

## Violating Maxims, Preserving Harmony: Pragmatic Strategies in Arabic Humor on Instagram Reels

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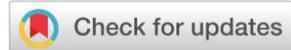
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### ABSTRACT

*Humor plays a vital role in human communication, serving complex social functions, especially within the Arab cultural context. This study aims to analyze the pragmatic aspects of Arabic humor by examining violations of cooperative principles and politeness strategies found in humorous dialogues. It focuses on pragmatic analysis based on Grice's cooperative principle and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. These theoretical frameworks are particularly relevant to Arabic humor given the culture's strong emphasis on indirect communication and face-saving practices in social interactions. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzes ten humorous dialogues from Instagram Reels shared by the user @taraef\_alarab. The study reveals that Arabic humor's effectiveness often lies in the intentional violation of the maxims of relation and quantity, along with the sophisticated use of politeness strategies to navigate sensitive situations, particularly within family and marital contexts. These findings confirm that humor serves as a social mechanism, allowing for the discussion of sensitive topics in a culturally acceptable manner. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the pragmatic role of humor in intercultural communication and provides an analytical framework for studying humor within the Arab socio-cultural context.*

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### 1. Introduction

Humor cannot be removed from human life because it is one of the typical aspects of human behavior (Abdul Hamid, 2003, p. 7). Bremmer and Roodenburg (1997, p. 1) define humor as "any message—transmitted in action, speech, writing, images, or music—intended to produce a smile or a laugh." Humor is essential for social interaction, fostering a lighter atmosphere and strengthening personal relationships.

In the Arab world, humor has become an integral element of popular culture, comparable to other cultural touchstones such as football, movies, and tea (Stewart, 2015, p. 224; Dalyan et al., 2022; Sahib & Rahman, 2021; Kaharuddin et al., 2024). Humor often serves to convey social and cultural messages that reflect societal values and norms (Suma et al., 2024; Karubaba et al., 2024; Dalyan et al., 2024). With the development of social media, the way people share and consume humor in Arab culture has evolved significantly. Instagram, with its 2.4 billion global active users in 2024 (How Many Users on Instagram?, n.d.), has become a leading platform for sharing humorous content through its reel feature. The account @taraef\_alarab (طرائف العرب/Tarā'ifu al-'Arab), which means Arab jokes, has amassed over 197 thousand followers with 333 posts as of November 24, 2024. The uniqueness of Arabic humor in this account lies in its linguistic and socio-pragmatic complexity, which not only serves as entertainment but also reflects the social dynamics and values of contemporary Arab society.

Research on humor in the Arabic context has attracted the attention of many researchers. In the context of social media and digital content, Al-Sawaeer et al. (2022) examined verbal humor in the Jordanian comedy show N2O, finding that comedians often violate the maxims of quantity and quality to create humor through satire, puns, and hyperbole. In line with this, Tsani et al. (2024) analyzed violations of the cooperative principle in verbal humor in short films on the YouTube channel Arab Podcasts, identifying the most significant violations of the maxims of quality and relevance (33.33%), with misunderstanding as the dominant type of humor. In the context of animated content, KR (2022) found 11 violations of the cooperative principle in the video "Green Burger" on YouTube Egyptoon, with the most violations of the principle of manner.

From the perspective of the function of humor in Arabic literature, Nurbaidah and Wijana (2023) analyzed the function of humor in classical Arabic literature, identifying three main functions: solidarity (40.59%), power (18.81%) and psychological (40.59%). Chafidzoh (2020) provides an interesting perspective on the use of humor as a diplomatic strategy in classical Arabic texts, showing how humor can be used as a tool for negotiating social status. In a more contemporary context, Hatab (2016) examines the use of political humor during the Arab Spring, demonstrating how humor functions as a tool for social and political critique. The linguistic aspects of Arabic humor also receive special attention. Wahyuni and Setiawan (2024) studied conversational implicatures in the dialogue of the Comedy Serial Film 'Arab Maklum', showing how context and listener response influence the interpretation of humor, especially in the use of uncommon Arabic terms.

Further research by Hider and Al-Abbas (2023) provides valuable insights into how Arabic humor manifests during times of social crisis. Analyzing 1,424 jokes collected from Facebook and WhatsApp during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hider's study revealed that gender-related humor dominated social media discourse, with women being the primary subject of stereotypical representations. The study identified four main thematic categories in gender-related jokes: marital relations (33%), habits and attributes (26%), beauty and makeup (23%), and violence (18%). These findings suggest that social media humor serves as a mirror reflecting deeper societal attitudes and stereotypes within Arab culture.

Similarly, Hambuch et al.'s (2024) analysis of Emirati digital content demonstrates how humor functions as a strategic tool for addressing sensitive social topics, particularly in the context of marriage and family relationships. The study emphasizes that the effectiveness of humor varies across different digital formats, with less text-based presentations generating greater audience engagement and emotional relief.

However, there remains a significant research gap in the context of Instagram Reels, which has unique characteristics as a medium for delivering contemporary humor. Initial analysis of @taraef\_alArab's content reveals communication patterns that intentionally violate conversational rules to create humor through ambiguity, implicature, and violation of politeness norms.

This study aims to identify and analyze the pragmatic aspects that arise in Arabic humor, focusing on violations of conversational maxims, politeness strategies, and their socio-cultural implications. Additionally, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of how humor serves as a means to express and navigate the complexities of interpersonal relationships within Arab societies. This question becomes particularly relevant considering that contemporary Arab humor on social media must balance the demands of humor with the sensitivity of Arab society's socio-cultural norms.

To analyze these phenomena, this study employs a pragmatic theoretical framework combining Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. This framework aligns with Hoicka's view that "context and intentions are important in understanding utterances, above and beyond literal meaning alone" (Hoicka, 2014, p. 219).

Grice's Cooperative Principle is a fundamental foundation in the study of pragmatics that explains how communication participants interact with each other to achieve mutual understanding. This principle consists of four main maxims (rules) (Grice, 1975, pp. 45–46): 1) Maxim of quantity: provide enough information, no less, no more than necessary. 2) Maxim of quality: provide truthful information. Do not say something you believe to be false or without sufficient evidence. 3) Maxim of relation: make a contribution relevant to the discussion topic. 4) Maxim of manner: be clear, concise, and organized; avoid ambiguity.

In humor, violation of the maxims in this principle is the primary mechanism that produces the humorous effect, as stated by Raskin (1984, pp. 100–102) and Attardo (1994, p. 271, 2020, p. 174). Humor is often created through deliberate violation of the maxim of quantity (by providing too much or too little information), the maxim of quality (by stating something untrue or exaggerating), the maxim of relation (by making a deliberately irrelevant statement), or the maxim of manner (by using ambiguity or vagueness). When done intentionally and creatively, these violations create incongruity, a key element in building humor (Eagleton, 2019, p. 67).

Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory emphasizes the concept of 'face' as a fundamental aspect of social interaction, which is divided into positive face (the need to be appreciated and maintain self-image) and negative face (the right to act freely without coercion) (Black, 2011, p. 154). In the context of humor, according to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 124), jokes not only function as positive politeness strategies that build togetherness and solidarity but can also be used to exploit politeness strategies to redefine the level of threat to face (Face-Threatening Act / FTA). The interaction between politeness strategies and the creation of humorous effects shows a complex dynamic, where humor often involves actions that have the potential to threaten face (Face Threatening Acts / FTA) (Zajdman, 1995, p. 326).

By combining these theoretical frameworks, this study seeks to identify and analyze the pragmatic aspects of Arabic humor on social media, focusing on conversational maxims, politeness strategies, and their socio-cultural implications. The results are expected to enrich pragmatic studies in the context of Arabic humor and provide insights into humor's role in intercultural communication and social conflict resolution. Understanding these pragmatic mechanisms will enhance our comprehension of how Arab society utilizes humor as an effective communication tool across various social contexts.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with pragmatic analysis to examine Arabic humor in Instagram Reels @taraef\_alarab. The research data are in the form of 10 humorous dialogues taken on November 8, 2024, covering the upload period from October 2022 to October 2023. Data was collected through documentation techniques by downloading, transcribing, and translating content in humorous dialogues between characters such as husband and wife and sheikh and questioner. The sample was selected purposively to ensure the diversity of humor contexts.

Data analysis was carried out in three stages: (1) identifying violations of Grice's cooperative principle, which includes the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner; (2) analyzing Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies, which include aspects of the positive and negative face; and (3) In the final stage of analysis, the study will incorporate cultural insights from existing literature on Arabic humor and cultural norms to contextualize how humor functions within contemporary Arab society. By examining relevant cultural references and their implications, the research aims to interpret the relationship between violations of conversational maxims and politeness strategies within the cultural context of the target community.

## 3. Result and Discussions

This section discusses the results of humor analysis collected from Instagram Reels @taraef\_alarab, focusing on violations of Grice's cooperative principle and the application of politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson's theory. Each dialogue is analyzed to reveal how humor is used as an effective communication tool in conveying messages, often involving specific cultural and social contexts.

### Data 1

Table 1. Humor Data 1

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Man: How do I know my faults?	الرجل: كيف أعرف عيوبي؟؟
Sheikh: Tell your wife one of her faults, and she will tell you all your faults and those of your family, friends, and neighbors.	الشيخ: اخبر جوزتك باحد عيوبها وستخبرك بكل عيوبك وعيوب أهلك وأصحابك وجيرانك.

The dialogue in humor data 01 involves two characters: a man who seeks a way to discover his shortcomings and a sheikh who gives a humorous answer. The sheikh's answer indicates a violation of several Gricean maxims, namely the maxims of relation and quantity.

The maxim of relation is violated because, rather than offering direct advice about self-reflection, the sheikh presents a non-serious yet entertaining solution that indirectly portrays the wife as a critical figure. This humor emphasizes that in many cultural contexts, particularly within marriages, couples tend to be more aware of and honest about each other's shortcomings than they are with others. This violation is intentional; it highlights the intimacy and openness that often characterize marital relationships, thereby adding a humorous dimension to the discussion.

In terms of the maxim of quantity, the provided answer is hyperbolic. Instead of listing just one or two shortcomings, it refers to an exhaustive list that includes all the flaws of the husband, along with those of his family and neighbors. This hyperbole serves as an effective comedic device, creating humor by exaggerating a wife's reaction to criticism. It highlights a cultural stereotype that suggests that even minor criticism can lead to an overwhelming response filled with complaints.

Politeness strategies play a significant role in this type of humor. Positive politeness is demonstrated through references to commonly understood experiences in marital relationships, celebrating open communication even within a joking context. Conversely, there is an implicit use of negative politeness, which respects the boundaries surrounding the discussion of one's imperfections in an entertaining yet non-offensive manner.

This humor assumes a shared understanding of domestic life in the Arab cultural context, where the wife's role, particularly in relation to domestic criticism, is familiar and relatable. In this context, an Arab man is recognized as the head of the family, wielding overt influence, while his wife operates within a defined but often behind-the-scenes sphere. Although Arab women may publicly show deference to their husbands, this may not always be the case in private (Nydell, 2012, p. 65).

The stereotype that Arab women are talkative (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022, p. 182) often plays into this dynamic, suggesting that while they may appear submissive in public, they possess a wealth of opinions and insights that they express in more private settings. This stereotype can be seen as both a reflection of and a challenge to traditional gender roles, as it highlights the complexity of women's voices within the household. Therefore, the success of this humor relies on the audience's ability to grasp the implicit meanings and appreciate the hyperbolic portrayals due to their familiarity with the depicted social dynamics.

This analysis illustrates how pragmatic maxims can be manipulated in humor to convey social satire in a way that is both evocative and amusing while still maintaining social solidarity.

## Data 2

Table 2. Humor Data 2

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Man: What is the fastest substance to evaporate?	الرجل: ما هي اسرع مادة تتبخر؟
Sheikh: Your salary if your wife saw it	الشيخ: راتبك اذا شافته زوجته

In this humor data, the dialogue between a man and a sheikh is again used as a tool to convey a humorous message that is full of pragmatic implications. The sheikh responds to the man's question about "what is the fastest evaporated material" with an unconventional and surprising answer: "Your salary when seen by your wife." This answer violates the maxims of relation and quality in Grice's Cooperative Principle, which is the source of humor in this conversation.

The maxim of relation is violated because the answer is entirely inconsistent with the initial question's scientific context, which might refer to chemical elements or compounds. Instead, the sheikh offers an unexpected social perspective, referring to everyday phenomena many couples face. This violation of the maxim of relation creates surprise and, therefore, becomes effective humor material. In addition, a violation of the maxim of quality is also seen here because the answer states something that is not literally true. However, this is done intentionally to create a humorous effect.

The politeness strategy in this context reflects positive politeness, where the sheikh establishes a familiar and intimate emotional connection with the audience by referencing shared experiences in household financial management. The phenomenon of "salary evaporation," particularly when responding to family needs as arranged by the wife, serves as a hyperbolic metaphor. This not only provides entertainment but also resonates with domestic realities.

Negative politeness is also implicitly present, as the discussion touches on a potentially sensitive subject—household financial expenditures—yet approaches it in a light and inoffensive manner, emphasizing humor over criticism. This humor effectively plays on social stereotypes regarding gender roles in managing family finances, which are widely recognized in more conservative cultural contexts.

Consequently, this humor is designed to be readily acceptable and understandable to an audience that shares similar values, drawing on a shared perception of financial dynamics within marriage. Its effectiveness stems from the amusing implication of how quickly a salary can "evaporate" when handled by the wife, offering an entertaining perspective on household spending habits. This humor also plays into the stereotype of materialistic Arab women, who are often portrayed as being overly concerned with wealth and material possessions (Allam, 2008, p. 3; Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022, p. 182). By exaggerating this stereotype, the humor highlights societal expectations and assumptions about women's roles in managing finances, while simultaneously inviting the audience to reflect on the realities of financial negotiations within their own households.

This analysis highlights humor's capacity to address both social and personal nuances simultaneously while maintaining universal appeal through commonly understood experiences.

Data 3

Table 3. Humor Data 3

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Man: How can I sleep easily?	الرجل: كيف انام بسهولة؟
Sheikh: When it's time to sleep, put all the problems outside the house and sleep peacefully.	الشيخ: عندما يحين موعد النوم ضع جميع المشاكل خارج البيت ونام بهدوووو.
Man: But is it permissible for me to let my wife sleep outside the house?	الرجل: ولكن هل يجوز ان اترك زوجتي تنام خارج البيت؟

The humor in this data utilizes wordplay and maxim violations to produce a comedic effect, which also has interesting pragmatic implications. The dialogue begins with a man asking about how to sleep easily, and the sheikh gives advice that literally frames the issue as something simple: to put all problems outside the house before going to bed. The man's subsequent response, attributing the "problem" to his wife, not only violates the maxims of relation and quality but also illustrates the social dynamics codified in marital humor.

The maxim of relation is violated when the sheikh's advice, intended as metaphorical advice to ease worries, is humorously articulated by the man in an extreme and literal way. By referring to his wife as the "problem" to be put outside the house, the humor shifts abruptly from wise advice to potentially offensive remarks intended as humor. The man's response to the sheikh's advice is a deliberate violation to create the effect of surprise and laughter, inviting the audience to re-examine the literal and figurative meanings in a single context.

The politeness strategy at play in this dialogue revolves around negative politeness, where using the term "problem" as a substitute for wife is a way to discuss the daily stressors of marriage without directly naming the complaint. This humor can express temporary frustrations or realities of life with a partner in a non-threatening and friendly tone. Negative politeness enables participants in communication, as well as the audience, to appreciate and enjoy humor while preserving existing social relationships; this is particularly important in a family context, where the quality of communication is crucial, since a lack of effective communication between partners can lead to conflicts (Mulyo et al., 2023, p. 126).

Culturally, this humor echoes the reality of many relationships where the simplicity of dealing with problems is often accompanied by emotional complexity. In Arab culture, the women/ wives are often stereotyped as the source of the problems that can cause their husbands significant disturbance, reinforcing the notion that they are often the source of domestic tension (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022, p. 182). This humor distorts common perceptions of how 'problems' should be treated and to what extent one should consider significant figures in their lives to be part of the problem. The effectiveness of this humor relies heavily on the audience's ability to read the meaning behind the words, celebrating the absurdity of the literal claim while enjoying the implied social critique of household dynamics.

Data 4

Table 4. Humor Data 4

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Sheikh: Why are you so sad?	الشيخ: لماذا انت حزين هكذا؟
Man: The girl I loved got married.	الرجل: الفتاة التي احببتها تجوزت.
Sheikh: Didn't you tell her that your father is wealthy?	الشيخ: ألم تخبرها بأن أبوك غني؟؟
Man: I told her, and now she married my father.	الرجل: أخبرتها وهي الآن تجوزت أبي.

In this humorous example, pragmatic strategies are sophisticatedly used to produce a comedic effect through a dialogue between a sheikh and a distressed man. Violations of the maxims of relation and quality in Grice's Cooperative Principle are central to creating this humor. When the man expresses his sadness that the woman he loves has married

someone else, the sheikh's calculating response by asking whether the man has told him about his father's wealth forms the basis of the witty humor.

On the one hand, the sheikh offers a pragmatically materialistic and humorous solution, suggesting that mentioning 'wealth' might turn things around. This is where the maxim of relation is violated because the solution offered is not directly relevant to the initial emotional problem faced by the man but instead highlights the materialistic side of the relationship. The man's response, saying that after revealing her father's wealth, the woman had married his father instead, plays on the violations of the literal and quality benchmarks in a way that enhances the comedic element.

This interaction's politeness strategies can be understood as positive and negative politeness. Here, by giving ironic advice, the sheikh creates closeness through a shared understanding of particular social dynamics, such as the influence of wealth on relationship decisions. Negative politeness occurs when the interaction discusses potentially sensitive issues—such as unrequited love and materialism—in a humorous rather than insulting way.

The humor in this conversation revolves around social stereotypes and materialism in relationships. Stereotypes continue to be shaped by traditional values that assess men based on their income and economic capabilities, while women are evaluated according to their reproductive and domestic roles (El Harras et al., 2024, p. 80). By introducing wealth as a potential factor in a marital relationship, the humor highlights the tendency to measure relationship value by material possessions.

This reflects the stereotype of Arab women as materialistic or "gold diggers," (Allam, 2008, p. 3; Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022, p. 182) where their motivations for marriage are often perceived to be driven by financial gain rather than genuine affection. Additionally, the punchline reveals that the woman ultimately marries her father, which serves as a surprising twist. This adds a layer of sarcastic humor, commenting on the hidden agendas and unexpected outcomes that can arise from materialistic viewpoints. By exaggerating these stereotypes, the humor critiques the societal tendency to equate love and commitment with financial status, inviting the audience to reflect on the absurdity of such assumptions in relationships.

The surprise of the change in relationship dynamics—where the woman chooses to marry the man's wealthy father over the man himself—provides a laugh that entertains and allows the audience to reflect on how material things often take unexpected priority in personal relationships. The effectiveness of this humor relies heavily on the audience's cultural and social knowledge that has internalized these norms, making it a reflective comedy about social and personal values.

## Data 5

Table 5. Humor Data 5

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: Do you see me in your dreams?	الزوجة: هل تراني بالحلم؟
Husband: No. I recite the <i>Mu'awwidhat</i> before sleeping.	الزوج: لا. فانا اقرأ المعوذات قبل النوم

In this dialogue, there is a pragmatic play involving violations of maxims and strategies of politeness, creating a comedic effect through the interaction between the wife and husband. The wife's question asking whether her husband saw her in his dream alludes to romanticism and caring, often associated with deep feelings or love. The explicit expectation of the question may be confirmation or an expression of affection from the husband.

However, the husband's response that he did not see his wife in his dream because he recited a protective prayer (in this case, "المعوذات", a protection surah in Islam) before going to bed produces unexpected humor. This response violates the maxims of relation and quality; rather than answering in an emotional context, the husband takes a literal and spiritual approach. This response suggests that by reciting the protection verse, he is protecting himself from the bad things in the dream, humorously depicting the presence of his wife as a kind of threat that needs to be prevented.

The politeness strategy in this dialogue leans more toward negative politeness. The husband's response seems to avoid the emotional commitment suggested by the initial question. By using humor, the husband takes an indirect approach to addressing the sensitive topics of feelings and attraction, thereby minimizing the potential tension that could result from a more serious answer.

The humor also explores social and cultural aspects of dream interpretation and the significance of reciting protective prayers in Islamic tradition. By mentioning the practice of reciting prayers before bed, the husband introduces a

widely recognized cultural and religious element, which adds depth to the comedy. The amusing response to the inappropriate context of a religious ritual reveals the mismatch between social expectations and spiritual practicality.

Through the conflicting elements of the wife's desire for affection and the husband's focus on spiritual protection, the humor delves into the dynamics of a relationship in a universally relatable context. Its effectiveness relies on the audience's understanding of the cultural connotations and emotional nuances underlying the dialogue, ultimately eliciting laughter from the clever and unexpected twist in expectations.

#### Data 6

Table 6. Humor Data 6

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: Yesterday I dreamt that you bought me a gold bracelet. Husband: How generous I am. Wear it in your next dream.	الزوجة: لقد حلمت بالأمس بأنك استريت لي سوار ذهبي الزوج: كم انا كريم. ارتدى في حلمك القادم

This humor has a rich interaction with interesting pragmatic nuances and interpersonal dynamics explored through dialogue between a wife and a husband. The conversation begins with the wife stating that she dreamed about her husband buying her a gold bracelet—a symbol often associated with affection and generosity. The statement may imply a hope or desire for it to be realized in reality.

The husband's response, "How generous of me, wear it in your next dream," violates the maxims of relation and quality. Rather than providing a realistic or loving response about the possibility of the dream coming true, the husband responds in a way that indicates treating the dream event as final enough—as if the dream itself had fulfilled his desire. This response directs the humor by presenting a contrast between the wife's hopes for the dream and the husband's practical attitude regarding the dream as a place where it remains.

From a politeness strategy perspective, there is an element of negative politeness, where the husband avoids potential financial or emotional obligations by using humor to defuse the expectations that might arise from the woman's statement. This response avoids the immediate conflict that might arise from these expectations while channeling the interaction into a lighter, more entertaining channel.

This humor illustrates the dynamics of relationships and the material expectations couples have of each other. The stereotype that gifts, especially jewelry, are proof of love is playfully mocked through absurd humor found in dreams. In this dialogue, the husband uses humor to acknowledge his wife's dreams while also setting practical boundaries regarding reality and expectations. This dynamic is further complicated by the traditional role of the husband as the breadwinner in Arab and Middle Eastern culture, where financial provision is often seen as a primary responsibility (Barakat, 2021, pp. 42–44; Jad et al., 2024, p. 139). This expectation places pressure on husbands to meet their wives' material desires, reinforcing the stereotype that love is demonstrated through financial means. The notion that dreams can serve as a space to fulfill these desires adds an element of absurdity and humor to the conversation, prompting the audience to laugh at this unconventional perspective.

This humor's effectiveness comes mainly from the audience's ability to understand the connotations of this relationship, where gift-giving is often equated with love and care. By taking the cooperative maxims in unexpected directions and injecting humor into the expected situation, this dialogue elicits laughter while reflecting the irony of the material expectations of interpersonal relationships.

#### Data 7

Table 7. Humor Data 7

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: My husband talks while he is asleep at night. What should I do? Sheikh: Give him a chance to talk during the day	الزوجة: زوجي يتكلم وهو نائم في الليل. ماذا افعل؟ الشيخ: اعطيه فرصة ليتكلم في النهار

The humor in this conversation involves clever, pragmatic play, with the use of flouted maxims and politeness strategies aimed at generating a comedic point. The dialogue begins with a woman complaining that her husband talks in his sleep at night, which could be interpreted as a question seeking a practical solution or advice.

The sheikh's response, suggesting that she allows her husband to talk during the day, flouts the maxim of relation and adds a comedic element through the use of irony. The suggestion implies that her husband may not have enough opportunities to express his thoughts while awake and instead must do so in his sleep. The sheik's advice leads to an unexpected assumption and presents a humorous, yet impractical, solution that is clearly irrelevant to the woman's actual problem.

Furthermore, this response could be interpreted as flouting the maxim of quantity in that this simple but nuanced answer displaces the complexity of real solutions that might be needed to address the underlying problem. This humor extrapolates the idea that communication in marriage—more specifically, the opportunities and time that should be spent communicating—can improve a couple's relationship.

Regarding politeness strategies, the response emphasizes positive politeness, creating bonds through shared experiences in the context of marriage, and humorously portraying situations of managing communication within the household. Shifting the nighttime problem to a daytime opportunity also indirectly invites the couple to be more open and communicative in everyday life. This humor stems from the social and psychological reality that poor communication often poses challenges in relationships (El Harras et al., 2024, p. 119; Mulyo et al., 2023, p. 126).

The sheikh uses humor to suggest that the solution might be simpler than expected, emphasizing the importance of allowing opportunities for everyday expression and communication in relationships. The effectiveness of this humor depends on the audience being familiar with the dynamics of the relationship, parodying the need to create adequate communication space in the couple's life, and drawing on this shared experience to generate laughter.

#### Data 8

Table 8. Humor Data 8

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: I wish I had married the devil and not you.	الزوجة: يا ليتني تزوجت إبليس ولا تزوجتك. الزوج: لا يجوز زواج الاخ من اخته
Husband: It is not permissible for a brother to marry his sister.	

The humor in this dialogue uses clever wordplay and pragmatic violations, producing a comedic effect through the biting exchange between the wife and husband. The wife expresses extreme regret by stating that she would rather marry the Devil than her current husband. This statement is hyperbolic and emotional, intended to convey deep dissatisfaction dramatically.

The husband's response, stating that "it is not lawful to marry a brother to his sister," plays on the violation of the maxims of relation and quality in a deliberately distorted manner to elicit laughter. The husband refers to the sibling's relationship with the Devil, sharply implying that the wife is the same as the Devil himself or shares his qualities. The man's response changes the context from the original complaint to sharp sarcasm, which relies on the opposite of conversational expectations: it not only dismisses the complaint but also mocks it.

The politeness strategies at play here can be both positive and negative. While the husband's response is sarcastic and could be seen as contentious, it creates an unexpected alternative reality that entertains the audience. This humor indirectly addresses dissatisfaction in the relationship, diffusing potentially heated emotions by transforming them into wordplay.

Culturally, the humor is rooted in existing stereotypes about the challenging dynamics of marriage and dissatisfaction in couples, bringing an element of familiarity that many in long-term relationships can relate to. By framing the response in terms of 'brother versus sister,' the humor takes the extreme conception of marital dissatisfaction into the realm of the ridiculous, presenting an approach to humor that can ease tensions in relationships through sharp satire. This function of humor is in line with the findings of Hambuch et al. (2024, p. 192), who state that "humor is a preferred mode to represent marriage in a variety of creative genres because of its capability to provide symbolic relief, and because of its ability to disguise the discussion of sensitive topics."

The effectiveness of this humor relies on the audience being able to see through the hyperbole and sarcasm contained within it and recognizing the deliberate logical fallacy between human relationships and allegorical entities such as the Devil. By adopting such an extreme and unexpected perspective, the humor creates space for laughter that releases emotional stress while encouraging reflection on the realities of relationships in everyday married life.

**Data 9**

**Table 9. Humor Data 9**

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: Our neighbor loves his wife very much. He kisses her when he goes out in the morning. Why don't you do the same?	الزوجة: إن جارنا شديد الحب لزوجته. فهو يقبلها عند خروجه في الصباح. فلماذا لا تفعل مثله؟ الرجل: ولكنني لم اعرف زوجته
Man: But I didn't know his wife.	

The humor in this conversation comes from wordplay and pragmatic violations that produce a comedic effect through the dialogue between the wife and husband. The wife compares her husband to their neighbor, who shows his affection for his wife every morning by kissing her before leaving. The standard expectation of this statement might be an implicit desire for her husband to do the same as an expression of love and concern.

However, the husband's response that he does not know his neighbor's wife violates the maxim of relation as a primary strategy for creating humor. Rather than responding in terms of the emotional expectations established by the woman, the husband turns the point around with a surprising and humorous literal interpretation. By saying that he does not know his neighbor's wife—who is literally a stranger to him—, he humorously makes a seemingly irrelevant but intentionally distorted response to elicit laughter.

The politeness strategy in this dialogue leans toward negative politeness, where the husband avoids confronting the emotional demands that may have been implied in his wife's initial comparison. Instead of directly rejecting or addressing her expectations, he uses humor to shift the conversation into a lighter, less tense atmosphere. This approach allows him to indirectly reject his wife's implicit criticism while still maintaining a pleasant interaction.

Culturally, this humor is well known in relationship dynamics where social or neighborly comparisons are often a source of hope or dissatisfaction. By creating humor by twisting the meaning of the wife's statements, this exchange parodies the phenomenon of comparison in relationships, suggesting that it can sometimes be taken in a very literal and absurd direction. This humor also plays into the stereotype of Arab women as being easily jealous (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022, p. 182), where such comparisons can lead to feelings of inadequacy or insecurity. The portrayal of the wife's exaggerated reactions to these comparisons highlights the societal expectation that women should be constantly aware of their standing relative to others, often leading to humorous yet relatable situations. By exaggerating this jealousy, the humor not only entertains but also critiques the pressures placed on women to conform to societal standards of comparison and competition within their social circles.

The effectiveness of this humor depends mainly on the audience's understanding of the connotations of expectations in relationships and the ironic use of the relational maxim. By depicting a familiar situation from a wholly reversed perspective, this humor invites the audience to laugh at the absurdity of comparing a relationship to someone else's standards while also facilitating a lighthearted reflection on everyday domestic dynamics.

**Data 10**

**Table 10. Humor Data 10**

Translation	Dialogue Transcript
Wife: What if a hyena attacks me and my mother, who would you rescue?	الزوجة: لو هجم ضبع علي وعلى أمي من تساعد فينا؟
Husband: The hyena	الزوج: الضبع

In this data, the conversation features a pragmatic game that relies on sharp irony and maxim violation to create comedic effect. The wife's question asking whom her husband would help, her or her mother if attacked by a hyena,

suggests a serious moral dilemma. Normatively, this would be expected to be a question that tests the husband's loyalty or courage in a critical situation.

However, the husband's short and unexpected response—choosing to help the hyena—violates the maxim of relation in a dramatic way, deliberately turning expectations into a joke. By implicitly suggesting that the hyena is more in need of help, the man provides an answer that is clearly irrational and impossible from a moral or practical perspective. The man's answer creates a humorous effect through surprise and absurdity, as the response is so different from the usual expectation and highlights an entirely different way of viewing the hypothetical situation.

The politeness strategy in this dialogue can be considered a form of negative politeness. In it, the husband defuses the pressure of a potentially sensitive hypothetical question by using humor to deflect the discussion from any possible emotional angle. By giving a completely unconventional answer, he avoids choosing between two people close to him, avoiding the potential conflict or discomfort that could have occurred if he had given a serious answer.

Humor in this context also touches on dilemmas in family and romantic relationships, where complex demands or questions can sometimes arise. Responding to these situations with humor allows for engaging serious themes such as responsibility and love preferences in a light and entertaining way. This aligns with the findings of Butzer and Kuiper (2008, pp. 255–256), who stated that "although humor is often used positively in romantic relationships to increase closeness and ease tension, individuals do occasionally use humor to change the topic of conversation or to put their partners down." This duality of humor highlights its multifaceted role in relationships, where it can serve both as a tool for fostering intimacy and as a means of deflecting difficult discussions or undermining a partner, reflecting the complexities of interpersonal dynamics.

The effectiveness of this humor depends on the audience's ability to pick up on the irony and understand the use of hyperbole in a context that would be entirely out of the question in a serious discussion. By subverting expectations and providing unconventional solutions to dilemmas, this conversation opens up space for laughter that circulates irony about the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the imaginary limits of hypothetical situations in everyday relationships.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate relationship between humor and communication within Arab society by analyzing ten humorous dialogues from Instagram reels. It highlights how the violation of conversational maxims, along with the strategic use of politeness, serves as a primary vehicle for conveying humor, particularly in sensitive discussions surrounding family and marriage. The findings reinforce the notion that humor operates not merely as entertainment but as a crucial social tool for addressing communication challenges.

While this research contributes valuable insights to the field of intercultural communication, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The focus on a specific cultural context and the brevity of the dialogues restrict the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should aim to explore a broader range of cultural environments and media formats to understand humor's complexities better. Additionally, investigating the long-term impacts of humor on interpersonal relationships and social perceptions may reveal further nuances in its role in fostering social connections. This multifaceted approach will enhance our comprehension of humor's pragmatic functions across different contexts, enriching the discourse on human interaction and communication.

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