

A Linguistic Analysis of Humor Related to COVID-19 in Jordanians Hashtags

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Abstract

This study explores Jordanians' hashtags related to COVID-19 that aim at creating a sense of humor on Facebook. To achieve the aim of this research, a sample was collected randomly from the Facebook posts based on four popular hashtags that had been widely used among Jordanian society since the outbreak of COVID-19 until the present day. The hashtags selected for this study are "all humanity," "dried and died," "bats' Sajiye" and "I will let my father interfere". The results of the study reveal that Jordanians mostly use these hashtags to create humor rather than to convey news stories. The results also show that Jordanians commonly use two types of humor: language-based and reference-based. In the first type, they use linguistic devices that include phonological, syntactic, and semantic aspects. In contrast, in reference-based humor, some cultural and religious references were employed.

Keywords: Hashtags; humor; pandemic; COVID-19, linguistic humor.

تحليل لغوي للفكاهة المتعلقة بكوفيد 19 في الوسوم الأردنية

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الوسوم الشائعة لدى الأردنيين المتعلقة بـ COVID-19، التي تهدف إلى خلق الفكاهة على موقع التواصل الاجتماعي الفيسبوك. ولتحقيق هدف هذا البحث جُمعت عينة عشوائية من منشورات فيسبوك بناءً على أربعة وسوم شائعة استخدمت على نطاق واسع في المجتمع الأردني منذ تفشي فيروس كورونا حتى يومنا هذا. الوسوم التي جرى اختيارها لأغراض هذه الدراسة هي "الإنسانية جمعاء" و "نشف ومات" و "صاحبة خفافيش" و "خلي بابا يتدخل". تكشف نتائج الدراسة أن الأردنيين يستخدمون في الغالب هذه الوسوم لخلق روح الفكاهة بدلاً من نقل الأخبار، كما تظهر النتائج أن الأردنيين يستخدمون نوعين من الفكاهة: القائمة على اللغة والأخرى القائمة على المراجع. في النوع الأول يستخدم الأردنيون أدوات لغوية تشمل الجوانب الصوتية والنحوية والدلالية. في المقابل جرى توظيف بعض المراجع الثقافية والدينية في الفكاهة القائمة على المراجع. الكلمات الدالة: هاشتاج، فكاهة، جائحة، كوفيد 19.



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1. Introduction

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus that was discovered in China in December of 2019. It has been linked to severe acute respiratory complications. The COVID-19 virus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization after infecting a large number of people in many parts of the world. It spreads from person to person via contact with infected surfaces or people. Because the COVID-19 virus spreads easily from person to person, the only way to control it is to minimize human interactions. As a result, many governments imposed lockdowns and confinement measures to prevent the virus from spreading. COVID 19 was first reported in Jordan in March 2020, and Jordanians were advised to take precautionary measures to protect themselves.

Social media has played an essential role in impacting people's lives and world events, mainly Facebook. Facebook is primarily used to post things that engage people in their personal and social lives, and Jordanians are not an exception to this trend during COVID 19 (Hussein& Aljamili, 2020). However, notably, most Jordanians use Facebook posts to create humor among themselves using the hashtags that made an impact or contained a sense of humor. During lockdown and quarantine, many Jordanians found themselves lonely due to the minimized human interactions to prevent the pandemic from spreading further. The main aim of Jordanians in using the hashtags was not other than to create a sense of humor among their friends. The usage of humor spread across the society of Jordanians, as many people enjoyed using the hashtags that became common during the time of COVID 19.

Hashtags are being used more and more in various social media platforms to indicate that a piece of content is related to a specific topic or falls into a category. They help people find content on any platform and allow it to reach a wider audience. Hashtags encourage people to seek out content that piques their interest. Jordanians' hashtags had a sense of humor, so everyone wanted to use them to get into the game's circle (Hussein& Aljamili, 2020). Because most Jordanians were less active as a result of the COVID 19 containment measures put in place by the government to stop the virus's spread, they turned to Facebook to pass the time and keep up with what was going on in the rest of the world.

2.The Problem of the Study

With the global spread of the Covid-19 epidemic and all social media platforms preoccupied with discussing it, its risks and consequences, it has become necessary to conduct extensive research on how the epidemic is reflected on social media. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no studies have been conducted so far on the linguistic analysis of the hashtags used by Facebook users in Jordan to create humor. These hashtags are crucial in understanding how Jordanians dealt with the pandemic, as well as their ability to use a variety of linguistic devices and cultural references to create humor.

3.The Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it is one of the first to conduct a linguistic analysis of the humor that accompanied the emergence of the Corona crisis in Jordanian society. Furthermore, this study demonstrated Jordanians' creativity in forming linguistic phrases and sentences quoted from political and societal figures, in which many linguistic classifications are involved. Aside from that, this study is very rich in a large number of humorous examples that could be a great reference for future researchers.

4. Review of Related Literature

Humor is a difficult concept to define because it encompasses so many different types and theories. According to Attardo (1994), linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists have defined humor as an all-encompassing category that includes any event or object that causes laughter, amusement, or is perceived to be funny. Similarly, Bremner and Roodenburg (1997) state that humor is a message communicated through various mediums such as action, writing, speech, or images, and it causes a smile or a laughter.

Many researchers attempted to classify humor to make it easier to understand and study. Zabalbeascoa (1996) categorized jokes into the following types:

- international/binational jokes that do not depend on linguistic or cultural- specific features
- national-culture-and-institutions jokes that require background knowledge of the national, cultural, or institutional reference in the joke

- language-dependent jokes, such as polysemy, homophony, and zeugma
- visual jokes that can be seen and might be a “coded version of a linguistic joke, as in a rebus”.
- complex jokes that combine two or more of these types of jokes.

Though COVID- 19 is a new phenomenon, it has created a high level of social stress worldwide due to its aftermath and the government pandemic containment measures. The government banned places where people gathered to interact and enjoy time together to avoid human contacts, marked as a critical contributor to the spread of the virus (Flecha et al.,2021). Many people were unable to walk from one place to another, and as a result, their social lives were severely disrupted. As a result of the COVID-19 distress, people devised methods to satisfy themselves and live a happier life, and creating humor on social media is one of these methods. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic caused tension, increased stress and depression and affected people’s mental and emotional health across the globe. People used various approaches to create humor and ease the tension. They focused on humor intervention in reducing anxiety and stress during the difficult time of COVID-19 (Akimbekov&Razzaque, 2021).

Several studies have been conducted on the psychological impact of humor and comedy on social media. Barry and Grace (2018) pointed out that when humor dominates, content is more favorably received than when humor is subordinate to message information. Neuendorf, et al. (2014) concluded that senses of humor outperform media use as a viable predictor of public opinion about marginalized groups. Furthermore, senses of humor are found to be related to political orientation, raising questions about the similarities and origins of these critical filters of sociopolitical attitudes. In their study about the impact of humor on social media conversations, Ge and Gretzel (2018) investigated the role of humor in encouraging likes, comments and reposts and they concluded that humorous messages on social media are more effective overall than text-based hum humor.

Many studies have been conducted about using humor by Jordanians in particular. Al-Khatib (1999), in his research about joke-telling in the Jordanian society, concluded that jokes communicate a great deal of information about the society and a wealth of other related social aspects, not to mention the primary function of joking i.e. humor and entertainment. Banikalef (2014) showed that humor in Facebook status has a pragmatic function governed by three pragmatic motives: love, life, and work. Hussein and Aljamili (2020) stated that Jordanians use social media in general as a window of relief with humor mitigating the spreading feelings of tension and fear.

Memes are contemporary digital folklore with spirit, and they help in sparkling happiness and conveying the intended information. People created humor through creating memes that made the COVID 19 stressful experience more bearable. Without the everyday human interactions that got believed to cause the spread of the COVID 19, many people got forced to remain indoors (Flecha et al.,2021). Therefore, it was very likely to cause unhappiness to many individuals. Memes revived many people's happiness since most of them spent most of their time on social media during the lockdown and quarantine.

Another source of humor in COVID 19 was creating innovative, funny videos that created a "Challenge concept" where everyone could participate in the contest. In 2020 when the COVID 19 was at its peak, and there were strict confinement and lockdown measures by the government, platforms such as TikTok emerged (Ahlse, 2020). A famous African song called Jerusalema touches many people's lives as it engages a lot of humor, hence stimulating its challenging concept to many people worldwide (Ahlse, 2020). The humor created by the innovative videos' arts encouraged people to relieve the stresses that maybe they are affecting them in the pandemic.

Many studies have been done on humor during COVID- 19, which are represented by semiotics and caricature. Still, such studies are excluded in this study since it focuses on the written forms of humor. Humor influences people's lives positively, and every kind of humor created focuses on a particular audience. The posts made by Jordanians on their Facebook were not meant to convey news about the COVID 19 but to create mood and entertain themselves, particularly in the time of lockdown and the quarantine. In this study, we defend this hypothesis by finding out the linguistic devices employed in the posts made by Jordanians. Some cultural and religious references are used to boost the humorous impact.

Accordingly, the study raises these questions:

1. What is the aim of using Hashtags by Jordanians during COVID -19?

2. What linguistic devices do Jordanians use to create humor?
3. What are cultural and religious aspects used to create humor?

5. Methodology

In this section, the researchers will provide a brief overview of each of the four hashtags that the study is centered on. The researchers then discuss the reasons for selecting these hashtags in particular, and it concludes with the method of data collection and analysis.

The researchers have chosen four leading hashtags as the data of this paper. These hashtags are:

1. "Coronavirus has dried up and died." *nijif wu ma:t*. It was said by the Jordanian Minister of Health at that time, Saad Jaber, in June in an indication of the virus's death in Jordan. It also indicates that the internal transmission of the virus among people has ended.



2. "I will ask my father to interfere." *Xalli: ba:ba: jiddaxal*. A Jordanian girl said it in February 2020 upon her arrival at Queen Alia Airport. She was surprised that she had to undergo a 14-day quarantine, revealing whether a person gets infected with the virus. It indicates that her father occupies an important position and can give her an exception not to undergo quarantine.



3. "Humanity at large". *ʔalʔinsa:nyya zamʕa: ʔ*. The former Minister for Media Affairs Amjad Adaileh used this phrase to conclude his daily press conferences during the Corona pandemic in 2020.



4. "Let us eat bats, Sajiye." *s'a: zijjit xafa:fi ʃ*. Sajiye is a traditional dish in Jordan that is prepared using a metal pan designed for charcoal grilling, which is usually made for many people, particularly for family gatherings. It is widely believed the what initiated the Corona pandemic is eating bats by Chinese people.





Researchers have investigated Facebook posts that are based on the above hashtags for several reasons. First, the above hashtags received a lot of popularity on Facebook in Jordanian society, which has made them get a repeated use by all Jordanians from almost all age categories. Many Jordanians used the above four hashtags in their posts on social media to get the attention in a humorous way in social media. Another reason for choosing these four hashtags is that they are considered rich research material since they have a lot of language -based and reference- based humor. The posts by Jordanians on the researchers' side of view had many devices, be they linguistic or cultural, to create humor. These devices acted as a fertile field of study by researchers.

5.1 Data Collection

The researchers used the following procedure to collect the data:

1. Deciding on the hashtags to choose as the data for this paper.
2. Collecting Facebook posts that include the selected hashtags since Jordanians start to feel and touch the impact of coronavirus on their lives; that is from March 2020 till June/2021.
3. Choosing only the posts that are considered humorous. The researchers can decide on this based on the fact that they are native speakers of Arabic, so they can tell if a certain sentence causes laughter or not, and based on the number of the laughing face reactions that the posts receive on Facebook.

5.2 Data Analysis

As stated earlier, the theoretical framework of this study is based on the analytical approach on the micro level which will be concerned with investigating the linguistic choices made by Jordanians who wrote the Facebook posts. Each of the categories will be discussed in details with clarifying examples in the findings and discussion section. The following table shows the level of linguistic analysis and the categories / subcategories of each one:

Table 1: the levels of analysis and their categories

| Level of Analysis | Categories and subcategories |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Phonological Level | Alliteration Rhyming Homophones Paronyms |
| 2. Syntactic Level | Conditional sentences Parallelism |
| 3. Semantic Level | Figures of speech: Hyperbole Metaphor Irony |

6. Findings and Discussion

As explained earlier, the current study focuses on four hashtags likely to be used the most by Jordanians to create humor about COVID -19, mainly when the pandemic first emerged in Jordan. In the effort of making it easier to discuss the findings

of the study, humor will be classified into language-based and reference-based. Each of these types will be further classified into sub-categories.

6.1 Language-Based Humor

Language-based humor uses word structures to create humor and laughter when conveying the intended information to people. Language-based humor is a tactic widely used in social media by content creators to keep the readers reading over and over more content. It is used as a strategy for the marketing industry due to many content creators who may be marketing the same product of different companies. The content creators who are good at employing language-based humor find themselves better off attracting more fans than those who have poor mastery of using this skill (Darling, 2019). Upon analyzing the posts that include the four hashtags, we find out that language-based humor has phonological, syntactic, and semantic aspects.

6.1.1 Phonological Aspect

The two phonological devices found are alliteration and rhyme.

1. Alliteration

Alliteration is a repetition of the same first consonants in closely related syllables in a group of words, including those spelled differently (Arp&Johnson,2009; Bradford,2005; Darling,2019). The importance of using alliteration in a sentence is because it sounds pleasing and gets the reader's attention (Darling, 2019). Alliteration gives readers fun because the words' patterns are intended to create a mood for them. It also enhances a memory to the readers as they can easily recall the joy they found while reading the sentences that have a good pattern of sounds (Darling, 2019).

In the Facebook contents by Jordanians, on top of using hashtags to create a sense of humor, their usage of alliteration adds up in making their posts more attractive and humorous. The following is an example of alliteration in a sentence from the Facebook posts:

1. کورونا کونی کفو و انشفی و موتی“

ko:ro:na: ku:ni: kafu: wu ʔinɬafi: wu mu:ti:

(Corona be nice, dry and die)



The first three words in this sentence start with the letter (ك), creating an occurrence of the same consonant in the same sentence.

2. Rhyming

Rhyming uses similar sounds in the final stressed consonants of two or more words in a sentence. It creates a musical flow of words that helps make a good memory for the reader about what had been read (Darling, 2019; Jeffries& McIntyre, 2010). Using verse helps the reader increase their ability to spell new words and expand their understanding of the language.

Jordanians have used rhyme in creating their content for Facebook to attract more readers. Combined with their use of hashtags to create humor, it works very well when rhyme is employed in their creative works. The following examples are found:

3. بعد ما نشف و مات شفنا وفيات بالمئات

baʕd ma: niʃif wu ma:t ʃufna: wafija:t bilmiʔa:t

After it dried and died, we have hundreds of deaths.

In the above sentence, the rhyming words are (مات،مئات).

Another example of rhyming is

4. مش بيكفينا كورونا.. ذبحتونا و نشفنا و متنا

miʃ bikfi:na: ko:ro:na: ʔabahtu:na: wu nife:fna wu mutna:

Is not Corona enough for us? You killed us, and we dried and died.

In the above sentence, the rhyming words (كورونا،ذبحتونا).

A third example is

5. نشف و مات و بدنا مخالفات

niʃif wu ma:t wu bidna: muxa:lafa:t

It dried and died, and we want traffic violations.

The rhyming words in the above sentence are (مات،مخالفات).



3. Homophones

As defined in Merriam Webster Dictionary, homophones are words pronounced alike but they are different in meaning or derivation or spelling. The example extracted from the Jordanian's posts is the word بابا in the following sentence:

عاجل: وصول البابا ليتدخل -6

ʕa:ʒil: wusʕu:l ba:ba lajiddaxal

Breaking news: The Pope has arrived to interfere



The aforementioned sentence was accompanied with a photo of the Vatican pope during one of his last visits to Jordan. Apparently, it is related to the hashtag “I will let my father interfere” Xalli: ba:ba: jiddaxal. The word بابا has two meanings in Arabic: father and the Vatican Pope. The comparison is held by Jordanians between the Vatican pope and the father of the lady who said this sentence because the Jordanian lady has indicated that her father is influential and has power over others, just like the pope of the Vatican. Pope is so influential, with a large global following.

Pope has a significant influence over the people since he is the head of the Roman Catholic Church as the highest-ranked spiritual leader. He leads over a billion followers, who are members of catholic church doctrine, and his decisions and opinions significantly affect societies and governments in all parts of the world (Pennington, 2018).

Pope's influence does not just happen, but it is backed up by the bountiful roles and responsibilities that he has. Pope has two significant functions: the bishop of Rome, which provides him with the power and supremacy over the catholic church worldwide (Pennington, 2018). In-state the term Rome simply means the whole of the catholic church in the whole world. As a bishop of Rome, he is expected to make any critical decisions.

Pope offers teachings to Christians who follow him to seek spiritual nourishment. Through his education, he acts as a direct messenger to Jesus, and therefore, he is a source of inspiration to many Christians. Many Christians view the papacy as a direct representation of Christ or that Christ is represented in the papacy. Again, the role and position of the pope to influence people to play a role as a political leader because it is like he is involved in politics (Pennington, 2018). His work has to get involved in politics since time in history when other popes have been engaged in social activists fighting against injustices and poverty. His accomplishments of fighting against social injustices and poverty have earned him a lot of reputation among his followers.

The Jordanian girl who said that her father should intervene when she was told that she will be put in quarantine had faith that her father was an influential person. She was sure that her father had the power to revise the situation by using his position. From this point, Jordanians used her words (I will let my father interfere) as a hashtag that created humor in their Facebook posts. It is humorous because she thought her father could influence the government to free her despite her getting held as per the government's COVID -19 containment measures.

4. Paronyms

Paronyms are words partly identical in form and / or meaning. In other words, this term refers to soundalikes (Al-Hussini Arab & Hasan, 2011). Felecan (2004) presented three different categories of paronyms, the third of which refers to word pairs with an element showing phonemic additions as in the words lot /plot, and sip slip. The following example, again related to the hashtag “I will let my father interfere” Xalli: ba:ba: jiddaxal, is extracted from Jordanians’ posts:

خلي بابلو اسكوبار يتدخل -7

xali bablu ?askubar jiddaxal

Let Pablo Escobar interfere.



This time, Jordanians held comparison between the Jordanian lady’s father and Pablo Escobar to create humor. In spoken Jordanian, the words بابا and بابلو are paronyms since they are pronounced the same, except for the last two sounds in Pablo. Jordanians, in their Facebook posts, compared the girl’s father to Escobar because of the impression she left on them that her father is so influential. She believed her father could influence any Jordanian institution. She had faith that her father’s position will finally scare the authorities and set her free from the compulsory quarantine.

Pablo Escobar is arguably the most powerful drug lord who ever lived and was highly feared by even the highest authority in Columbia. He started his illegal business of stealing cars, selling fake diplomas, and stealing tombstones that he later resold. He was first arrested for stealing vehicles before later stepping up to the cocaine business. He got involved in cocaine smuggling that gave money and helped him found a criminal organization called Medellin Cartel (Naef, 2018). He had loyal partners in his criminal organization who were Juan David, Fabio, Jorge Luis. Pablo controlled and led the criminal organization by giving instructions to his partners to conduct illegal activities together and as a gang.

The Medellin Cartel by Pablo Escobar mainly focused on transportation, production, and sale of cocaine. Through this organization, Pablo gained a lot of wealth, and he dominated the cocaine industry giving him a lot of power and control (Naef, 2018). He owned many assets and luxury properties that ranked him among the richest and the most influential people.

Pablo created a significant influence not only on American residents but also on the whole world. His impact on the government authorities made him untouchable, and he could escape any hands of the government with ease. His vast size wealth helped him immensely in earning and commanding respect among Americans. He mercilessly killed anybody who crossed his path, and it made him have a significant impact on the execution of the law on the Americans. Some people perceive him as mysterious (Naef, 2018). Therefore, he was greatly feared in America and beyond, making it very hard for him to get executed by any government law, be it state or federal. He had learned skills of concealing the tracks of his illegal activities, and it also made it hard to find evidence against him that would otherwise result in him being arrested.

6.1.2 Syntactic Aspect

The main syntactic devices employed in Jordanians’ posts are conditional sentences and parallelism.

1. Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences were used a lot, particularly with the bats Sajiye. This structure is found in tens of posts, which might be attributed to the fact that Jordanians are fed up with staying home during the lockdown, so they start sarcastically to threaten to do anything to help the virus spread in case the lockdown continues. Applying conditional sentences is crucial as it allows people to express their feelings about their fears that might happen in both the present and the future. Conditional sentences are mainly used to give advice, show regret or create a room to discuss facts. In our case, Jordanians use conditional sentences to express their sadness at the pandemic containment measures put by the government to prevent the spread of COVID- 19. An example is:

8- اذا الحكومة رجعت حظر التجول بدي اعمل صاجية خفافيش

ʔiða: l-huku:ma raʒaʕat haðʕr ʔitaʒawwul bidi: ʔaʕmal
sʕa:ʒijit xafa:fi:f

If the government reimposes the lockdown, I will make
bats Sajiye.



2. Parallelism

Parallelism is a device that suggests a connection simply by repeating the form of one sentence or clause (Cook,1989; Saliba,1982). Parallelism occurs when two closely related sections of a text are similar. The similarity is usually structural, meaning that one or two structures are similar, or lexical, meaning that the words are similar. There are two types of parallelism: anaphora and epiphora. The repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences is known as anaphora. On the opposite side, epiphora is the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. Epiphora helps in providing emphasis on keywords in a sentence or a discussion. By repeating one word or phrase, it establishes a rhythm that emphasizes the repeated words and makes the words stick to the reader's mind quickly, making it easy to remember them. Jordanians have mastered the use of catching the attention of people through using epiphora in their Facebooks posts. The sentence below is an example:

9. اذا بالصيف ما نشف و مات الأمل بالشتوية بلكي غرق و مات

ʔiða: bisʕe:f ma: niʃf wu ma:t ʔilʔamal biʃatwijja balki: yirig wu ma:t

If the virus did not dry and die in summer, we hope it will in winter.



Here the word (die) is repeated at the end of the consecutive structure, hence creating epiphora.

6.1.3 Semantic Aspect

1. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a style that applies exaggeration as a device of speech (Carston & Wearing, 2015). When defining hyperbole, many researchers emphasize the element of extremity that exists in the hyperbolic instance (Norrick, 2004). It is an attention-

seeking figure of speech because as people read, they pose to interpret the deeper meaning of the sentence. Through posing, the reader understands the right intentions on why they have opted to hyperbole to convey their message. The hyperbole device is exciting and quickly sticks to the reader's memory (Darling, 2019). Jordanians have used hyperbole in their Facebook posts during the COVID -19 lockdown and quarantine together with popular hashtags to create humor. It is excellent and creative to use hyperbole because it shows extraordinary mastery of using figures of speech.

Hyperbole is manifested in using the phrase (humanity at large) to describe any crowded place exaggeratedly or any relatively huge number of people involved in doing something. Examples are:

10. الانسانية جمعاء بحدائق الحسين.

?al?insa:niyya zamʕa:ʔ biħada:ʔiq l-ħuse:n

Humanity at large is in Al Hussein Park.

11. الانسانية جمعاء على شاطئ الغندور.

?al?insa:niyya zamʕa:ʔ ʕa:la: ʃa:tʕiʔ l-ɣandu:r

Humanity at large is on Al Ghandour beach

12. الانسانية جمعاء ستفتقدك.

?al?insa:niyya zamʕa:ʔ sataftaqiduk

Humanity at large will miss you



2. Metaphor

According to Lan (2005), Aristotle defines a metaphor as giving something a name that belongs to something else, with the transference occurring either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or on analogy grounds. Metaphors help the readers have the image they initially did not have or could not have imagined. They help the readers have a broader scope of comprehension and demonstrations because they usually help change the thinking of a concept (Darling, 2019). Metaphors carry a different amount of power, and they do not have a similar meaning in all of them. Some metaphors are more potent than others. Some metaphors are applicable in some contexts and not fitting in other ones. Hence, the person who is using them has to ensure that the comparison blends with the context and gets addressed well. Jordanians used some metaphors in their Facebook posts to get the readers' attention to their post's contents. Examples found are:

13. نشف ومات مصدر رزقتنا.

ʔilli: niʔif wu ma:t mas'dar rizgitna:

What dried and died is Our livelihood.



14. المواطن الاردني نشف و مات.

ʔilmuwa:t'in ʔilʔurduni: niʔif wu ma:t

The Jordanian citizen dried and died.



15. القروب نشف و مات.

ʔilgru:b niʔif wu ma:t

The group (Facebook group) has dried and died.



16. دعم الخبز نشف و مات.

daʕm l-xubz niʃif wu ma:t

Bread subsidies dried and died.



In these four examples, the livelihood, the Jordanian citizen, the group and the subsidies are compared to a creature that dried and died.

3. Irony

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines irony as “the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning”. Irony is primarily used to generate humor, and its impact is typically determined by the reader's level of expectation from the events addressed. Irony is used by writers to increase reader engagement by grabbing their attention or creating a deeper meaning. As a result, it is prudent to understand where to place the part of speech in order to capture the reader's attention or engage the deeper meaning (Darling, 2019). Irony creates a sense of humor, and when it is used in hashtags, it has a significant impact on how the content is attractive to the reader.

Example:

17. بعد ما نشف و مات شفنا وفيات بالمئات.

baʕd ma: niʃif wu ma:t ʃufna: wafija:t bilmiʔa:t

After the virus dried and died, we had hundreds of deaths.



The irony in this example is that it is expected to witness no deaths in Jordan after the virus's death, but what happened is totally the opposite.

6.2 Reference-Based Humor

Reference-based humor is a type of amusement that involves relating one thing to another. This type of humor is intended to make fun of things, other people, or even oneself. It is more practical than language-based humor because it can be related to or referenced with physical objects to create humor. Some factors influence whether or not a person finds humor in what is said or done. It depends on the level of understanding of the person to whom the humor is intended and how creatively the reference is crafted.

The reference – based humor detected is (Bats Sajiye) as in the following sentence:

بدي اسلخ صاجية خفافيش-18

bidi: ʔaslax sʰa:ʒijit xafa:fi:f

I want to eat bats Sajiye.



The Sajiye is one of the most popular dishes in the Jordanian society, and it has been widely used in Jordan in family gatherings since it requires a large number of people to eat. It is a social food since it can pull many people together in happy times or in times of celebration (Aloudat et al., 2020). It creates a great sense of humor to associate one of the most loved and popular food in Jordan with bats that are believed to be the source of COVID -19. Food is essential to every culture, and more so the gathering and sharing it.

Jordanians are known to embrace the culture of their foods and general lifestyles, and it is a clear indication of the value that the Jordanians have for their culture. Sajiye is a valued, popular food in Jordan, and therefore associating it with pandemics triggers a sense of humor because, after all, there is no association. Most Jordanians found this humorous as what they valued as their dish is found to have a close relation with bats that many believe caused coronavirus.

Some people proposed theories to explain the virus's origin, such as it was imported to China by Americans, it is a disease of bats, it is a curse from God, it is the end of the world, and so on. However, the most popular one was that COVID -19 was brought by bats in Wuhan, China, where the virus was first discovered. Many people started to fear bats, and no one wanted to be connected or in touch with bats since they were regarded as the source of mystery to the whole world. Many kinds of research were done based on the assumption that COVID-19 evolved from bats and spread to the world as a whole (Chiodo et al., 2020). However, none of the premises have ever been proven accurate or get any closer to them. Chinese are believed to have initiated the COVID -19 after eating bats. Therefore, it creates a lot of humor when the most popular dish in Jordan is associated with the world pandemic that has put many people's lives under pressure and distress.

Like the rest of world, most Jordanians believe that eating bats by Chinese people is the primary cause of the pandemic's occurrence and spread. Given the pandemic's wide and extensive spread, most Jordanians imagine that the Chinese eat bats together from the same plate during family, relative, and friend gatherings. The reason behind their imagination is that this is the way Jordanians eat their traditional food, like Mansaf and Sajiye. It is not customary at all for Jordanians to put food in separate dishes when having traditional food with others. From this point, Jordanians came up with the concept of Sajiye bats, that is, eating bats by a relatively large number of people from the same plate.

Jordanians use this cultural reference about their own traditional food to create humor. This hashtag is used in some specific situations. For example, if Jordanians are tired of staying at home during the lockdown, they will sarcastically threaten to do anything to help the virus spread, such as eating bats Sajiye, if the lockdown continues. Another situation

where this hashtag is used to create humor is when authorities announce a sudden increase in the number of deaths and infections, Jordanians start to humorously assume that a large number of people ate bats Sajiyeh.

It is worth noting that examples 6 and 7, which were labeled as exemplifying homographs and paronyms, can also be considered examples of reference – based humor. This is due to the fact that humor was developed not only through the use of linguistic devices, but also through the use of references to specific famous figures.

Conclusion

The study explored some Jordanians' hashtags related to COVID-19 to create a sense of humor on Facebook. The authors assumed that Jordanians created linguistic and cultural humor by employing a number of devices and references used to this end. A range of examples was extracted from Jordanians' Facebook posts that included four popular hashtags: "humanity at large," "dried and died," "bats Sajiyeh" and "I will let my father interfere". The study used an analytical approach to analyze the posts used as the material of the research. The findings of the study support the assumption that Jordanians created linguistic humor on phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels by employing devices like alliteration, rhyming, homophones, paronyms, conditional sentences, parallelism, hyperbole, metaphor, and irony. Moreover, the findings reveal that cultural humor was created by making references to some famous figures, such as the Vatican Pope and Pablo Escobar, and to a famous Jordanian dish, i.e. Sajiyeh.

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