An Analytical Study of the Linguistic Strategies Used by Egyptian University Students in their Humorous Facebook Chats

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Abstract

With the growth of the number of Facebook users, people become able to create and disseminate humorous utterances by a button-click. University students who represent the mass users of Facebook in Egypt resort to the use of humour in order to release undesired feelings and emotions. The current research seeks to identify the linguistic strategies used in the chats of Egyptian University students and the influence of gender on the use of humour on Facebook. For this purpose, the researcher joined some Facebook groups of Egyptian University students. A sample of Facebook chats was randomly picked up from the different groups of Egyptian University students. The humorous chats were identified and analyzed. The results revealed that Egyptian students employ different types of linguistic strategies in their humorous posts. However, they used pragmatic strategies more than any other strategy. Also, male students tended to create and share humorous posts more than female students.

Key words: *Humour, Facebook Chats, Pragmatics, Structural Strategies, Semantic Strategies*

Introduction

The study of humour is an interesting and challenging linguistic topic. It is a universal human phenomenon that is related to amusing effects such as laughter. It has cathartic properties which help people release feelings and emotions, and it is pivotal for understanding social and cultural processes. So, all people react positively to humour regardless of their social status, cultural metamorphoses or beliefs (Reyes,

Rosso & Buscaldi, 2012). In the present era, internet-based humour plays a major role in the production and distribution of humour (Shifman, 2007). Social media are a species of internet-based technologies that enable people to communicate and share their ideas, interests and information via virtual communities (Chimuanya & Ajiboye, 2016). Since The use of social media constitutes a revolution in the field of communication, users of social media channels are rapidly increasing (Baruah, 2012).

Facebook, one of the most prominent forms of social media, had over 1.87 billion users worldwide in January 2017 (Statista, 2017). In Egypt, Facebook users constitute 55% of the total number of social media users. Although Facebook is viable to anyone, college students represent the majority of Facebook users worldwide (Michikyan, Subrahmanyam & Dennis, 2015) and 93% of Egyptian University students depend on Facebook in their communication (Saied, Elsabagh & El-Afandy, 2016). Webb, Wilson, Hodges, Smith and Zakeri (2012) illustrate that most of the college students leave their homes for the first time and need to get a sense of connectedness or belonging in the college community via using Facebook.

Facebook is a social medium that offers its users the opportunity to employ verbal and non-verbal humor. Verbal humour includes the use of different linguistic strategies and/or writing formats (He, 2008). Facebook offers a variety of techniques for expressing non-verbal humour such as the use of smileys, emoticons, hashtags, e-cards, profile photos, cartoons

and/or memes[1] (Wong, 2012; Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). Additionally, Facebook enables its users to mix between verbal and nonverbal humour by using memes, videos, photos or pictures supported by verbal expressions. This mixture gives Facebook-based humour a viral nature in its quick spread (Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015). The share of humorous oriented utterances builds a common ground among the users of Facebook and reduces the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty (Pennington & Hall, 2014).

The problem of the study

Humour is a complex human behavior that attracts the attention of researchers in different fields such as linguistics, sociology, psychology, philosophy and communication (Kehinde, 2016). Some of the studies that manipulated humour focused on analyzing some of the linguistic features of humour. However, most of these studies focused on analyzing the pragmatic aspects of humour. For example, Cobos (1997) outlined some pragmatic strategies that could be used to express humour such as incongruity. Widiana (2014) analyzed the pragmatics of implicature in the broadcast messages. He concluded that implicature is not usually used for the sake of entertainment but it could be used to avoid being cruel or rude in satire or criticism. Moreover, Kehinde (2016) studied the impact of conscious or unconscious violation of the Gricean maxims on creating a humorous effect in the stand-up comedy in Nigeria. Some other few studies investigated the influence of some semantic and morphosyntactic strategies that could be used to identify ambiguity-based humour (Reyes, Buscaldi, and Rosso, 2012).

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[1] Memes are ideas, behaviours, styles or rituals that are transmitted from one person to another within a culture by imitation. So, memes are cultural units that include stories, songs, films, habits, skills, innovations and ways of doing things (Bao, 2016).

Some of the studies that manipulated humour examined the influence of gender on the use of humour. Crawford (2003) studied the influence of gender through a questionnaire directed to male and female respondents in the United States and he concluded that there is no difference between men and women in the use of humour. Coates (2014) discussed the impact of gender on the use of humour and she concluded that gender has no effect on the use of humour. Holmes and Schnurr (2014) explored the effects of gender on the use of verbal humour. They found out that women tend to use humour more than men because women use humour as a means to criticize the feminist society in which they live. So, there is no agreement on the influence of gender on the use of humour.

As humour is a human-related phenomenon that may arise in any human interaction (Michalik & Sznicer, 2017), Some studies manipulated humour in different social contexts such as classrooms (Alatalo and Poutiainen, 2016), workplaces (Michalik and Sznicer, 2017), comic films (Vandaele, 2002), stand-up comedies (Schwarz, 2010 and Kehinde, 2016), and social media (Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong, 2015; Castro, Cubero, Garat and Guillermo, 2016; Lewin-Jones, 2015). Some of the studies that manipulated humour in social media focused on the nature of social media like Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong (2015) and Bao (2016) who studied the functions of memes as humorous tools, while other studies concentrated on means of identifying humour in social media like Castro, Cubero, Garat and Guillermo (2016). Some other studies focused on analyzing humour in different cultures and different age groups like Duncan (1984) who investigated the involvement of

managers and employees in humour networks and Ge (2016) who tried to analyze humour in customer engagement on Chinese social media .

By reviewing the literature related to humour, there is no comprehensive survey of the linguistic strategies employed to express humour in social media. Since humour is affected by cultural differences, this research seeks to identify the different linguistic strategies used by Egyptian University students in their expression of humour.

Theoretical background

Humor is a language activity that is intimately related to human nature (Alatalo & Poutianen, 2016). It enriches human communication and changes rigid and frozen situations into vivid ones (He, 2008). However, humor is an undefined phenomenon that has no universally accepted definition (Reyes, Rosso & Buscaldi, 2012). In seeking to identify humor, Crawford (1994) describes it as "any communication that elicits a positive cognitive or affective response from the listener". Humorous communication elicits response from the listener through offering incongruent ideas, having a feeling of superiority, releasing tension or coping with ambiguous people or environment (Crawford, 1994). Humor could manifest incongruity at three levels: logical, natural and social. Logical incongruity occurs mainly between what should happen logically and what happens in reality. Natural incongruity takes place between a certain action and the words describing it, whereas social incongruity occurs between natural demands of people and social conventions (Vandaele, 2002). Humorous situations may imply a hostile attitude of the producer towards the target member or group. This hostility may be grounded on political, ethnic or gender bases. Humor

releases tension and causes pleasure. In this sense, humor is considered as a sort of battle that takes place inside the human being, and laughter is the behavior that results from overcoming the threat (Krikmann, 2007). Humor helps people to deal with environment. People may laugh at anything, but not with everyone. People laugh because of their relationship with other individuals, and laughter helps people to create a positive bond with the target (Crawford, 1994 & Anggraini, 2014).

Humorous communications could be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal humour emerges from pictures or body language like smiling or raising a cynical eyebrow. Verbal humour, the main interest of linguists, is introduced by the means of language or text like jokes (Dynel, 2009). Verbal humour is known as communicative devices that employ linguistic strategies such as structural, semantic and pragmatic in order to amuse (Delabastita, 1996, pp. 131-133). Linguistic strategies are based on ambiguity (Bucaria, 2004). These strategies are discussed in the following section.

1. Structrual strategies

Structural ambiguity can occur at various levels: in phonology, graphology, morphology and lexis, as well as in syntax and deixis (Bucaria, 2004).

1.1. Phonology

At the phonological level, sounds can often be interpreted in different ways, which is also referred to as sound play. This is the case with homophones, onomatopoeia and spoonerisms.

Homophones are words which sound alike but have different spellings and differ in meaning such as to/two/too, some/sum, four/for and right/write (Knight, 2012, p.7). In the following example, humour is derived from the homophonic pairs eight/ate and red/read:

"Why is six afraid of seven? Because seven eight (ate) nine.

What is black and white and red all over? A newspaper (/red/= read)" (Medgyes, 2002, p.50).

Rhyme, assonance and alliteration are three ways of humour with a musical effect . Rhyme refers to words that have similar final sounds (e.g. moon /mu:n/ and tune /tju:n/). Rhyming words could be used to give a funny or humorous effect (Yang, Lavie, Dyer& Hovey, 2015). Also, assonance is one of the ways that gives musical and humorous effects. Assonance occurs when two or more words that are close to eachother have the same vowel sound (e.g mike/maik/, strike /straik/ and bike /baik/) (Tabe, 2016). Another way of creating phonological humour is the use of alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of the same intial consonant (e.g. sweet, swear and sweat)(Tabe, 2016).

Onomatopoeia is the formation of words from sounds. These words express the meaning of the sound produced by an object or animal, in order to convey an "audible image" of it (e.g. bang, boom, buzz, miaw) (McCarthy, 2002).

Spoonerisms are named after professor William Spooner who used to change the initial sounds of two or more words within the same phrase; e.g. keep a tape (for "tep a cape") (Formkin, 1973).

1.2. Graphology

Graphology is defined as playing around with the whole writing system including spelling, punctuation and paragraphing (Zakariyah & Asonibare, 2017). Homographs, palindromes and anagrams are examples of graphological features that may arouse humour. Homographs are words that are spelled identically but have different meanings. Most of the homographs have the same pronounciation but they may have different pronounciation (e.g. bank "an institution for currency exchange and bank "a land along the river") (Drury, 1969). Palindromes are sequences of terms that have the characteristic of being read unvaried backwards (e.g. mum/ too hot to hoot) (Jones, 1980). Angrams are the result of reordering words or letters producing other word pairs that have meaning; e.g. dormitory-dirty room (Medgyes, 2002, p.67).

1.3. Morphology

To create humorous sense, one can play with the way words are formed like metathesis and neologism. Metathesis is a strategy that uses reversal of two items within a word (e.g. urination - ruination) (Moskal, 2009).

Neologism is considered a type of word formation. It refers to a new word or a new sense of an existing word. There are three major types of neologisms. The first type is formed by adding new elements using affixation, blending and compounding (e.g. "crowdsourcing" is formed by adding "crowd" to "sourcing" and it means making a lot of people participate in a project or task, especially online tasks). The second type is formed by reduction using abbreviations and backformation (e.g.

"APP" is a backformation of the word "application" and it usually refers to a software application used for computers, smartphones and tablets). The third type is neutral neologisms that depend on semantic change, conversions, coinages or loans (e.g. the word "google" which is a search machine is used as a verb, "to google")(Ahmad, 2000 & Miller, 2014, pp. 83-99).

1.4. Lexis

"Lexis" is related to the words of a language. A unit of vocabulary is usually referred to as lexeme (Crystal, 2008, p. 279). Homonyms, polysemy and idioms are examples of lexical items that could create a sense of humour. Homonyms and polysemy are two interferring concepts. Homonyms are words that have the same pronunciation and writing but have different meanings; e.g. lie 'to stretch your body' and lie 'to tell something that is not true'. Polysemy refers to one word that has different meanings; e.g. plain 'clear', 'obvious', 'easy', 'a large area of flat land' (Ross, 1998, p. 16). Idioms are groups of words whose meaning does not equal the sum of the meanings of their words. The incongruity between the meaning of the words and the meaning of the whole idiom may be a source of ambiguity, and therefore may create a sense of humour (Ross, 1998, p. 18).

1.5. Syntax and deixis

Ambiguity may occur when changing the natural order of the sentences. Also, amiguity of deixis, which is a linguistic term whose meaning is relative to the situation in which it occurs. Deixis manipulates the features of language that refer to the personal, temporal or locational characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place

(Crystal, 2008, p. 133). For example, The Mississippi is one of the longest rivers in the world. Can you spell it? IT spells 'i-t'. (Ross, 1998, p. 24).

2. Semantic strategies

"Semantics" is the study of meaning in language. Semantic strategies that could lead to a sense of humour include synonymy, oxymora and contradictions (Ross, 1998, p. 30).

Synonymy occurs when words are identical in meaning. Theoretically, it is possible to replace one word with one of its synonyms in any context. Incorrect use of synonymic pairs can be humorous (e.g. "grill" and "barbecue" are synonymous, we barbecued/grilled ribs but the policeman can grill a suspect, not "barbecue") (Glynn, 2009). As for oxymora, they are considered figures of speech. Each oxymoron is formed by combining words or phrases which disagree with each other (e.g. diet ice-cream, soft rock, despairing hope) (Flayih, 2009). By contrast, a contradiction refers to a sentence that can not be true because it contradicts our knowledge of language or our knowledge of the world around us (e.g., "my brother sleeps wakefully" and "my brother sleeps standing on one toe", 'sleep' and 'wakefully' contadicts our knowledge of language while 'sleep' and 'standing on one toe' contradicts our knowledge of the world around us- it is not possible for someone to sleep on one toe) (Ross, 1998, p. 30).

3. Pragmatic strategies

Pragmatics studies how context influences the meaning of utterances. It focuses on what the speaker means not on what the words of the

utterances, by themselves, mean (Yule, 1996, p. 3). Humour results from incongruity or conflict. Incongruity and conflict are explained pragmatically through flouting Grice's cooperative principle, violating the principles of politeness or failing the convesational implicature (Anggraini, 2014).

3.1.　Flouting the cooperative principles

Grice's cooperative principle suggests that successful verbal communication is achieved by the cooperation between the interlocuters. The "cooperative principle" consists of four maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. If either the speaker or the listener breaks or flouts one of these maxims, the misunderstanding resulting from this flouting may lead to quiet humorous or tricky situations (Yule, 1996, p. 36).

Flouting the maxim of quantity means to give too little information or too much information than required (Jorfi & Dowlatabadi, 2015). As for the maxim of quality, it can be flouted through two ways. First, one of the interlocuters says something that is not true or something without a proof (Hu, 2012). Second, interlocuters use a hyperbole, a deliberate exaggeration to enhance a speech act. The maxim of relevance can be flouted by giving a response or observation that is not related to the topic, while the maxim of manner can be flouted by using obscure or ambiguous language, or to say something that is not clear or not in order (He, 2012).

3.2.　Violating the principles of politeness

Linguistic politeness is a significant part of any conversation, as it aims to manifest the distance between interlocuters, such as in the case of

social hierarchial placements that should be retained through the use of language (Mey, 1993, p.75). The fundamental conept of politeness is "face", a person's self image. This "face" could be positive or negative. The positive face refers to a person's desire to be accepted, liked by others and treated as a member of a group, while the negative face is the person's desire to be free in his actions and to be independent. In everyday conversations, people try to reinforce the positive face and evade threatening the negative face of their interlocutors. In the face-threatening acts, the positive and negative faces are under attack (Yule, 1996, pp. 60-63). Situations that threaten the face could create a sense of humour, such as teasing, embarressing or self-mockery situations. Some people tend to use indirectness to avoid threatening the face of the interlocuters which could be a source of humour (Dynel, 2013).

3.3. Failure of conversational implicature

Implicature refers to listener's ability to understand more than what is actually said (Widiana, 2014). It is the speaker who usually flouts the cooperative principles or violates the politeness principles. Conversely, it is the listener who fails to get the conversational implicature of an utterance. In other words, the listener may misinterpret the implicit meaning of a speech act. This may lead to confusion and may create a comic sense (Ross, 1998:40).

Purpose of the research

The current research seeks to identify the different linguistic strategies used in social networks' humorous chats of the Egyptian University students. Also, it aims to specify the strategies that the

Egyptian youth tend to use in their expression of humour. Moreover, the influence of gender on the use of verbal humour is explored.

Research questions

The current research seeks to answer the following questions:

- Do Egyptian University students tend to use humour in their Facebook chats?
- What are the linguistic strategies that Egyptian university students employ to express humour?
- Which linguistic strategies are prefered by male and female students?
- Are male and female Egyptian University students similar in the use of humour in their Facebook chats?

Method

To answer the previous questions, the researcher reviewed humour-related literature, which discloses different linguistic strategies that could be used to express dyadic verbal humorous communications.

TO BE ABLE TO ANALYZE SPONTANEOUS AND NATURAL HUMOROUS FACEBOOK CHATS, THE RESEARCHER SENT A FRIENDSHIP REQUEST TO MORE THAN 1000 FACEBOOK GROUPS DEDICATED TO EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. ONLY 100 GROUP ADMINS ACCEPTED THE FRIENDSHIP REQUEST. AS A RESULT, THE RESEARCHER BECAME A MEMBER OF EGYPTIAN UNIVERSIY STUDENTS' FACEBOOK GROUPS

SUCH AS: CAIRO UNIVERSITY, I'M IN PORT SAID FACULTY OF EDUCATION " أنا في كلية التربية بورسعيد", DAMIETTA FACULTY OF ARTS (HISTORY DEPARTMENT) "كلية أداب دمياط (قسم تاريخ)", MANSOURA MEDICAL GIRLS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION ALL LEVELS "كلية التربية كل الفرق", ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FACULTY OF PORTSAID, DIARIES OF EDUCATION FACULTIES OF EGYPT " كليات "يوميات تربية", "MANSOURA CLINICAL PHARMACY - THE 6TH –", مصر, "ULTRAS PHARMACY MANSSOURA UNIVERSITY", "FACULTY OF PHARMACY MANSOURA UNIVERSITY 2011", "MANSOURA MED-SCHOOL 54 CLASS", .ETC. THESE GROUPS TAKE IN STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT FACULTIES SUCH AS THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, ARTS, PHARMACY AND MEDICINE. SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUPS ACCEPTED TO SHARE THEIR CHATS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH. HOWEVER, THEY ASKED TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY. AFTER TAKING THE PERMISSION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUPS, 1000 FACEBOOK CHATS ARE RANDOMLY PICKED UP FROM THE DIFFERENT GROUPS FROM JANUARY 2017 TO AUGUST 2017.

TO CODE THE CHATS AS BEING HUMOROUS OR NON-HUMOROUS, THE HUMOUR IDENTIFICTION MARKERS PROPOSED BY ADAMS (2012) WERE APPLIED. ADAMS SPECIFIES FIVE MARKERS FOR HUMOUR IDENTIFICATION IN COMPUTER MEDIATED

COMMUNICATIONS. THESE INCLUDE THE USE OF PUNCTUATION MARKS, EMOTICONS, FARMATTING, LAUGHTER OR EXPLICIT EXPRESSIONS. IN ADDITION TO THESE MARKERS, "MEME", WHICH IS A CONCEPT, AN IDEA OR A PIECE OF MEDIA THAT IS CAPTURED FOR HUMOROUS PURPOSES, IS FOUND TO BE ONE OF THE MARKERS OF HUMOUR IN FACEBOOK COMMUNICATIONS (TAECHARUNGROJ &NUEANGJAMNONG, 2015). THUS, AFTER ANALYZING THE CHATS AND APPLYING THE HUMOUR MARKERS, THE CHATS WERE CODED AS HUMOROUS OR NON-HUMOROUS. THEN, THE HUMOROUS CHATS WERE DESCRIPTIVELY ANALYZED TO HELP ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.
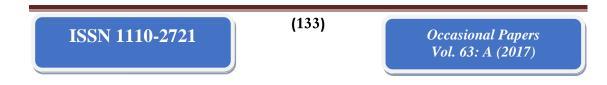
Analysis

The qualitative analysis of Facebook chats reveals that Egyptian University students employ the following strategies in their humorous chats.

I) Structrual strategies

Egyptian University students employ different types of structural strategies such as phonological, graphological, morphological, lexical and syntactic strategies. Examples of phonolgical strategies are presented below.

ex. 1: 'الصحاب في كل حتة لكن الجدعان خمسة ستة'
"Friends are everywhere but loyalists are five or six."

The words "everywhere /Kul Həta/", "five /khəmsa/" and "six /səta/" are rhyming, have the same final sounds, in the Egyptian dialect. The use of rhyme creates a sense of humour due to its surprising effect on the recipients.

ex. 2: 😀 'ههههههة انا السارح المارح ومنمتش م امبارح'

"I'm the distracted, jovial and I haven't slept since yesterday".

The words "distracted سارح/sarih/", "Jovial مارح /marih/", and "Yesterday امبارح/əmbarih/" have the same spelling in the Egyptian dialect, except in one letter. This is a type of phonological spoonerism which makes the utterance humorous.

ex. 3: 'كيدهن عظيم ياساااتر ، دا الشيطان يقولك استغفر الله العظيم'

"Oh my God, when women plot, the devil asks forgiveness."

The word "Oh my God ساااتر" has a change in its spelling by repeating the medial letter to reflect the stress that the speaker was subjected to by a woman who decieved him. This change in the spelling gives a humorous effect on the audience.

ex. 4: 'حد ياجماعة فكر مرة يرد او يجاوب على الصابون السائل؟'

"Oh people, has anyone tried to answer the liquid soap?"

In the Eyptian dialect, the word "liquid سائل /sa'il/" is homonymous to the phrase "the person who is asking سائل /sa'il/". So, this question could be understood as "oh people, has anyone tried to answer the asking soap?". This play of homonyms sheds a sense of humour.

Another example for the use of homonyms in facebook chats of the Egyptian University students could be detected in the following example:

ex. 5: لاتحزن اذا كنت غير مرتبط😔

ففي الكيمياء 🔬🧪

يسمى العنصر الغير مرتبط عنصر نبيل

"Don't be sad if you are single because, in Chemistry, the free element is called a noble element."

In this example, one can find a similarity between the word "noble" as a person from a high social rank and as a characteristic of the chemical element that stands free in the nature. The use of homonyms is a structrual mechanism that may arouse a sense of humor.

ex. 6: 'استني عشروميت سنه علي جمب

"Wait ten hundred years aside."

In this example, the Facebooker is exaggerating in expressing the number of years since noone can wait ten hunundred years. This exaggeration is conveyed through a neologism, "عشروميتten hundred". This is a new word that is not regularly used in the Egyptian dialect. The use of this neologism generates a humorous effect.

ex. 7: بقينا بنصحي مع الكتاكيت وننام مع البطابيط 😂😂😂

"We're getting up with chicks and sleeping with ducklings."

In the Egyptian dialect, there is an assonance between the words"chicks كتاكيت /kətaki:t/" and "ducklings بطابيط /bətabi:t/" as they have the same vowel sound. In this example, the Facebook poster renders her message with a musical and humorous effect.

II) Semantic strategies

Egyptian University students make use of semantic strategies such as contradiction. The following example clarifies the use of semantic contradiction by two Egyptian University students.

ex. 8: فتاة: بطبخ ربنا يستر بقى نفسي اعرف ذنب الفرخه ايه!!!!!!!
صديقة: بالراحة علي الفرخة دي بنت ناس
الفتاة: زمان نفسيتها منهارة في الفرن. بس ريحتها حلوة

"A young girl: I'm cooking. May Allah save us. I would like to know what the fault of this chicken is.
Her friend: Handle her gently, she has a family.
The girl: I think she is very depressed in the oven. But it smells good."

In this example, there are two types of contradiction. The first is referring to the chicken as a female human being who has a family. This utterance contradicts our knowledge of the language, i.e. the chicken cannot be referred to by using 'she' and 'her'. The second contradiction is saying that the chicken is depressed in the oven. In the oven, there is no feeling, and the chicken could not have a feeling of depression. This contradicts our knowledge of the world. This contradiction creates a sense of humour.

III) Pragmatic strategies

The facebook chats of Egyptian University students employ different types of pragmatic strategies to express humour. The following examples were identified.

ex. 9: الأم لوزارة التعليم العالي: هي الدراسة ها تبدأ امتي؟ أصل ابني صلاح مش قاعد علي بعضه عايز يحب ويتحب.

"A mother to the ministry of Higher Education: When will the University start? My son Salah isn't stable, he wants to love and be loved."

This utterance flouts the maxim of relevance, hence the purpose of going to University is to learn not to fall in love or to be loved.

Another example that clarifies the flouting of the maxim of relevance is expressed through a student's experience with a minibus driver.

ex. 10:راكب: هي الأجرة كام يا اسطي؟
السائق: سبعة جنيه
الراكب: لكن المحافظ قال ٥ جنيه
السائق: انزل اركب المحافظ

"Passenger: What is the fare, driver?
Driver: 7 pounds.
Passenger: But the governor has said 5 pounds only.
Driver: Get down and take the governor."

The driver's reply flouts the maxim of relevance. This is irrelevant to what is said by the passenger who expects a speech act about the price of the ticket. In addition to flouting the maxim of relevance, the driver uses some sort of word play "take the governor" instead of "take the minibus". The word play and flouting the maxim of relevance create a sense of humour.
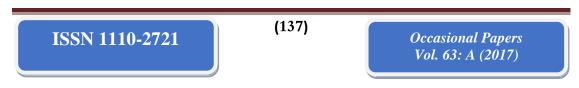
ex. 11:اللي ها يطفي المروحة عليا و انا نايم ها يلسعه عقرب ويعضه الثعبان ويكسر عظمه التمساح.

"A student says to his roommates: the person who turns off the fan while I'm sleeping, a scorpion will sting him/her, a snake will bite him/her and a crocodile will break his/her bones."

This person flouts the maxim of quality because what the speaker says is inadequate and could not be true. The speaker is not sincere in his threatening because noone could be stung by a scorpion, bit by a snake and had his bones broken by a crocodile for this trivial reason, which is turning off the fan. So the speaker blatantly fails to observe the maxim of quality and this creates a comic atmosphere.

Egyptian University students use also "hyperbole" to flout the maxim of quality to give a sense of humour.

ex. 12:طالب يقول لأصدقائه: عندي سؤال عميق من السماء الي الأرض!!!
"A student to his friends: I have a deep question that extends from the heaven to the earth!!!"

This student deliberately exaggerates in expressing the depth of his question. The use of hyperbole in this utterance sheds a humorous sense to the chat. Also, in order to increase the sense of humour, this utterance is supported by a graphological structrual mechanism which is the repetition of the exclamation mark.

An additional example that clarifies the extensive use of hyperbole in Facebook chats of Egyptian university students is shown in the following post.

13. ex.وبعد ألف سيلفي فاشل، نحن جميلون بطريقة لا يمكن للكاميرا التقاطها
"After a thousand unsuccessful selfies, we can say that we're so beautiful to the extent that the camera can't capture this beauty."

In this utterance, there is an exaggeration in expressing the number of unsuccessful selfies and the amount of beauty they expect to have. The Facbook poster attributes her failure in getting a beautiful selfie to her extreme beauty that the camera could not capture. This exaggeration gives a humorous impression.

14. ex: ....امتي ها نصلح حالنا؟
ليه بتحاولي دايما تغيري الواقع ليه مش بتحاولي تتعايشي معاه، بطلي تحطي نقط وحطي اختيارات.
"When will our life become better?
Why do you usually try to change the reality, try to cope with it. Also, stop adding dots (requiring specific answers) and give choices for your friends."

In this example, a female student is asking her friend a question that requires a specific and brief answer. However, the answer she got from one of her friends is flouting the maxim of quantity. The answer is more informative than required. Although the question of the girl is serious, the enlarged response gives a humorous sense to the chat.

ex. 15:ما هو الشيء الذي ننام عليه ونجلس فوقه ونغسل به اسناننا ؟

"What is the thing that we sleep on, sit on and wash our teeth with?"

To create a humorous effect, a female Egyptian University student flouts the maxim of manner by posing an ambiguous and obscure question. The respondents gave her variable answers; toothbrush, sofa, wood, trees and the hands. The answers to this question are not specific because the question is not clear and this creates a humorous effect.

ex. 16:طالب: عندي ليكي مفأجاه محصلتش
صديقته: اي هي
الطالب: ماهي محصلتش انتي غبيه

"A student to his girlfriend: I've, for you, a surprise that hasn't happened yet
The girlfriend: what is it?
The student: Are you stupid? I've just said it hasn't happened yet."

In this example, the positive face of the girlfriend is threatened. Her desire to be praised and accepted as a member of a group is endangered. Instead of being praised, the girlfriend is insulted of being stupid. So, this example is considered a violation of the politeness principles.

ex. 17:طالب: أنا دلوقتي بحب واحدة ومش عارف أقولها ازاي

صديقته: قولها علي طول انك بتحبها

الطالب: طب أنا بحبك

الصديقة: وانا كمان بحبك يلا رووح قول لها

الطالب: أنا لسة قايلها حالا

الصديقة: كويس وهي قالت لك ايه؟ وردت ايه؟

"A young man is chatting with his beloved who doesn't know that she is the intended person.
student: Now, I love a girl and I don't know how to tell her.
girlfriend: Tell her directly that you love her.
student: Then, I love you.

girlfriend: Ok I love you too, but go to your beloved and tell her.
student: I've just told her
girlfriend: Good, what has she told you? She loves you or not?"

This situation is an example for the implicature of conversational. The speaker uses implicitness to express the intention behind his speech act which is expressing love to his girlfriend. This confuses the girlfriend who fails to get the conversational implicature. She could not get that the speaker means her not any other girl. Her failure to get the implicature makes the conversation humorous.

The quantitative analysis of the Facebook chats of the Egyptian University students reveals that 60% of the humorous utterances employ pragmatic strategies, while 30% of the utterances use structural strategies. It is also found that only 10% of the utterances utilize the semantic strategies. Additionally, the analysis of the chats manifests that 55% of the verbal humor is used by male students, while only 45% of the humor is used by female students.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the Facebook chats of Egyptian University students reveals that 40% of the chats employ verbal humor. Although the analyzed chats are taken from University groups that are created to be informative and serious, 40% of the chats are identified as humorous. This extensive use of the humor could be considered a relief from tension caused by the pressures of life. Laughter is a behavior that is triggered by Egyptian University students to release themselves from the negative energy resulting from repression and tension of life. Also, it helps them cope with difficult and ambiguous situations (Crawford, 1994). Another

reason for using humor by the students could be to increase the feeling of solidarity among group members or to display cleverness by posing a humorous joke or a story (Andrew, 2012).

The results indicate that Egyptian University students employ different types of linguistic strategies in their Facebook chats. However, pragmatic strategies are used more than semantic and structural strategies. the reason for that could be related to the communicative nature of language in general, and of the conversational language of Facebook chats in particular. It is easier for Facebook posters to flout the cooperative maxims or to violate the principles of politeness to create a humorous sense than to use semantic or structural devices, which depend on the deep understanding of the structure of the word or the structure of the sentence.

By analyzing Facebook chats of the Egyptian University students, it was found that male posters tend to use humor more than female posters. This result contradicts the results of Holmes and Schnurr (2014) and Crawford (2003). Holmes and Schnurr found out that women use humor to satire feminine behaviors and to challenge the restrictive gender norms in their communities. On the other hand, Crawford observes that gender has no effect on the use of humor. Both women and men use humor to express themselves as feminine women and masculine men. This contradiction between the results of the current study and the results of Holmes and Schnurr, and Crawford, could be attributed to the Egyptian culture which links between impoliteness and the use of humor. Girls find it impolite to use humor , especially in mixed groups. Girls may think that university groups should be serious, and it is inadequate to use humor in these groups. However, in girls' uni-groups like "Girls of the faculty of

Education "بنات تربية", girls tend to use humorous posts. So, the scarcity of using humor by female Egyptian University students may be related to embarrassment.

Conclusion

Egyptian University students use humour extensively in their Facebook chats. However, male students tend to use humour more than female students. The Egyptian students employ different types of linguistic strategies supported by non-verbal techniques in their humours posts. The variation of techniques creates a virality in the humorous posts. However, Egyptian students employ pragmatic strategies more than any other mechanism.

Further Research

The current research is an attempt to identify the linguistic strategies used by Egyptian University students in their Facebook chats. The results of this research reveal that some linguistic strategies are used by the Egyptian University students more than other strategies. However, there could be a correlation between the linguistic mechanism used and the relationship between the interlocuters. So, an interesting future research project would be to study the correlation between the use of linguistic strategies and the relationship between interlocutors.

Another interesting topic for further research is to identify the linguistic strategies used to express humour by different age groups.

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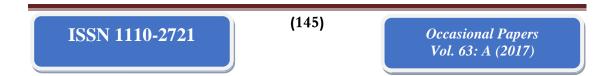
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