

Racist Humor in Western Performance: A Critical Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

The language of stand-up comedy is a significant type of public discourse because of its humorous and interactive nature. Beside using language in comedy to entertain the audience, it is also used to circulate stereotypes and guide the audience toward particular interpretations. Consequently, the present study investigates racist humor in selected English stand-up comedy data, in the light of a critical sociolinguistic perspective. The study examines how Arab-Muslim identity is constructed. To achieve this aim, an eclectic model is adopted. It is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework (1989, 2003), Fairhurst and Sarr's framing tools (1996), and Bucholtz and Hall's identity principles (2005). The data consist of five selected stand-up comedy extracts taken from YouTube performances by Malik Elassal, Leo Kears, Fahim Anwar, Maher Matta, and Murahd Shawki. The selected extracts are analyzed qualitatively with the aid of quantitative indicators. The results show that racist humor is not constructed through direct racist expressions only, but through the interaction of vocabulary, grammar, framing, and identity positioning. Evaluation is the most frequent vocabulary item, especially negative assumed evaluation. Attribution is the dominant process type, while declarative mode is the most frequent grammatical mode. The results also show that spin is the most frequent framing tool, especially negative spin. At the identity level, distinction and illegitimation are dominant. The study concludes that stand-up comedy can function as a discourse where Muslim and Arab identities are represented through suspicion, fear, terrorism, and airport-security associations.

Keywords: (racial humor, improvisational comedy, critical sociolinguistics).

الفكاهة العنصرية في العروض الغربية: دراسة نقدية لغوية اجتماعية

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المخلص

تُعَدُّ لغة الكوميديا الارتجالية نوعاً مهماً من أنواع الخطاب العام، وذلك لطبيعتها الفكاهية والتفاعلية وذات الدلالة الاجتماعية. فاللغة في الكوميديا لا تُستعمل لتسلية الجمهور فحسب، بل تُستعمل أيضاً لتمثيل الهويات، وتداول الصور النمطية، وتوجيه الجمهور نحو تفسيرات معينة. وبناءً على ذلك، تبحث الدراسة الحالية في الفكاهة العنصرية في نماذج مختارة من الكوميديا الارتجالية الإنجليزية من منظور لغوي اجتماعي نقدي. وتدرس هذه الدراسة الكيفية التي تُبنى بها الهويتان الإسلامية والعربية من خلال الاختيارات المعجمية، والتراكيب النحوية، وأدوات التأطير، وعلاقات الهوية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تتبنى الدراسة أنموذجاً انتقائياً يستند إلى إطار فيركلاف الثلاثي الأبعاد في التحليل النقدي للخطاب (١٩٨٩، ٢٠٠٣)، وأدوات التأطير عند فيرهيرست وسار (١٩٩٦)، ومبادئ الهوية عند بوخولتز وهال (٢٠٠٥). وتتكون بيانات الدراسة من خمسة مقتطفات مختارة من عروض كوميديا ارتجالية منشورة على منصة يوتيوب لكل من مالك العسل، وليو كيرس، وفهيم أنور، وماهر متى، ومراد شوقي. وقد حُلِّلت المقتطفات المختارة تحليلاً نوعياً مدعوماً بمؤشرات كمية. وتُظهر النتائج أن الفكاهة العنصرية لا تُبنى من خلال التعبيرات العنصرية المباشرة فحسب، بل من خلال التفاعل بين المفردات، والقواعد، والتأطير، وتموضع الهويات. كما تبين أن التقييم هو أكثر العناصر المعجمية تكراراً، ولا سيما التقييم المفترض السلبي. ويُعدّ الإسناد أكثر أنواع العمليات النحوية حضوراً، في حين يُعدّ النمط الخبري أكثر الأنماط النحوية تكراراً. وتُظهر النتائج أيضاً أن التوجيه التأطيري هو أكثر أدوات التأطير تكراراً، ولا سيما التوجيه التأطيري السلبي. وعلى مستوى الهوية، يبرز كلٌّ من التمييز ونزع الشرعية بوصفهما العنصرين الأكثر حضوراً. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الكوميديا الارتجالية يمكن أن تؤدي وظيفة خطابية تُصوّر من خلالها الهويتان الإسلامية والعربية عبر دلالات الشك، والخوف، والإرهاب، والارتباطات الخاصة بأمن المطارات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (الفكاهة العنصرية، الكوميديا الارتجالية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي النقدي).

Introduction

The Problem of the Study

The linguistic problem lies in the fact that racist humor in stand-up comedy is not always expressed directly, but is often constructed through lexical choices, grammatical structures, framing tools, and identity relations. Muslim and Arab identities may be represented humorously through associations with suspicion, fear, terrorism, and airport security. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine how racist humor is linguistically, sociolinguistically, and critically constructed in selected English stand-up comedy discourse.

Aims of the Study

The current study aims to:

1. Examine the main lexical and grammatical features used in constructing racist humor in selected stand-up comedy extracts.
2. Show how framing tools are used to represent Muslim and Arab identities in humorous discourse.
3. Explore how Muslim and Arab identities are ideologically constructed through selected sociolinguistic identity principles.

Hypothesis of the Study

The current study hypothesizes the following:

1. Racist humor in the selected stand-up comedy extracts is expected to depend more on negative evaluation and negative spin than positive representation.
2. Attribution process and declarative mode are expected to be dominant grammatical choices in representing Muslim and Arab identities.
3. Muslim and Arab identities are expected to be mainly constructed through distinction and illegitimation.

The Limits

The present study is limited to five selected English stand-up comedy extracts taken from YouTube and transcribed using rev.com

website. The extracts represent Muslim and Arab identities In relation to racist humor in Western society. The analysis is restricted to verbal discourse, with reference to audience laughter, and it follows the adopted eclectic model only.

The Significance of the Study

This study is hoped to be beneficial to researchers and students in Critical Discourse Analysis, sociolinguistics, humor studies, and identity studies. It offers a critical and sociolinguistic analysis of how racist humor represents Muslim and Arab identities in selected English stand-up comedy. The study also draws attention to the fact that humor is not always neutral, since it may reproduce stereotypes and guide audience interpretation through language, framing, and identity construction.

Theoretical Background

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics can be introduced concisely as the study of language in relation to society. Hudson defines it as “the study of language in relation to society” (Hudson 1996: 1). Wardhaugh explains that it investigates the connection between language and society in order to understand how language works structurally and functionally in communication (Wardhaugh 2010: 12). Trudgill also views sociolinguistics as the part of linguistics that deals with language as a social and cultural phenomenon (Trudgill 2000: 21). In this sense, sociolinguistics is relevant to the present study because stand-up comedy is not only a verbal performance, but also a social event in which comedians use language to construct identities, represent groups, and reproduce or challenge social meanings.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is one of the main approaches used to study the relationship between language, power, ideology, and society. Fairclough states that CDA examines the relationship between

textual features and social relations that may not be clear to ordinary language users (Fairclough 1995). Similarly, van Dijk explains that CDA investigates how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are produced and resisted through discourse (van Dijk 2001). CDA is important for the current study since racist humor is not treated as simple joking only; rather, it is examined as a discourse that may carry ideological meanings about Muslims, Arabs, and other represented groups. Therefore, CDA helps reveal how humorous language can participate in the construction of stereotypes and unequal social relations.

Racism

Beside biological race and skin color, racism also includes cultural, ethnic, and religious forms of exclusion. Guillaumin defines racism as a symbolic system that operates within power relations in society (Guillaumin 1995: 30). Van Dijk also views racism as a complex system of social and political inequality that is reproduced through discourse (van Dijk 2001: 362). In relation to language, racism may appear in the way particular groups are described, evaluated, mocked, or positioned as different from the dominant social group. This makes racism highly relevant to the present study, since racist humor in stand-up comedy may reproduce negative images of Muslims and Arabs while simultaneously it appears to be only a form of entertainment.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is generally understood as fear, hostility, or discrimination that is directed toward Islam and Muslims. Merriam-Webster defines it as an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam. Sheeni describes Islamophobia as an ideological formation based on fear and hatred toward Muslims (Sheeni 2011). Kalin points out that the term became more widely used in the 1990s and gained stronger attention after the

9/11 attacks (Kalin 2011: 8). In recent scholarship, Islamophobia is often treated as a form of cultural racism because Muslim identity is represented as fixed, inferior, violent, or threatening. The present study is concerned with this form of racism since the selected stand-up comedy data represent Muslim identity through associations with terrorism, airport security, danger, and suspicion.

Humor

Humor is a broad concept that is usually connected with amusement and laughter, yet, it can also carry social and ideological meanings. Gardner defines humor as anything that causes amusement or makes people laugh (Gardner 2008: 9). Whereas Attardo notes that humor is difficult to define because terms such as “funny,” “comic,” and “ridicule” are often used in overlapping ways (Attardo 2020). From a sociolinguistic perspective, humor is studied through its social function beside its linguistic form. It can create solidarity, express criticism, mark social boundaries, or reproduce stereotypes. Thus, humor is central to the current study because the jokes analyzed are as discourse that can construct social identities and ideological meanings.

Stand-up Comedy

Stand-up comedy is a spoken humorous performance in which a comedian addresses a live audience directly. Oxford University Press defines it as a comic performance in which one person stands before an audience and tells jokes (Oxford University Press n.d.). Mintz identifies it as a performance where a single performer delivers comic material directly to the audience (Mintz 1985: 71). Uwa also explains that stand-up comedians use jokes and punchlines to amuse the audience and produce laughter and applause (Uwa 2022: 145). However, stand-up comedy is not a simple monologue, since the performer has to manage timing and audience response. Quirk notes that audience response makes stand-up comedy a complex interaction (Quirk 2015: 13). Brodie views it as a collaborative performance carried out with the

audience rather than only to the audience (Brodie 2014: 5). In this respect, audience laughter signals recognition of the joke and may show alignment with its social meaning. Stand-up comedy is relevant to the present study because comedians may use jokes to present Muslims and Arabs through particular stereotypes, while the audience's laughter can contribute to the acceptance or circulation of these meanings.

Context

Context is essential in understanding discourse because meaning does not depend on words alone. Swann et al. define context as the linguistic and non-linguistic elements that surround an utterance or linguistic feature (Swann et al. 2004: 49-50). Van Dijk also emphasizes that context includes social structures, participants, situations, and speech functions (van Dijk 2008). In stand-up comedy, context includes the performance setting, the comedian, the audience, the topic, shared cultural knowledge, and wider ideological assumptions. Therefore, the present study depends on context to explain how jokes about Muslims and Arabs become understandable within Western social settings.

Framing

Framing refers to the way a speaker selects and presents one meaning rather than another. Fairhurst and Sarr explain that framing involves managing meaning by choosing a particular interpretation and making it appear valid (Fairhurst & Sarr 1996: 3). They identify several framing tools, of which the present study uses four. Metaphor presents one idea through comparison with another idea in order to make the meaning more vivid. Jargon refers to special or familiar terms that belong to a certain field, group, or context. Contrast presents meaning through opposition between two ideas, expressions, or situations. Spin refers to presenting a subject in either a positive or negative light. In the current study, these tools are used to examine how comedians guide

the audience toward particular interpretations of the represented identities.

Power

Power is an important concept in discourse because language can be used to control meaning, represent groups, and influence interpretation. Fairclough defines power in terms of asymmetrical relations between participants and unequal control over how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed (Fairclough 1995: 1-2). Van Dijk also connects social power with the control of one group over another (van Dijk 2008: 9). In stand-up comedy, the comedian usually controls the topic, timing, and development of the joke. Whereas the audience mainly responds through laughter. This relationship gives the comedian discursive authority to represent social groups in particular ways. In the present study, power is relevant since comedians may use public performance in order to reproduce or challenge stereotypes about Muslims and Arabs.

Ideology

Ideology refers to shared beliefs and assumptions socially in which groups understand the world. Swann et al. describe ideology as a set of beliefs that are held by individuals or groups about how society works (Swann et al. 2004: 141). Van Dijk explains that ideologies are not merely individual beliefs, they are socially shared systems connected to group interests and social relations (van Dijk 1998). Fairclough also argues that discourse may naturalize ideological meanings by making them appear normal or common sense. This concept is significant for the current study because racist humor may depend on shared assumptions about Arabs, Muslims, terrorism, and danger. Thus, ideology helps to explain how jokes can reproduce.

Identity

Identity refers to how individuals or groups are understood and represented socially. Swann et al. define identity as an individual's or

group's understanding of who they are, whether defined by themselves or by others (Swann et al. 2004: 140). Bucholtz and Hall define identity as "the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 586). Their framework is useful since it treats identity as something produced through interaction instead of considering it as a fixed category. In the present study, Muslim identity is examined through positionality, relationality, and partialness.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a mixed-method research design in order to analyze racist humor in selected English stand-up comedy discourse. The qualitative approach emphasizes understanding phenomena in which it analyzes the meanings and interpretations that are created through language use. It serves in this study as the main analytical device for examining how racist humor is linguistically and sociolinguistically constructed. The quantitative approach, on the other hand, is used to support the qualitative analysis by presenting the distribution of analytical categories through frequencies and percentages. This synthesis allows the study to provide detailed interpretation, as well as systematic numerical indication. This helps to understand how racist humor represents Muslim and Arabian identities in stand-up comedy discourse.

Data Selection

The data are based on five selected English stand-up comedy extracts that are taken from YouTube performances. The selection of the of extracts is based on methodological concerns, which are related to the aims of the present study. Most importantly, the selected extracts clearly represent racist humor through Muslim and Arab identity in Western stand-up comedy contexts. Three extracts focus on Muslim identity, namely Malik Ellassal's "My Cousin," Leo Kears's "Bondi and Islamophobia," and Fahim Anwar's "Fixing Islam's PR Problem."

The other two extracts focus on Arab identity, namely Maher Matta's "Born In The Middle East, But Raised In The South" and Murahd Shawki's "Dirty Little Immigrant Boy." The extracts are selected because they contain rich linguistic features. Furthermore, they contain.

Data Description

The first extract is taken from Malik Elassal's "My Cousin," published by CBC on August 27, 2022, as part of the Winnipeg Comedy Festival; the comedian is Lebanese-Canadian, and the place of performance is the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, in which the Islamic name "Jihad" is humorously connected with airport suspicion. The second extract is taken from Leo Kears's "Bondi And Islamophobia," published by Leo Kears on December 19, 2025; the comedian is Scottish, and the performance is connected with the Free Speech Union Christmas show, where the expressions "moderate Muslim" and "radicalized Muslim" are used to frame Muslim identity in relation to danger and violence. The third extract is taken from Fahim Anwar's "Fixing Islam's PR Problem," published by Comedy Central Stand-Up on June 8, 2019; the comedian is an American comedian of Afghan descent, while the exact place of performance is not specified in the available data, in which Islam is described through the metaphor of "bad PR," while the expression "Allah Akbar" is connected with fear and media representation. The fourth extract is taken from Maher Matta's "Born In The Middle East, But Raised In The South," published by Dry Bar Comedy on January 29, 2021; the comedian is Lebanese-American, and the performance is connected with Dry Bar Comedy in the United States, where the Arabic name "Maher" is contrasted between its Arabic meaning "skill" and its English social meaning "airport security." The fifth extract is taken from Murahd Shawki's "Dirty Little Immigrant Boy," published by Don't Tell Comedy on July 11, 2022; the comedian is Egyptian-American, while the exact place of performance is not specified in the available data, in

which the Arabic name “Murahd” is similarly shifted from its Arabic meaning “wished for” to the airport meaning “randomly selected.” The extracts are unified by their focus on racist humor.

The Model of Analysis

The present study uses an eclectic model that combines Fairclough’s three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough 1989, 2003) with Fairhurst and Sarr’s framing tools (Fairhurst & Sarr 1996) and Bucholtz and Hall’s identity principles (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). The analysis is carried out through three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. Description examines vocabulary, grammar, and interaction; interpretation examines situational context and framing tools, namely metaphor, jargon, contrast, and spin; and explanation examines identity construction through positionality, relationality, and partialness. This model is suitable for the study because it connects the linguistic form of racist humor with its contextual meaning and its role in representing Muslim and Arab identities. The countable items are also supported by frequencies and percentages.

Data Analysis

Malik Elassal: My Cousin

I have a cousin who’s dealt with a lot of Islamophobia. His name is Jihad,

[audience laughter]

and he’s gotten it pretty bad. He got lost at the airport one time when he was a little kid.

[audience laughter]

There’s really nothing you can do in that situation, you know. If you’re the parents, you lose your kid named Jihad in the airport like ...

[audience laughter]

You just gotta leave, you know. That’s it. What are you supposed to do? You can’t just drop all your luggage and start screaming “Jihad” in the middle of the airport.

[audience laughter]

Only thing worse than screaming “Jihad” in the airport is whispering “Jihad” in the airport. For some reason ...

[audience laughter]

it’s worse. I don’t know why.

Description

At the vocabulary level, antonymy is realized through the opposition between “screaming” and “whispering.” Evaluation is also used in negative direct evaluation in “pretty bad,” “lose,” “only thing worse,” and “it’s worse.” Negative deontic evaluation is found in “you gotta leave,” “what are you supposed to do,” and “you can’t just ... start screaming ‘Jihad’.” Negative assumed evaluation appears in “Islamophobia,” “screaming ‘Jihad’,” and “whispering ‘Jihad’.” At the grammatical level, attribution process is used in “his name is Jihad,” “only thing worse than screaming ‘Jihad’ in the airport is whispering ‘Jihad’ in the airport,” and “it’s worse.” Declarative mode appears in “a cousin who’s dealt with a lot of Islamophobia,” “his name is Jihad,” “he’s gotten it pretty bad,” “you lose your kid named Jihad in the airport,” “you just gotta leave,” “you can’t just ... start screaming ‘Jihad’ in the middle of the airport,” “only thing worse than screaming ‘Jihad’ in the airport is whispering ‘Jihad’ in the airport,” and “it’s worse.” The grammatical question appears in “what are you supposed to do?” Interactionally, the comedian controls the discourse by introducing the name “Jihad,” the airport situation, and the contrast between screaming and whispering, while the audience responds through laughter.

Interpretation

At the level of situational context, content is represented in the potential trouble connected with the Islamic name “Jihad” in the airport. Subject position appears through the comedian as an insider Muslim speaker who presents the stereotype humorously. Whereas the audience is positioned as listeners and responders. Relation is

asymmetrical since the comedian controls the topic and its development. The audience, on the other hand, reacts through laughter. In framing, contrast is realized through “screaming” versus “whispering.” Spin is realized in a negative light through “pretty bad,” “you gotta leave,” “you can’t just ... start screaming ‘Jihad’,” “only thing worse,” and “it’s worse,” since these expressions frame the ordinary act of calling a lost child’s name as dangerous in the airport context.

Explanation

At the level of positionality, the macro-level category is Muslim identity, which is constructed through “Jihad” and “Islamophobia.” The local cultural position is the suspicious Muslim name in a security-related place, realized through “pretty bad,” “screaming ‘Jihad’,” “whispering ‘Jihad’,” “only thing worse,” and “it’s worse.” In relationality, distinction is realized through the contrast between ordinary parental behavior, calling a lost child’s name, and the abnormal restriction attached to the name “Jihad” in the airport. Illegitimation is realized through the representation of the name “Jihad” as socially dangerous and problematic. Partialness appears through three elements: the speaker’s humorous framing of the name “Jihad,” the audience’s laughter, and the broader post-9/11 ideological association between Muslim identity and terrorism.

Leo Kears: Bondi and Islamophobia

And I don’t know, man. Like if I was having some sort of buffet spread, like some sort of barbecue, and sixteen people got food poisoning but there was one sausage roll that didn’t kill anybody, I wouldn’t be like, “Oh, what a fantastic success this buffet policy is...” you know. “Oh, what a resounding success!”

[audience laughter]

As long as you can rely on a moderate Muslim being there when, you know, the radicalized Muslim wants to kill you. I mean, the term “moderate Muslim” is that not a bit of a red flag in itself?

[audience laughter]

You know what I mean? We've got to give out labels for people who haven't murdered anyone today.

[audience laughter]

It's like, "Wow! what an achievement! What an achievement. Here's a gold star for basic civilization."

[audience laughter]

Description

At the vocabulary level, metaphor is realized through "buffet spread," "barbecue," "sausage roll," "moderate Muslim," "red flag," and "gold star." Antonymy appears in "moderate Muslim" versus "radicalized Muslim," "kill/murdered" versus "haven't murdered anyone," and also in the contrast between "fantastic success," "resounding success," and "achievement" on the one hand, and "food poisoning," "kill," and "murdered" on the other. Negative direct evaluation appears in "kill" and "red flag." Negative assumed evaluation appears in "sixteen people got food poisoning," "one sausage roll that didn't kill anybody," "resounding success," "moderate Muslim," "haven't murdered anyone today," "what an achievement," and "gold star for basic civilization." At the grammatical level, action process appears in "one sausage roll that didn't kill anybody," "the radicalized Muslim wants to kill you," and "people who haven't murdered anyone today." Attribution process appears in "the term 'moderate Muslim' is that not a bit of a red flag in itself?" Declarative mode is represented in "sixteen people got food poisoning," "one sausage roll that didn't kill anybody," "the radicalized Muslim wants to kill you," "we've got to give out labels for people who haven't murdered anyone today," and "Here's a gold star for basic civilization." Grammatical question appears in "the term 'moderate Muslim' is that not a bit of a red flag in itself?" Interactionally, the comedian develops the discourse from the buffet metaphor to the labels

“moderate Muslim” and “radicalized Muslim,” while the audience responds through laughter.

Interpretation

At the level of situational context, content is represented in the classification of Muslims through the opposition between moderation and radicalization. Subject position consists of the comedian as a Scottish performer who controls the topic, the positioned audience as Western listeners and responders. Relation is asymmetrical because the comedian controls the extended turn, the rhetorical question, as well as the sarcastic conclusion. In framing, metaphor is realized through “buffet spread,” “barbecue,” “sausage roll,” “red flag,” and “gold star,” where Muslim classification is framed through danger, warning, and reward. Contrast is realized through “moderate Muslim” versus “radicalized Muslim,” and through “kill/murdered” versus “haven’t murdered anyone.” Negative spin is realized through “moderate Muslim,” “red flag,” “what an achievement,” and “gold star for basic civilization,” since the discourse frames even non-violence as unusual and rewardable.

Explanation

At the level of positionality, the macro-level category is Muslim identity, which is constructed through “moderate Muslim” and “radicalized Muslim.” The local cultural position of “radicalized Muslim” is threatening through “wants to kill you,” while the local cultural position of “moderate Muslim” is also suspicious through “red flag.” In relationality, adequation is realized by bringing “moderate Muslim” and “radicalized Muslim” into the same Muslim category through the repeated relation between Muslim identity and violence. Illegitimation is realized through “red flag,” “wants to kill you,” “haven’t murdered anyone today,” and “gold star for basic civilization,” since Muslim identity is represented as requiring explanation, suspicion, or reward for basic non-violence. Partialness

appears through the speaker's metaphorical framing of Muslims through poisoning food, the audience's laughter, and broader ideological associations that connect Islam with violence and public suspicion.

Fahim Anwar: Fixing Islam's PR Problem

Thank you, this is nice. So many brown people you know. It's like Brown Panther. It's nice.

[audience laughter]

Wakanda stand. Gotta throw the "stand" on it you know. I visited my parents recently. My parents, they're worried about Islamophobia nowadays you know with everything that's going on. But Islam, I think we have bad PR, right? Even me just saying "Allah Akbar," some white people are nervous right now.

[audience laughter]

Cause in the movies, whenever someone says "Allah Akbar," bad stuff happens.

Description

At the vocabulary level, metaphor is realized in "we have bad PR," "Brown Panther," and "Wakanda stand." Antonymy appears between "nice" and "bad," and also between "brown people" and "white people." Positive direct evaluation is found in "this is nice" and "It's nice." Negative direct evaluation appears in "bad PR" and "bad stuff." Negative affective evaluation is realized in "they're worried about Islamophobia" and "some white people are nervous." Negative assumed evaluation appears in "Allah Akbar." At the grammatical level, event process appears in "bad stuff happens." Attribution process appears in "we have bad PR" and "some white people are nervous right now." Declarative mode appears in "they're worried about Islamophobia nowadays," "some white people are nervous right now," and "whenever someone says 'Allah Akbar,' bad stuff happens." Grammatical question appears in "I think we have bad PR, right?" Interactionally, the comedian begins with positive evaluation of the

brown audience, then shifts to Islamophobia, Islam's public image, and the fearful reaction to "Allah Akbar," while the audience responds through laughter.

Interpretation

At the level of situational context, content is represented in Islamophobia and the audience reaction to Islamic markers. Subject position appears through the comedian as an insider Muslim speaker and commentator, while the audience is positioned as Western listeners and responders. Relation is asymmetrical because the comedian controls the topic, its shift from brown identity to Islamic identity, and the timing of the punchline. In framing, metaphor is illustrated through "bad PR," as Islam is framed as having a damaged public image, and through "Brown Panther" and "Wakanda stand," where brown identity is framed through popular cultural references. Contrast is realized through "brown people" versus "white people," and through the religious meaning of "Allah Akbar" versus its cinematic association with "bad stuff." Positive spin appears in "this is nice" and "It's nice," while negative spin appears in "bad PR," "some white people are nervous," "Allah Akbar," and "bad stuff happens."

Explanation

At the level of positionality, the macro-level category is Muslim identity, which is constructed through "Islam," "Islamophobia," and "Allah Akbar." The local cultural position is Muslim identity as publicly misunderstood and associated with fear, as realized in "bad PR," "some white people are nervous," and "bad stuff happens." In relationality, distinction is realized through "brown people" versus "white people," where the comedian creates solidarity with the brown audience while white people are positioned as nervous receivers of the Islamic phrase. Illegitimation is realized through "Allah Akbar" and "bad stuff happens," since the Islamic expression is connected with danger through movie representation. Partialness appears through the

speaker's framing of Islam's public image, the audience's la Extract 4:

Maher Matta: Born In The Middle East, But Raised In The South

Maher Matta: Born In The Middle East, But Raised In The South

Well, as you heard, my name is Maher.

[audience laughter]

It's unbelievable.

[audience laughter]

The full name is actually Maher Kamal Matta. Isn't that nice? Thank you. In Arabic, Maher means skill. In English, Maher means airport security is what it means.

[audience laughter]

With the extended Arab stare. Just ...

[audience laughter]

airport security.

Description

At the vocabulary level, metaphor is realized in "Maher means airport security." Positive direct evaluation appears in "nice," and positive assumed evaluation appears in "skill." Negative assumed evaluation is realized in "Maher," "unbelievable," "airport security," "extended Arab stare," and the repeated "airport security." At the grammatical level, attribution process appears in "my name is Maher," "It's unbelievable," "The full name is actually Maher Kamal Matta," "Isn't that nice?", "Maher means skill," and "Maher means airport security." Declarative mode appears in "my name is Maher," "It's unbelievable," "The full name is actually Maher Kamal Matta," "In Arabic, Maher means skill," and "In English, Maher means airport security." Grammatical question appears in "Isn't that nice?" Interactionally, the comedian introduces his Arabic name, then shifts from its Arabic meaning "skill" to its English social meaning "airport security," while the audience responds through laughter.

Interpretation

At the level of situational context, content is represented in the social interpretation of an Arabic name within an American airport-security context. Subject position appears through the comedian as a Lebanese-American speaker, while the audience is positioned as American listeners and responders. Relation is asymmetrical because the comedian controls the topic, its development, and the timing of the punchline. In framing, metaphor is realized through “Maher means airport security,” since the Arabic name is metaphorically linked to airport inspection. Contrast is realized through “Maher means skill” versus “Maher means airport security.” Negative spin is realized through “airport security,” “extended Arab stare,” and the repeated “airport security,” since Arab identity is framed as suspicious and security-related.

Explanation

At the level of positionality, the macro-level category is Arab identity, which is constructed through “Maher Kamal Matta” and “extended Arab stare.” The local cultural position is the suspicious Arab traveler, realized through “Maher means airport security” and the repeated “airport security.” In relationality, distinction is realized through the contrast between the Arabic meaning “skill” and the English social meaning “airport security,” separating the normal cultural meaning of the name from its stereotyped American interpretation. Illegitimation is realized through the association of the Arabic name with “airport security,” since Arab identity is denied a normal social meaning and framed as a source of suspicion. Partialness appears through the speaker’s humorous framing of his Arabic name, the audience’s laughter, and broader ideological associations that link Arab identity with airport security and Murahd Shawki: Dirty Little Immigrant Boy.

Murahd Shawki: Dirty Little Immigrant Boy

Hello. Hi guys. Like your host said, my name's Murahd. Uh ... In Arabic, Murahd means wished for. At the airport, it means randomly selected.

[audience laughter]

It's good to be with you guys. For the rest of the show, I will be going by my DJ name Saudi Arabia.

[audience laughter]

Description

At the vocabulary level, metaphor is realized in "At the airport, it means randomly selected." Positive assumed evaluation appears in "wished for." Negative assumed evaluation is realized in "Murahd," "at the airport," "randomly selected," "DJ name," and "Saudi Arabia." At the grammatical level, attribution process appears in "my name's Murahd," "Murahd means wished for," and "it means randomly selected." Declarative mode is represented in "my name's Murahd," "In Arabic, Murahd means wished for," "At the airport, it means randomly selected," and "I will be going by my DJ name Saudi Arabia." Interactionally, the comedian introduces his Arabic name, shifts from its Arabic meaning to its airport meaning, and then extends the Arab identity frame through "Saudi Arabia." The audience responds through laughter.

Interpretation

At the level of situational context, content is represented in the social interpretation of the Arabic name "Murahd" in an American airport context. Subject position appears through the comedian as an Egyptian-American speaker who introduces himself through an Arabic name, while the audience is positioned as American listeners and responders. Relation is asymmetrical since the comedian controls the topic, its development, and the timing of the punchline. In framing, metaphor is realized through "At the airport, it means randomly selected," since the Arabic name is metaphorically linked to airport

security selection. Contrast is realized through “Murahd means wished for” versus “it means randomly selected.” Negative spin is illustrated through “at the airport,” “randomly selected,” “DJ name,” and “Saudi Arabia,” since Arab identity is framed through airport suspicion and Middle Eastern association.

Explanation

At the level of positionality, the macro-level category is Arab identity, which is constructed through “Murahd” and “Saudi Arabia.” The local cultural position is the suspicious Arab traveler, realized through “At the airport, it means randomly selected.” In relationality, distinction is realized through the contrast between the Arabic meaning “wished for” and the airport meaning “randomly selected,” separating the normal cultural meaning of the name from its stereotyped interpretation in an American airport context. Illegitimation is realized through the association of the Arabic name with “randomly selected,” since Arab identity is denied a normal social meaning and framed as a source of airport suspicion. Partialness appears through the speaker’s humorous framing of his Arabic name, the audience’s laughter, and broader ideological associations that link Arab and Middle Eastern identity with airport security and suspicion.

Results of the Analysis

The study derive the following results of the eclectic model as represented in the following tables:

Table 1: Distribution of Vocabulary Items

Vocabulary Item	Fr.	Pr.
Metaphor	11	19.64%
Antonymy	6	10.71%
Evaluation	39	69.64%
Total	56	100%

Table 2: Distribution of Evaluation Types

Evaluation Type	Fr.	Pr.
Positive Direct Evaluation	3	7.69%
Negative Direct Evaluation	8	20.51%
Negative Deontic Evaluation	3	7.69%
Negative Affective Evaluation	2	5.13%
Positive Assumed Evaluation	2	5.13%
Negative Assumed Evaluation	21	53.85%
Total	39	100%

Table 3: Distribution of Process Types

Process Type	Fr.	Pr.
Action	3	15.79%
Event	1	5.26%
Attribution	15	78.95%
Total	19	100%

Table 4: Distribution of Mode

Mode	Fr.	Pr.
Declarative	25	86.21%
Grammatical Question	4	13.79%
Total	29	100%

Table 5: Distribution of Framing Tools

Mode	Fr.	Pr.
Declarative	25	86.21%
Grammatical Question	4	13.79%
Total	29	100%

Table 6: Distribution of Spin Types

Spin Type	Fr.	Pr.
Positive Spin	2	9.09%
Negative Spin	20	90.91%
Total	22	100%

Table 7: Distribution of Adequation and Distinction

Relationality Item	Fr.	Pr.
Adequation	1	20%
Distinction	4	80%
Total	5	100%

Table 8: Distribution of Authorization and Illegitimation

Relationality Item	Fr.	Pr.
Authorization	0	0%
Illegitimation	5	100%
Total	5	100%

Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions of the current study:

1. Based on the study's results, racist humor in the selected stand-up comedy extracts is likely to represent Muslim and Arab identities through negative evaluation. Evaluation is the most frequent vocabulary item, especially negative assumed evaluation, which shows that the discourse often depends on implicit meanings of suspicion, fear, danger, and social abnormality.
2. It is concluded that grammatical choices contribute to the construction of racist humor. Attribution is the most frequent process type, which indicates that Muslim and Arab identities are mainly represented by assigning qualities, labels, or social meanings to them.
3. The analysis shows that declarative mode is highly dominant in the selected extracts. This means that comedians usually present humorous meanings as direct statements. Such statements assist to make the stereotypes sound familiar and easily accepted.
4. The study comes to the conclusion that framing plays a central role in guiding the audience's interpretation of Arab-Muslim identity. Negative spin is dominant, since the selected extracts frame Islamic names, Arabic names, religious expressions, and ethnic markers in relation to suspicion, violence, and fear.

5. Arab-Muslim identity is not represented neutrally in the humorous discourse. The findings show that distinction and illegitimation are the main identity relations. This means that this identity is often constructed as different from the normal social group and is deprived of legitimacy as it is associated with terrorism.
6. Finally, the study concludes that racist humor does not simply entertain the audience, but also participates in forming social meanings. The audience's laughter supports the humorous uptake of the stereotypes, while the broader post-9/11 ideological background assists to make the jokes understandable. Therefore, stand-up comedy can function as a discourse where identity, ideology, and power are reproduced.

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