38)
Arab are terrorists	Maz is intimidated on hearing the word 'Arab' as shown in figure 48, describing the way Arabs say it as a "violent way"	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:38)
Middle Easterners are gas expert	A friend asks Maz about his opinion "what is going on with this gas thing?"	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:41)
Army stereotype	Air support, naval support	(Nassar, 2019, 1:44)

Note. The stereotypes used to draw laughter in the three shows (My table, M. E.)

In spite of the different ethnicity, all the comedians tend to use stereotypes. Unlike the other comedians, Peters as an Indian tackles one stereotype about Indians while talking about the Arabs. This shows that any comedian is critical of his people. Although two of the three comedians share the stereotype about Arabs as terrorists, they differ in the way they address it. Thus, Peters just evokes it then presents it as a stereotype that is not true, while Jobrani just uses it for laughter without considering whether it is true or false. Jobrani even indirectly confirms that Arabs are terrorist when he compares them to Persians arguing that Persians are not dangerous like them. This leads to the second part of the question about the comedians' ethnicity influence on the show.

Table 2

Comedians' stances towards the Arabs

Comedian's Ethnicity	Stance	Ethnic Background Instances	Clip
Russell Peters (Indian)	Arabs are scary people who do not have sense of humor.	Don't worry. I will talk to him after	(Peters, 2016b, 1:38)
	He refers to terrorist claims as stereotypes, and he balms it on media	They [media] kind of just perpetuate stereotypes about people	(Peters, 2016b, 1:58)
Maz Jobrani (Persian)	Comparing Arabs to Iranians he clears Persians of any connections with the Arabs or terrorism.	I am not dangerous. I am Persian. I am Persian like the cat, meow.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:02)
	The nuclear program in Iran is peaceful, but still dangerous.	They [Iranian authorities] blow you up then they hug you	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:10)
	Maz describes the way the word 'Arab' is said as being violent and the accent as intimidating.	His way is very violent	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:32)
Nemr Abu Nassar (Lebanese)	Proud of the Lebanese army.	We fought the militarily first and we crushed them at the <u>borders</u> .	(Nassar, 2019, 0:01)
	Arabs are tough fighters.	The men and women in uniform in our military are probably the most <u>powerful</u>	(Nassar, 2019, 1:20)

Lebanese people don't have the fundamental basics. Lebanon is a war zone	warriors ... They have <u>to</u> be, because that's all we have.	
Acknowledges the role of Lebanese mothers	Lebanese mothers are the backbone of our military might.	(Nassar, 2019, 1:59)

Note. The stances are collected from all the videos analyzed (My table, M. E.)

Table two displays the comedians' attitudes towards the Arabs. It is noticed that Jobrani criticizes the Persian nuclear program while talking about the Arabs, which again confirms that each comedian is highly critical of his own people. Both Peters and Jobrani reproduce the stereotype of Arabs as terrorists, but Peters quickly admits that it is just a false stereotype. Unlike Peters, Jobrani compares the Persians to the Arabs claiming that Persians are nicer and not dangerous like the Arabs. So, he indirectly confirms the terrorist stereotype and clears his country of any ties with the Arabs. Nassar also tries to glorify his country and his people when compared to ISIS troops, presenting his people as the toughest warriors in spite of the lack of resources. Such findings indicate that comedians may be critical of their country but when compared to another, they extol it.

In regard to the second research question about the features of the humor utilized in stand-up comedy, findings indicate that all the comedians construct their narratives around one of the main comedy strategies that constitute the source of laughter. Then these strategies are realized by both verbal and nonverbal techniques. All the comedy strategies detected are demonstrated in table 3 with examples from the analyzed videos.

Table 3

Main comedy tactics

Main Comedy Strategies	Elaboration	Illustration	Clip
Expectations Breaching	Strong American intimidations to invade Iraq are met by unexpected response	okay	(Peters, 2016b, 3:43)
	No one is expected to blow up somebody then hug him.	They [Iranian authorities] blow you up then they hug you	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:10)
	After setting expectations about the Lebanese people's warriorship, Nassar maintains that they won the fight because of the Lebanese moms' pressure and their distasteful food, Mujaddara.	That is how we won a mixture of Lebanese moms and Mujaddara.	(Nassar, 2019, 4:05)
Contradictions	The striking difference between the laughs of Arabs in figure 7 and laughs of ordinary people from other nationalities in figure 8.	Figure 7 and figure 8	(Peters, 2016b, 1:20) (Peters, 2016b, 1:17)
	relaxed Persian ways and the tensely stressed Arab ways	Figure 17 & figure 18	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:51) (Jobrani, 2012a, 1:38)
	American and Lebanese way of perceiving ISIS	divine power fight in flipflops	(Nassar, 2019, :25)
Exaggerations	Exaggerated American threats to Iraqis	Figure 4	(Peters, 2016b, 3:38)
	Maz exaggerated way of the pronunciation of the word 'Persian' with a very relaxed body movement	Persian	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:50)
	Sound of flipflops is exaggerated to be thunder-like.	What is that? thunder?	(Nassar, 2019, 1:03)
Disproportionate Reactions	Exaggerated American threats are met with easy	okay	(Peters, 2016b, 3:43)
	Intimidated reaction of Maz to the word 'Arab'	Figure 14	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:38)

	Mother's way of speaking is disproportionate to the battlefield situation	Mother: Hello! Habibi. How are you today? Did you kill anyone today?	(Nassar, 2019, 2:48)
Misconstruing	Persians are misconstrued as Arabs	Stop shooting	(Jobrani, 2012a, 0:50)
	Mujaddara is misconstrued as Nassar favorite food	Favorite food 'Mujaddara'	(Nassar, 2019, 3:17)
Fear	Starting the show, Russell, all of a sudden, decides to leave the stage as he felt afraid of the Arabs	Figure 5	(Peters, 2016b, 0:05)
	Maz is intimidated on hearing the word 'Arab'.	Figure 48	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:38)
Fooling	Media fools people by presenting photos of Arabs and explosions without stating that they are related.	They convince us that things are what we think.	(Peters, 2016b, 2:48)
	Iranians are fooling the world with the peaceful claims of the nuclear program and Maz does the same to the audience	They [Iranian authorities] blow you up then they hug you	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:10)
Stupidity	An Arab responding to the American threat saying that he will kill himself	I kill me	(Peters, 2016b, 4:29)
	Th belief that Arabs and Persians as oil experts	People think just I'm from the Middle East, I'm an expert on the Middle East	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:30)
	ISIS troops try to ambush the Lebanese people, but they foolishly do this wearing loud noisy flip-flops.	These are people who fight in flipflops... how you gonna sneak up on your enemy.	(Nassar, 2019, 0:28)
Mockery	Russell mocks the audience's unclear words	"hul-hula laah-laah"	(Peters, 2016b, 0:15)

Note. Comedians adopt one of those comedy themes in the narrative (My table, M. E.)

Analysis of the data reveals ten comedy strategies as shown in table 2. In the first strategy, 'expectation breaching', comedians set expectations and then breach them to shock the audience and draw laughs. For example, Nassar sets expectation about the Lebanese warriorship then claims that they won the war because of the Lebanese mothers' bad food choices. Comedy tactics such as incongruity, insanity, absurdity, anomalies, and any deviation from logic fall under this strategy since they involve a breaching of the expectations formed by the normal logic patterns of the mind. These subcategories differ in terms of the way they realize such deviation. Thus, on one hand, anomalies refer to a word or phrase that is used in an incongruent context. On the other hand, incongruities involve a thing or a situation that is at variance with the context as shown in table 2 below. In absurdity the deviation from logic accompanies some silliness or ridiculousness. In insanity the deviation comes with delusional or paranoid effects.

Table 4

Expectation breaching strategy subcategories examples

Strategy	Example	clip
Anomaly	The paradox between 'kill two' and 'favorite food' in "Listen! kill two, kill two ... just two, just two, two and then ... come home. I have made your favorite food".	(Nassar, 2019, 3:12)
Incongruity	In figure 99, serene smiling facial expressions are incongruent with battlefield.	(Nassar, 2019, 2:51)

Note. The table shows examples of anomaly and incongruity as subcategories of the expectation breaching strategy (My table, M. E.)

Other strategies that are related but in different ways could be ‘exaggeration’ and ‘disproportionate reaction’. While the former refers to something that is overstated to shock the audience, the latter describes a disproportionate reaction to the stimuli where an insignificant matter is addressed with great concern and vice versa. For example, Peters’ ease and indifference as a reaction to the exaggerated American threats is laughter inducing since it breaches expectations. Although the two strategies involve expectation breaching, they are discussed separately in this study due to their richer descriptive nature. In other words, a word out of context can form an anomaly, but disproportionate reactions require an elaborate description of behavior. For instance, the Lebanese mother’s way of speaking and entire behavior is at variance with the war context.

The fourth comedy strategy is ‘contradictions’. In contradictions a comparison is held between two things to emphasize their striking differences, generating laughter. This relation is not a relation between two opposites that cannot coexist, but rather a relation between two extremely different things. The more the differences are striking the more humor is generated. For example, Peters compares the way Arabs laugh and the way other people laugh to his jokes to highlight the striking difference between them. ‘Misconstruing’ is another tactic of laughter creation, where comedians create situations when they misinterpreted a word or a behavior. Mistaking something for another is humorous, especially when such misconception has an impact. Most of the time, the person who is misunderstood is totally ignorant of the misinterpretation and its impact, which makes it hilarious. For instance, mistaking Persians for Arabs leads to terrible consequences such as shooting.

Another two related strategies are ‘stupidity’ and ‘fooling’. Both strategies display weak mental abilities but in different ways. In the former a person shows foolishness, whereas in the latter a person outsmarts another. Laughter is stronger with stupidity if the character shows a great deal of foolishness. However, with fooling, laughter is stronger if the trick used to fool someone is so simple. For example, Peters’ joke about how the media simply fool people by displaying certain consecutive photos to let your mind connect the dots without stating anything directly. The eighth strategy is ‘fear’. In this one, comedians show fear or tell a story where they were afraid. Such tactic generates great laughter especially when the thing causing fear is not scary at all. For instance, Maz shows fear on hearing the word ‘Arab’ which sounds harmless. The ninth strategy, ‘Mockery’, refers to contemptuous words or actions that are used to tease someone by copying him as Peters does to the audience by imitating the sounds of their words and reproducing them in a gibberish form ‘hul-hula laah-laah’. The final strategy, ‘irony’ involves a word or a situation that runs opposite to what is expected and it is recognized in three different forms; namely, verbal, dramatic, and situational irony.

The second research question focuses on the nature of the language used in stand-up comedy, whether it is verbal or nonverbal. All the above discussed strategies cannot be realized without the use of the linguistic and paralinguistic tools. In other words, comedians use a combination of verbal and nonverbal linguistic tools to attain one of these comedy tactics in pursuit of laughter creation. Analysis reveals eight verbal linguistic tools and four nonverbal linguistic cues as demonstrated in tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5

The verbal linguistic tools for humor generation

Strategy	Example	clip
Pauses	Iraqis responded in a long moment of silence to the American threats.	(Peters, 2016b, 4:26)
	In figure 5, an Arab guy indignantly gazes at the comedian in silence.	(Peters, 2016b, 1:34)
	No, [short pause] I thought you better than this. [short pause] My neighbor, her son kill three.	(Nassar, 2019, 2:48)
	Pause while pumping gas in figure 16	(Jobrani, 2012a, 4:04)
Word elongation	Maz’s relaxed way of pronouncing the word ‘Persian’ to convince audience that he is not an aggressive terrorist.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:50)

	The word 'peaceful' in "Peaceful nuclear program" is elongated to give a soothing effect to nuclear threat. Contradiction brings about laughter.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:06)
	we are going to come to <u>your</u> country and <u>kill</u> you	(Peters, 2016b, 4:14)
Accent mimicry	Arabic accent when Russell says "I kill me"	(Peters, 2016b, 4:29)
	Arabs conversing "Don't worry. I will talk to him after"	(Peters, 2016b, 1:38)
	Accent mimicking of Iranians and Arabs	(Jobrani, 2012a, 0:58)
	Arabic accent in "My neighbor, her son kill three. Is she better than your mother?"	(Nassar, 2019, 3:00)
Voice modulation	Maz's intense way of pronouncing the word 'Arab'	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:38)
	In figure 17, Maz talks in a relaxed way while imitating the Persian accent.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:51)
	In figure 18, Maz speaks tensely while imitating the Arabic accent.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:33)
	The high rising tone in "what do you think?" to make it sound like a real question, requesting information	(Peters, 2016b, 2:37)
	Nemr uses relaxed softhearted motherly tone of voice to echo mother while saying "Hello! Habibi. How are you today? Did you kill anyone today?"	(Nassar, 2019, 2:46)
Word choice	The words 'perpetuate', 'enforce', 'convince' are carefully selected to show the malicious role of media.	(Peters, 2016b, 1:58)
	Paradox between 'hug' and 'blew up'	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:10)
	Paradox between 'favorite food', 'habibi' and 'kill'	(Nassar, 2019, 2:48)
Incorrect Language	Russell plays the role of an Arab, saying "I kill me".	(Peters, 2016b, 4:29)
	The missing verb in "I thought you better than this" and the unconjugated verb 'kill' in "her son kill three"	(Nassar, 2019, 2:58)
Laughs	When Russell laughs without saying anything, the audience laughs.	(Peters, 2016b, 0:42)
Sounds	'hul-hula laah-laah'	(Peters, 2016b, 0:21)
	Cat sound, 'meow'	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:07)
	Slipper sound, 'ishta'	(Nassar, 2019, 0:46)
	Vomiting sound, 'yoho'	(Nassar, 2019, 3:49)

Note. The table displays the verbal linguistic tools adopted by the comedians to generate laughter (My table, M. E.)

As listed in table 3, eight verbal linguistic tools are revealed through the data analysis, namely word choices, pauses, word elongation, accent mimicry, voice modulation, incorrect language, laughs and sounds. The first tool, 'word choices', refers to the skillful lexical choice that deliver the best humorous effect while expressing ideas clearly. For example, Jobrani generates laughter by using two paradoxical words 'blow up' and 'hug' which create a funny anomaly.

Humor is not only about words, but also the way these words are communicated. Thus, linguistic tools such as pauses, word elongation, voice modulation, accent mimicry, and incorrect language play a vital part in laughter creation. For example, 'Pauses', which indicate a period of silence, generate laughter in numerous ways. It is used to direct the audience's attention to the physical action or the facial expressions rather than the words as detected in Jobrani's pause to focus on the gas pumping processes. The pause is also used by Peters to indicate the Iraqi people's indifference to the American threats. Expressing indifference by a pause has a stronger humorous effect than words since it is acted out rather than said.

Another way of delivering words is 'word elongation', where words are stretched longer than usual. Breaching the usual way of articulation creates laughter and delivers certain messages at the same time. For example, Jobrani's elongation of the words 'peaceful' and 'Persian' sounds funny and delivers the message that Persians are peaceful people not terrorists. In similar manner, 'voice modulation', through which comedians change the pitch, volume, tone, or pace of speech to deliver the message in a certain way. For instance, Jobrani compares the Arabic accent to the Persian one by modulating his voice as he attaches a relaxed tone to Persian and a stressed tone to Arabic. Also, Nemr's soft emotional tone of voice, when he imitates the mothers' phone calls to sons during war, generates strong laughter.

Accent mimicry, as a linguistic tool for humor, does not change the meaning of the words, but rather impinges authenticity on the narrative. In other words, when comedians copy the way in which a certain group usually speaks, the narrative is presented as a true story in spite of all its absurdities and thus creates laughter. Laughter is even stronger when the accent destroys the language or the entire message. Not to mention that some accents naturally sound funny and unusual. If the accents corrupting language sound funny then ‘incorrect language’ is even funnier. Using this tool comedians intentionally add some language mistakes in their shows to project a low-profile character or to cast some authenticity on the narrative. Hence, Peters’ example, where an Iraqi guy says, ‘I kill me’, generates laughter as the accent lends the narrative an authentic air and the sentence projects an uneducated strong-headed person that is not open for discussions.

Finally, ‘laughs’ and ‘sounds’ are somewhat related as no words are said but just sounds that bring about laughs. ‘Sounds’ can be defined as anything audible that does not constitute a word and ‘Laughs’ are considered the sounds that reflect happiness or fun. It is worth noting that laughs are sequential in nature. Hence, if an individual sparkles the smallest laugh, it can go viral and develop into a tremendous one among the audience. This is exactly what happened with Peters as he just laughed without say anything at all. Then laughter started to spread among the audience until the whole theatre was swept with laughter. Nemr narrates the ISIS attack story, stressing that they fought in flipflops, but the narrative does not receive much laughter until he acts it out with the slippers’ sound, ‘ishta, ishta, ishta’. It is only then when the audience bursts in laughter.

Such verbal techniques are not the only ones used to realize the main comedy strategies. Nonverbal techniques such as body movement, gestures, gazes, and facial expressions cooperate with the verbal ones to attain the utmost humorous effect. The nonverbal techniques are listed in table 6 below.

Table 6

The nonverbal linguistic tools for laughter generation

Strategy	Example	clip
Body movement	In figure 4, an American uses slow body movement to intimidate an Arab guy.	(Peters, 2016b, 3:38)
	In figure 12, Maz dances in a funny way while doing the national chants	(Jobrani, 2012a, 0:26)
	In figure 17, Maz moves his body in a relaxed way to render Persians peaceful	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:51)
	In figure 14, Maz is taken aback on hearing the word Arab	(Jobrani, 2012a, 2:38)
	In figure 20, Nemr acts the ISIS soldiers’ attack, running in a funny way.	(Nassar, 2019, 0:46)
Gestures	In figure 9, an Iraqi guy talks to a friend, discussing the American threats.	(Peters, 2016b, 4:05)
	Figure 15 shows Maz’s warm hugging gestures after blowing somebody up	(Jobrani, 2012a, 3:12)
	In figure 21, categorization gesture.	(Nassar, 2019, 1:44)
Gazes	In figure 5, an Arab looks at Russell indignantly for making jokes about Arabs.	(Peters, 2016b, 1:18)
Facial expressions	In figure 7, Russell asks easy-to-answer questions with a puzzled face.	(Peters, 2016b, 2:21)
	In figure 5, Arabs’ fake facial expressions while laughing.	(Peters, 2016b, 1:20)
	Smiley face when doing Persian figure 17, but stressed face when doing the Arab in figure 18.	(Jobrani, 2012a, 1:51) (Jobrani, 2012a, 1:38)
	Figure 22 shows the serene smiling facial expressions of a Lebanese mom calling her son on battlefield which runs contradictory to the war turmoil.	(Nassar, 2019, 2:51)

Note. The table shows the nonverbal linguistic tools adopted by the comedians to generate laughter (My table, M. E.)

Both the body movement and gestures are quite related since both communicate messages by movement. So, while body movement describes the alternation of the whole body’s position to deliver a message, the gestures indicate a movement of a body part such as the hand, arm, or head to signal something. For instance, Peters slow walking pace and intimidating body movement look so funny as shown in figure 4. Also, Jobrani’s intimate and emotional hugging gesture in figure 15 generates tremendous laughs. These nonverbal tools are mixed with the verbal

ones to realize the main comedy tactics. Thus, the hugging gesture is combined with the anomaly between ‘blow’ and ‘hug’ and it aims at the incongruity or expectation breaching tactic.

The other two nonverbal techniques gazes and facial expressions are also related since the interpretation of gazes in part depends on the facial expressions. This study, however, distinguishes them as somewhat separate techniques because sometimes comedians may just gaze without any facial expressions. A gaze can be defined as a long steady look that communicates an unusual feeling, whereas facial expressions can be described as the facial contortions that are used to express feelings. Gazes find example in Peters’ indignant looks, imitating an Arab while hearing jokes about Arabs. Facial expressions are discerned in Peters’ puzzled face in figure 7, and Nemr’s serene smiling face in figure 22. Both techniques are used along with the verbal ones to realize the main comedy strategies. Thus, Nemr’s serene facial expressions, in figure 22, are incongruent with a battlefield setting.

Since stand-up comedians have no props other than their body and mic stand, their body movement, gestures, gazes and facial expressions are very crucial for their performances. Not to mention that these nonverbal cues help the audiences visualize the narrative. Although the verbal techniques outnumber the nonverbal ones, it is noticed that the nonverbal techniques have a stronger humorous effect. In this regard some stylistic differences are noticed. Thus, on one hand, it is observed that Nassar draws more than the others on the verbal linguistic tools. On the other hand, Peters and Jobrani, employ the nonverbal linguistic tools more than the verbal ones. Also, Peters excels them all in the use of facial expressions and gazes. In general, all the comedians use a mixture of verbal and nonverbal tools to realize the main comedy strategies which in turn generate laughter.

In regard to the third research question, results have proven the compatibility of Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (2021) model, as far as the analysis of the visual modes of language are concerned. However, the current study has proposed a two-dimensional multimodal discourse analysis model that conducts analysis on the linguistic and discursive levels. On the linguistic level, the model adopts from Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (2021) model the narrative processes analysis for two types of verbs, actional and reactional, which contributes to the representational meaning, and gazes, angles, and social distance to examine the interactive meaning of the discourse. It also adopts from Halliday (2014), the ideational meaning analysis which is evident in some linguistic tools such as diction, metaphor, and transitivity, and the interpersonal meaning analysis which is clear in some linguistic tools such as modality, mood, and intonation and voice quality. On the discursive level, analysis is conducted using Dean’s (2019) joke structure and the current dissertation’s findings about the humor strategies and techniques.

8. Conclusion

This study attempts exploring American stand-up comedies about the Arabs to examine the features of such humor; if it is verbal, nonverbal or a combination of both, and if there are certain strategies employed to create laughter. In pursuit of objectivity, different videos for different comedians are analyzed on various levels so that one video or one level of analysis may confirm or refute the other. The whole research endeavor tries to answer three questions. The first question focuses on the influence of the comedians’ ethnicity on the topics addressed and the role of stereotypes. The second question tackles the feature of that humor and the comic strategies, and the third evaluates the compatibility of the theoretical framework.

Regarding the first research question, results have shown that all the comedians almost tackle the same stereotypes about the Arabs, but they address them differently due to their ethnic variation. Hence, Russell sounds objective with the Arabs, perceiving the stereotypes as incorrect claims. Nemr is not only objective with the Arabs, but also he glorifies them, especially the Lebanese people. Maz attempts to be objective with the Arabs, criticizing the stereotypes against them. However, he fails to do so when the Persians are compared to the Arabs as he clears the Persians from any ties with the Arabs and he even indirectly confirms the terrorist stereotype about the Arabs.

Regarding the second research question, the results have indicated that comedians create laughter by using their personal experiences to construct the narratives around one of the main ten comedy strategies identified in the study. The main strategies include exaggerations, misconstruing, expectation breaching, disproportionate reactions, contradictions, fear, stupidity, fooling, irony and mockery. The personal experiences lend an authentic air to the narrative and comedians give due care to the details since laughter lies in them. These comedy strategies are realized by a combination of some verbal and nonverbal techniques. Verbal techniques encompass word choices, voice modulation, sounds, incorrect language, pauses, word elongation, laughs and accent mimicry. Nonverbal techniques involve facial expressions, gazes, gestures, and body movement. The study's findings can be applied in further research on stand-up comedy and can help comedians construct their shows.

Regarding the third research question, results have proven the compatibility of Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model, with stand-up comedy. However, the current study has proposed a two-level multimodal discourse analysis model that adopts from Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2021) model the representational meaning and the interactive meaning analysis, in addition to Halliday's (2014), ideational meaning analysis on the linguistic level. On the discursive level, analysis is conducted using Dean's (2019) joke structure and the current dissertation's findings about humor's strategies and techniques. Finally, the dissertation's findings can be applied in further research on stand-up comedy and can help comedians construct their shows.

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Appendix 1

Russell Peters' Video Clip: *Red, White, and Brown*. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/GEVAE3EYoOg>



Figure 1. Transactional reactional process (Peters, 2016b, 1:42)



Figure 2. Non-transactional reactional process (Peters, 2016b, 1:58)



Figure 3. Russell leaves the floor of Arabs (Peters, 2016b, 0:05)



Figure 4. An American threatening to jump on Russell Peters (Peters, 2016b, 3:38)



Figure 5. Laughs of Arabs (Peters, 2016b, 1:30)



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Maz Jobrani's Video Clip: *Maz Jobrani Persians vs Arabs*. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/9AxQfsOX-mE>



Figure 10. Non-transactional reactional process (Jobrani, 2012a, 3:27)



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Figure 16. Maz acting as if he pumps gas (Jobrani, 2012a, 4:07)

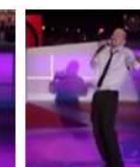


Figure 17. Maz refused as Persians (Jobrani, 2012a, 1:51)



Figure 18. Maz is intensely shocked as Arabs (Jobrani, 2012a, 1:38)

Nemr Abou Nassar's Video Clip: *Top Middle Eastern Comedy - Arab Comedy & Arab Comedians*. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/8gxOYApQv-Y>



Figure 19. Nemr talks about Lebanese glory (Nassar, 2019, 0:06)



Figure 20. Nemr during ISIS soldiers' attack (Nassar, 2019, 0:46)



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Discourse Analysis and Pragmatic Functions of *A'fiah* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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ABSTRACT

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The current study explores the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *a'fiah* (عفية) in Jordanian spoken Arabic from a pragma-discourse perspective. This exploration was carried out through collecting data by means of face-to-face interviews with twenty-five Jordanian Arabic native speakers who were asked to employ such a discourse marker within a real-life context. The results of the study reveal that the discourse marker *a'fiah* was used to fulfill eleven pragmatic functions according to the context in which it occurred: to scold, to scorn, to show happiness, to make a threat, to express admiration, anger, blame, approval, disapproval, annoyance and surprise. They also reveal that expressing admiration was the most dominant function performed by *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic, while scolding, scorning, making a threat and expressing approval were the least dominant functions. These conclusions are supported by in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses.

1. Introduction:

Language is an absolute necessity of social life since it is the merely individual's means of expressing their needs and desires. In other words, it is the human vehicle not only for interacting with others and exchanging ideas but also for conveying opinions, feelings and attitudes. Accordingly, it offers a significant number of linguistic devices that attain various functions across contexts in social communication such as criticizing, apologizing, threatening, complaining and many others. This indicates that every social situation has its own unique words, expressions and phrases. However, it should be noted that the same word or expression might be used in different contexts to serve different functions, i.e. to be interpreted differently in each social context. Hence, it can be said that interlocutors make their own language choices according

to the situation in which they are involved in so as to be able to establish social relationships with whom they are addressing.

Discourse analysis and Pragmatics are two interdisciplinary areas of study that pay particular attention to those context-dependent aspects of language. They are primarily concerned with the analysis of language in use, attending to the description of linguistic forms along with their purposes and functions (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1). To be more specific, discourse analysis is interested in the knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence. It not only explores language patterns across texts but also examines the correlation between language and its social and cultural contexts (Paltridge, 2012, p. 2) – i.e. how people use language in real life to construct meanings, present different views and understandings and organize what they wish to say. Similarly, Pragmatics is concerned with the study of intended meaning made by a language user – speaker or writer – in the interactional context. That is to say, it looks beyond what an utterance, a word or a phrase might mean in isolation (literal meaning) and scrutinizes the implied meaning of that utterance, word or phrase and how it is constructed in the given context (Yule, 1996, p. 3).

Discourse markers (hereafter DMs), which are functionally related expressions, are frequently used in languages, and thus they have been the focus of an expanding body of linguistic research. That is, a significant number of studies have been found in the relevant literature which focus on either a whole range of DMs (see, for example, Schourup, 1985; Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1988; Watts, 1989) or individual ones (see, for example, Lakoff 1973; Svartvik, 1980; Owen, 1981; James, 1983) across languages from different methods and perspectives. Nevertheless, in spite of this wide research interest, there is no general consensus reached on the definition of the term “discourse markers” (Jucker and Ziv, 1998, p. 2). Accordingly, a variety of terms have been suggested by scholars to refer to these linguistic units such as discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1996; Brinton, 1996), discourse particles (Schourup, 1985; Abraham, 1991), pragmatic particles (Östman, 1981), pragmatic expressions (Erman, 1987) or discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987).

Schiffrin (1987) notes that “discourse marker” seems to be the most appropriate term since it can be used to refer to a wide range of linguistic items under a single conceptual umbrella, unlike other terms such as “discourse connective” – e.g. *so, therefore* – or “pragmatic expression” – e.g. *you know, you see* – which tend to be restricted in nature because they are used to refer to linking words and elements including more than one word respectively (Jucker and Ziv, 1998, p. 2). Thus, Schiffrin (1987, p. 31) defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk”, pointing out that they can be sentences, propositions, speech acts and tone units which are dependent on the discourse structure in place of the syntactic structure such as clauses and sentences (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 40). Equally, Fraser (1990, p. 387)

states that DMs are linguistic items of various syntactic classes which have procedural meaning interpreted and determined by context, and they are used to indicate the potential communicative intentions of the speaker.

It has been observed in the literature that the study of DMs has received close attention and been the focus of the two interrelated linguistic fields of Discourse analysis and Pragmatics (Moore, 2007, as cited in Al-Khawaldeh, 2018, p. 114). It must be acknowledged that DMs are widely used in daily interactions among Jordanians, and therefore the present study explores the discourse analysis and pragmatic functions of a very common DM in Jordanian spoken discourse: *a'fiah* – whose literal meaning is “good health”. There have been, of course, several studies concerned with the uses of various discourse markers in Jordanian Arabic from a pragma-discourse perspective (see, for example, Al-Khalidy, 2017; Al-Khawaldeh, 2018; Alrousan et al., 2020; Hamdan and Rouza, 2020). However, there have not been, to the best of our knowledge, any studies interested in investigating the pragmatic functions of *a'fiah*. Accordingly, with this aim in view, the current study seeks to address the following questions:

1- What are the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *a'fiah* in Jordanian spoken Arabic?

2- What are the most and least commonly occurring pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *a'fiah* in Jordanian spoken Arabic?

Wittgenstein (1958, p. 20) states that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”. This suggests that, as already mentioned, a word may involve different meanings/interpretations based on the contexts in which it is employed. It has been noticed that Jordanians frequently use *a'fiah* in their daily conversations to make an array of meanings serving various illocutionary acts, which will be discussed in detail in Section 4. Hence, the researchers argue that such a discourse marker is multifunctional in Jordanian Arabic.

2. Review of Literature

It does need to be acknowledged that there are several studies conducted to explore the discourse analysis and pragmatic functions of different DMs in different spoken Arabic dialects. To exemplify, Mughazy (2001), Alazzawie (2015), Al-Rousan (2015) and Abdeljawad and Radwan (2016) investigated the pragmatic meanings, functions and uses of the DMs *wallahi* (an oath expression) in Egyptian Arabic, *ʕa:di* (corresponding to “okay”) in Iraqi Arabic, *maʕ nafsak* (literally means “with yourself”) in Saudi Arabic and *inzeen* (similar to “well”) in Arabian Gulf spoken Arabic respectively. However, the review

below only attends to some key studies which were concerned with the illocutions of various DMs in Jordanian Arabic in order to place the current study against this backdrop of relevant previous scholarship within the same spoken discourse.

Kanakri & Al Harahsheh (2013) carried out a study to examine the functions of the DM *ʕa:di* (meaning “normally”, “usually”) in Jordanian Arabic from a pragmatic point of view. They found that this DM is used to serve multiple functions according to the context in which it is employed: “to mitigate the effects of sad news, to ask for a permission to do something, to express the meaning of disapproval or rebuke, to show disappointment regarding a certain action, to express contempt, to express courtesy, to show acceptance, to save one’s face, to show indifference and to express an indirect criticism”.

Al Harahsheh & Kanakri (2013) also conducted a study to determine the pragmatic uses of the Jordanian spoken Arabic DM *tayyib* (which means “Okay” or “fine”). Their study revealed that this DM is deployed in Jordanian spoken discourses to perform several functions: “to mark backchannel with what precedes it, to mean stop or let us understand the matter, to show objection to what has been said, to introduce a new topic, to be used as a mitigating term for the disagreement force, to be used as a marker of challenge or confrontation, to signal the end of discourse, to send a message to the interlocutor to be patient, to give permission and to be used as gap fillers.”

Another study was undertaken by Al-Ghoweri (2016) who explored the contextual meanings and pragmatic functions of the DM *aʕalakom Allah* (which means “may God elevate you”) in Jordanian Arabic. This study found that Arabic Jordanian speakers make use of this DM “when they talk about animals, impure places and reprehensible situations.”

Al-Khalidy (2017) reports on a study whose aim was to investigate the discourse analysis and pragmatic meanings of the DM *ta:lʕ* in Jordanian Arabic as used in TV comedy series. The data analyzed consisted of some YouTube videos ranging from 15 to 45 minutes. The researcher found that *ta:lʕ* is deployed to serve eight different contextual meanings: going, going out, hearable, to appear, to look like, to share, ascending and from now on.

Another study was carried out by Al-Khawaldeh (2018) which was directed at scrutinizing the illocutionary acts of the DM *wallahi* (an oath expression) in Jordanian spoken Arabic. A corpus of eight hours of spoken discourse was gathered, including face-to-face and cell phone conversations. The study found that the DM *wallahi* is multifunctional in the sense that it was deployed to fulfill ten functions: to introduce an acceptance, an apology, a threat, and a compliment, and to serve as a request softener, a marker of elaboration, a continuer, a marker of confirmation, a marker of complying with a request, and a filler marker.

Another study was conducted by Alrousan et al. (2020) to explore the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* (whose literal meaning is “but”) in Jordanian spoken Arabic. A corpus of 24 dyadic conversations with male and female native speakers of Jordanian Arabic was put together, which involved 93313 words including 113 instances of the DM *bas*. The authors found that the DM *bas* in Jordanian spoken discourse is multifunctional involving multiple pragmatic uses: to initiate a topic, to signal topic change, to close a turn, to end a conversation, to indicate speaker’s hesitancy, to mitigate Face Threatening Acts, to make a correction, to attract hearer’s attention, to express restrictions and conditions, to show disbelief and indicate a question, to provide interpretation, to show contrast, to express regret, to show agreement, to indicate emphasis and to fill in gaps in an interaction.

Hamdan and Rumman (2020) report on a study which looked at the illocutions of the discourse marker *Yahummalali* in Jordanian spoken Arabic. They collected a list of 50 scenarios which featured *Yahummalali* based on their experience and knowledge of this DM and its associated contexts in Jordanian society. Results of the study demonstrated that *Yahummalali* is used to serve 19 pragmatic functions: “viz., expressing dismay and disapproval, fear, condemnation, disappointment, mitigating exaggerated claims, wishing, expressing sadness, regret, dissatisfaction, shock, making threats, ridiculing, expressing anger, jealousy, desperation, surprise, sarcasm, indecisiveness and doubt or uncertainty.”

The studies cited above are of immediate relevance to the present study in terms of exploring the contextual meanings and pragmatic functions of discourse markers within Jordanian spoken Arabic discourse. However, they only reported qualitative findings and did not involve any quantitative findings. Therefore, as far as we are aware, the methodology employed in this study is original in seeking to examine the pragmatic uses of the DM *a’fiah* in Jordanian spoken Arabic through both quantitative measures and qualitative observations.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The current study drew on the concept of DMs introduced by Fraser (1999, 2006, 2009) who reported that every DM “(1) has a core meaning which can be enriched by the context; and (2) signals the relationship that the speaker intends between the utterance the DM introduces and the foregoing utterance (rather than only illuminating the relationship...)” (Fraser, 1999, p. 936). The researchers, thus, maintain that *a’fiah* features a core meaning – i.e. to wish someone good health. Nevertheless, from a pragmatic perspective, it has a wide range of meanings on the basis of the context in which it is used – this will be demonstrated at an appropriate point below. Accordingly, in order to explore the pragmatic functions and uses of this DM in Jordanian Arabic, a multifaceted approach has been employed in this study, taking into

account discourse analysis, coherence analysis, conversation analysis and Fraser's (1999, 2006) grammatical-pragmatic framework which concentrates on determining DMs and their grammatical status.

3.1 Data Collection

So as to collect the data required for the present study, the researchers interviewed twenty-five Jordanian Arabic native speakers in different public places such as shopping centers, bus stations, parks, cafes and restaurants. They felt that this number of participants ideally suited for the objectives of the study and could provide insightful conclusions. Participants were first advised of the nature of the research study and its main objective, i.e. to explore the pragmatic functions of the DM *a'fiah* in Jordanian spoken Arabic. They were also informed as to confidentiality requirements whereby their identities would remain anonymous. They were then asked to provide a situation in which they use the DM *a'fiah* in their daily conversations or employ it in a real-life context. Once the interviews, which lasted for approximately 5 minutes each, had been completed, the researchers collected 25 situations.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 25 Jordanian Arabic native speakers, ranging in age from 25 to 45. They were male and female Jordanians who were selected randomly from different cities across Jordan. The researchers anticipated that such a sample would be able to produce real-life situations using the DM *a'fiah* since they would be familiar with it.

3.3 Data Analysis

As discussed above, the methodology employed in this study drew on multiple analyses, including discourse analysis, coherence analysis, conversation analysis and pragmatic analysis of the DM *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic. It considered insights from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. More precisely, it carried out a qualitative examination to explore the pragmatic functions of the Jordanian spoken Arabic DM *a'fiah*, supplemented by a quantitative examination to identify the frequencies of these functions. The analysis of the data was conducted as follows. The first step in the analysis process involved quantitative findings as to the frequencies of the pragmatic functions of the Jordanian spoken Arabic DM *a'fiah*, followed by qualitative findings which provided a detailed account and exemplification of each function. The real-life situations collected for this study, which included the DM *a'fiah*, were first introduced in their original language, i.e. Jordanian Arabic. They were also transliterated and then translated into English.

4. Results and Discussion

As previously outlined, the current study is concerned with exploring the pragmatic functions of the DM *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic and determining frequencies of each function. Analysis conducted on the data revealed that *a'fiah* was multifunctional deployed to serve eleven pragmatic functions: to scold, to scorn, to show happiness, to make a threat, to express admiration, anger, blame, approval, disapproval, annoyance and surprise. It also revealed that expressing admiration was the most commonly occurring pragmatic function performed by the DM *a'fiah*. This will be discussed at length below.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

Frequencies of each pragmatic function per every five real-life situations	
Expressing admiration	1
Scolding	0.2
Scorning	0.2
Showing happiness	0.6
Making a threat	0.2
Expressing anger	0.6
Expressing approval	0.2
Blaming	0.4
Expressing disapproval	0.8
Expressing annoyance	0.4
Expressing surprise	0.4

Table 1: Frequencies of each pragmatic function served by the DM *a'fiah*

What stands out in Table 1 is that expressing admiration is the most frequent illocutionary act performed by the DM *a'fiah* – one instance per every 5 real-life situations, the second most frequent function being expressing disapproval – 0.8 for every 5 real-life situations. The functions of showing happiness and expressing anger come third with 0.6 instance per every 5 real-life situations, followed by the functions of blaming, expressing annoyance and expressing surprise all with 0.4 instance per every 5 real-life situations, and then the functions of scolding, scorning, making a threat and expressing approval all with 0.2 instance per every 5 real-life situations.

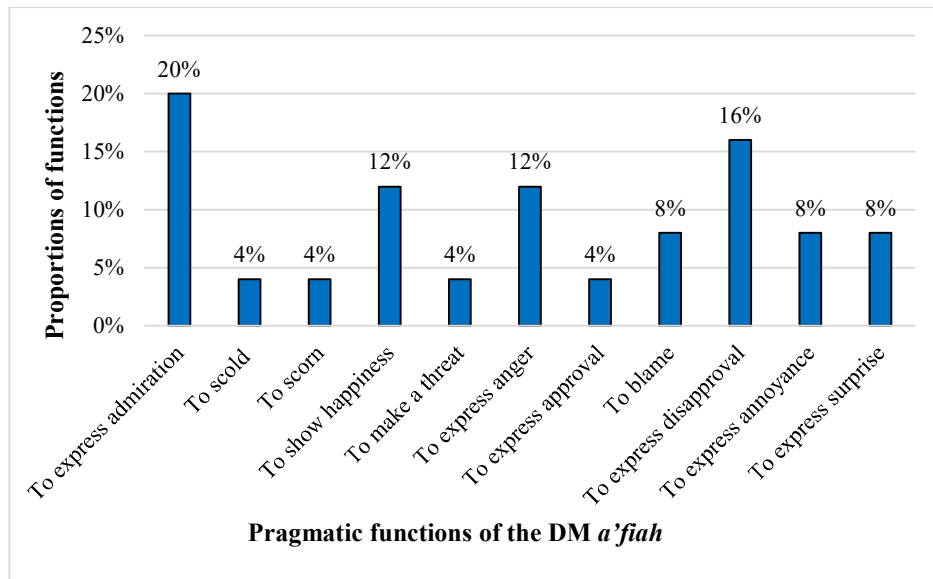


Figure 1: Proportions of each pragmatic function served by the DM *a'fiah*

With respect to proportions, Figure 1 shows that expressing admiration is the most predominant pragmatic function served by the DM *a'fiah*, accounting for 20 percent of the total number of the collected real-life situations. The function with the second-high percentage is expressing disapproval which involved in slightly more than 15 percent. Scolding, scorning, making a threat and expressing approval come last with all just under five percent.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

Turning now from purely quantitative findings to a more qualitative orientation of the specific pragmatic functions fulfilled by the DM *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic with a view to examining their communicative implications. Due to space constraints, only one illustrative example of each illocution will be discussed below.

As outlined above, the DM *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic is deployed to serve 11 pragmatic functions as follows:

1. Expressing admiration

Arabic text
عليهم. بس سمع محمد إنه قادة الدول العربية وشعوبها هبوا لمساعدة لبنان اللي تعرض لانفجار قوي، قال: عافية
Transliteration
bas samʕ Mohammad innah qa:dit addual alʕarabia waʃʕubiha hau limusaʕdit lebnan alli tʕaradʕ linfizar qawi qa:l ʕfiah ʕalahum.

Translation

When Mohammad heard that the leaders of the Arab countries and their people rushed to help Lebanon that had a strong explosion, he said: *a'fiah* on them.

The above example illustrates that *a'fiah* is used to express admiration. More specifically, it demonstrates that the speaker admired the leaders of the Arab countries and their people who hurried to provide assistance to Lebanon that had a strong explosion. That is, the action taken by the Arab leaders and their people towards the disastrous blast occurred in Beirut has compelled the speaker's admiration. Accordingly, from the speaker's perspective, Lebanon should have obtained relief from Arab leaders and their people who did not disappoint him, and were as helpful as he expected.

2. Scolding**Arabic text**

أخبر خالد أبيه: أنه جاب بالإمتحان علامة 2 من 10 فقال له أبوه: عفية.

Transliteration

ʔxbar xalid ʔbi:h innu ʒa:b bili:mtihan ʕlama iθnain mi ʕaʃrah fqa:l luh ʔbuh *ʕfiah*.

Translation

Khaled told his father that he got 2 out of 10 in the exam, so his father said to him: *a'fiah*.

We notice here that the pragmatic meaning made by *a'fiah* is to scold somebody for doing something wrong or unacceptable. To wit, in the above situation, the father spoke to his son angrily, disapproving his low grade in the exam by means of *a'fiah*. In other words, the son was berated by his angry father on account of his poor performance in the exam.

3. Scorning**Arabic text**

شاف علي مجموعة من الشباب يفحطوا بسياراتهم فقال لهم: عفية.

Transliteration

ʃa:f ʕali maʒmuʕa mi aʃʃabab jfahtun bisyatatihm fqa:l luhum *ʕfiah*.

Translation

Ali saw a group of youngsters drifting their cars, he then said to them: *a'fiah*.

It is observed in the context under consideration that *a'fiah* is employed to scorn for somebody. To clarify, the speaker (Ali) displayed total contempt for the youth because of their appalling behavior, which is car drifting.

4. Showing happiness

Arabic text
جاء صدام علامة عالية في التوجيهي فقال له أبوه: عفية.
Transliteration
ʒa:b s ^ʕ ddam ʕlama ʕali:h fi ʔttawʒihi fqa:l luh ʔbuh <i>ʕfiah</i> .
Translation
Saddam got a high grade in the Tawjihi exam, and then his father said to him: <i>a'fiah</i> .

We note that the pragmatic function performed by *a'fiah* in this context is to indicate happiness. That is, the speaker (the father) deployed *a'fiah* to express that he is pleased with his son's performance in the exam. In other words, the son has made his father happy by virtue of his high grade.

5. Making a threat

Arabic text
شاف حسن ابنه يدخن فقال له: عفية.
Transliteration
ʃa:f hasan ʔbnah judaxn fqa:l luh <i>ʕfiah</i> .
Translation
Hasan saw his son smoking, then he said to him: <i>a'fiah</i> .

The data under analysis revealed that *a'fiah* can be utilized to make a threat to someone who has done something wrong. As we can see in the above example, Hasan used *a'fiah* to threaten his son who was smoking. This signifies that this behavior is unacceptable by the father, and hence the son will be administered a punishment.

6. Expressing anger

Arabic text
بس عرف خالد إن بعض الدول العربية تقوم بمساعدة إسرائيل اللي تعرضت لحريق كبير قال: عفية.

Transliteration
bas ʕrif xa:lid inna bʕdʕ alʕrabiah taqum bimusaʕdit ʔsrael ali tʕradʕt lihariq kabir qa:l <i>ʕfiah</i> .
Translation
When Khaled knew that some Arab countries are helping Israel to put out a large fire, he said: <i>aʕfiah</i> .

Aʕfiah can also be used to serve the pragmatic function of expressing anger. This occurs when a person sees or hears something unacceptable either socially or religiously. As observed in the context given above, the speaker (Khaled) made use of *aʕfiah* in order to show his anger over some Arab countries' reactions towards the fire that blazed Israel. This suggests that from the speaker's point of view, the Arab countries should not have accommodated Israel with any assistance.

7. Showing approval

Arabic text
بس محمود شاف ابنه يساعد إمراه عجوز في شيل أشيائها قال له: عفية.
Transliteration
bas Mahmoud ʃa:f ʔbnah jusaʕid ʔmra:h ʕʒwz fi ʃal ʔʃiaʔha qa:l luh <i>ʕfiah</i> .
Translation
When Mahmoud saw his son helping an old woman to carry her stuff, he said to him: <i>aʕfiah</i> .

It was also found when analyzing the data assembled for this study that *aʕfiah* can be applied to show approval. This takes place when a person has a positive opinion of someone owing to their moral acts. As evident in the situation at issue, Mahmoud (the father) used *aʕfiah* to thoroughly approve of his son who has noticed an old woman struggling to carry her own belongings, and thus coming to her assistance.

8. Blaming

Arabic text
قالت مريم زوجة محمد لزوجها إنها ضيعت خاتمها قال لها: عفية.
Transliteration
qa:lit Mariam zawʒt Mohammad lizawʒiha annah dʕiʕt zatamah qa:l lha ʕfiah.
Translation
When Mariam, the wife of Mohammad, told her husband that she lost her ring, he said to her: <i>aʕfiah</i> .

The analysis conducted also revealed that *aʕfiah* is used to serve the illocutionary act of blaming. This meaning is made when a person thinks that somebody has performed something wrong or is responsible for something bad occurring. This is illustrated in the above situation where the speaker (the husband) put the blame for the ring loss on his wife via the DM *aʕfiah*.

9. Indicating disapproval

Arabic text
سمع أبو مالك إنه 6 رجال من أبناء قبيلته بدهم يترشحوا للانتخابات النيابية وإنهم مش متفقين على مرشح واحد فقال لهم: عفية.
Transliteration
smiʕ abu ma:lik inna sit riʒal mi ʔbtaʔ qabilatuh bidhum jtraʃʃahu lalinbixabat anniabiah winnahum miʃ mitafqin ʕa muraʃah wahid fqa:l luhum ʕfiah.
Translation
Abu Malik heard that 6 men from his tribe intended to nominate themselves for the parliamentary elections and that they did not agree on a single candidate, so he said to them: <i>aʕfiah</i> .

According to the examination carried out on the data collected, *aʕfiah* is also deployed to indicate disapproval. This is achieved when a person holds a negative view about someone or their actions. As demonstrated in the context in question, the speaker (Abu Malik) used *aʕfiah* to disapprove of the behavior of the six men 6 of his tribe in relation to parliamentary elections since they were in total disagreement over who should be the tribe's candidate to stand in the elections.

10. Signaling annoyance

Arabic text
بس عرف محمد اللي يحضر لامتحاناته النهائية إن أخته وأبنائها الستة، بدهم يجوا يبيتوا عنده ليلة، قال: عفية.
Transliteration
bas ʕrif mohammad alli jhdʕr limtihanatuh annihaʔiah inna ʔxtuh w banatiha assti bidhum jzibu ʕinduh liliah qa:l <i>ʕfiah</i> .
Translation
When Mohammad who was preparing for his final exams had known that his sister and her 6 children wanted to come over and spend one night with him, he said: <i>aʕfiah</i> .

It was also found that *aʕfiah* is employed to make the pragmatic meaning of showing annoyance. This is accomplished when something happening makes somebody feel angry or annoyed. As we can note in the above situation, the speaker (Mohammad) was preparing for his final exams, and thus he did not want anyone to cause him disturbance. However, his sister and her six children decided to pay him a visit which rendered him irritated. Accordingly, he used *aʕfiah* to express that irritation.

11. Expressing surprise

Arabic text
قال محمد لصديقه محمود إنه جارهم خالد باع سيارته وداره واختفى فجأة فقال له محمود: عفية!
Transliteration
qa:l mohammad li sʕadi:quh inna za:rahum xalid baʕ sai:aratih wdarah wxtafa fazah fqa:l luh Mahmoud <i>ʕfiah</i> !
Translation
Mohammad said to his friend Mahmoud that their neighbor Khaled sold his car and house, and suddenly disappeared. Then, Mahmoud said to him: <i>aʕfiah</i> !

Based on the in-depth analysis undertaken, *aʕfiah* can also be deployed to express surprise in which a person sees or hears an unexpected incident. This is exhibited in the context provided above where the speaker (Mahmoud) used *aʕfiah* to indicate that he was astonished by the abrupt disappearance of his friend's neighbor after selling his car and house.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study has closely examined the use of *a'fiah* as a DM in Jordanian spoken Arabic, employing a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative analyses so as to obtain more concrete evidence of the pragmatic functions attained by this DM. This careful examination has demonstrated that *a'fiah* is highly context-dependent and multifunctional, conveying a plethora of pragmatic meanings: expressing admiration, scolding, scorning, showing happiness, making a threat, indicating anger, signaling approval, blaming, expressing disapproval, showing annoyance and indicating surprise. It has also showed that the most commonly occurring pragmatic function served by *a'fiah* in Jordanian Arabic is expressing admiration, whereas the least commonly occurring pragmatic functions are scolding, scorning, making a threat and expressing approval.

The study recommends that further research needs to be conducted on the use of *a'fiah* in Jordanian spoken Arabic in more authentic contexts such as TV series. Since *a'fiah* is not only used in Jordanian spoken Arabic, the study also recommends that future research may investigate the illocutionary meanings made by this DM in other Arabic spoken discourses such as Syrian, Iraqi and Arabian Gulf. These recommendations are made to investigate whether this DM serves similar, different or further pragmatic functions, make findings on its use more reliable and enable stronger claims to generalizability to be made.

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