

**Humor Expressing Suffering and Resistance during
January 25 Revolution
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Abstract

This paper presents a linguistic study of ten humorous texts produced during the eighteen-day revolution of January 25, 2011. During this period, Egyptians, exploiting their renowned sense of humor, created various humorous forms to satirize the autocratic rule, to expose the various aspects of its maladministration such as the political and the economic corruption as well as the hard living conditions, and to articulate their revolutionary demands. The aim of this study is to demonstrate this skillful use of humor as a form of resistance and revolution. It examines the revolutionary aspects of their humor. It also attempts to uncover the various functions fulfilled by producing jokes, banners and caricatures. More importantly, this study attempts to apply the Cooperative Principle (CP), proposed by Grice (1975), and the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), presented by Attardo and Raskin (1991), to examine Arabic humorous texts. This study asserted that using humor to resist autocratic regimes is a form of political containment, which combined entertainment and political humor that asserts the powerful impact of humor during the revolution. It also highlighted various aspects of these texts through employing the two linguistic tools. It also emphasized the use of humor as a coping mechanism as well as a corrective means to effect some desirable change.

Keywords: Humor, January 25 revolution, Politics, SSTH, GTVH

استخدام الفكاهة للتعبير عن المعاناة والمقاومة أثناء ثورة 25 يناير جودة كمال طه الملخص

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة لغوية لعشرة نصوص فكاهية ظهرت أثناء ثورة الخامس والعشرين من يناير عام 2011 التي امتدت ثمانية عشر يوماً حتى سقوط النظام الحاكم، ووظف فيها المصريون ما يتمتعون به من حس فكاهي لصياغة أشكال مختلفة من الفكاهة للسخرية من الحكم الممتد لنظام مبارك، ولكشف الجوانب المختلفة للسياسة السيئة والإدارة الفاسدة لهذا النظام، وللتعبير عن مطالب ثورتهم. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إبراز هذا الاستغلال الأمثل للحس الفكاهي كأحد أشكال المقاومة والثورة في ظل حكم النظم الاستبدادية، والكشف عن النواحي الثورية التي عبرت عنها تلك النصوص الفكاهية، كما تظهر الدراسة الوظائف المختلفة للفكاهة أثناء هذه الثورة التي ظهرت بوضوح في تحليل استخدام النكت والشعارات والرسوم الكاريكاتيرية بالإضافة إلى الهتافات التي كانت تعج بها المسيرات والمظاهرات. وقد اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على نظريتين في تحليل هذه النصوص: الأولى هي المبدأ التعاوني The Cooperative Principle الذي قدمه جرايس في 1975 والثانية هي النظرية العامة للفكاهة اللفظية General Theory of Verbal Humor التي قدمها سلفادور أتاردو Salvatore Attardo وفكتور راسكين Victor Raskin. وقد أظهرت هذه الدراسة فاعلية استخدام الفكاهة في مقاومة النظام الاستبدادي وقدمته كشكل من أشكال " الترفيه والعمل السياسي politicotainment" إذ يجمع بين السياسة والفكاهة، ويبرزه كأحد أشكال التعبير الفعال أثناء الثورة سواء عن الأسباب التي دفعت المصريين للثورة أو عن مطالبهم أثناء ثورتهم. كما قدمت هذه الدراسة السمات الأساسية لتلك النصوص العربية في ضوء الدراسات اللغوية الحديثة متمثلة في النظريتين السابقتين.

1. Introduction

“Bread, freedom and social justice” were three demands summarizing what the Egyptians, who took to streets, were calling for in January 2011. These requests were the slogans of the January 25 revolution; they represented the basic rights of any human being, which the then Egyptian ruling regime ignored. The first item has to do with the low standards of living in Egypt and the increasing level of poverty among them, which was evident in the World Bank's report about Egypt in 2011. The report indicated that about 25% of the population fell below the national poverty line that was equal to \$1.25 per day (World Bank, 2011). The second motto is of the freedom which was absent under Mubarak's administration since the country was much like a police state where one would disappear, be arrested or sentenced to life in prison, for just criticizing the atrocity of the state agencies. The third issue has to do with rampant corruption and nepotism which spread every where.

Humor had a remarkable role during the eighteen- day Egyptian revolution in 2011. It was present from the very beginning until Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011 after 30 years of autocratic rule. This outstanding appearance of humor brought the epithets *the laughing revolution* and *humor revolution* to this revolution since humor was skillfully used to express the people's attitude towards the ruling regime as well as to articulate the revolution's demands. Humor was a silent and peaceful revolutionary means; it was a manifestation of nonviolent resistance, which motivated people to overthrow that long-time autocratic regime.

For the Egyptians, in particular, humor is an inseparable part of their lives. Every aspect of their lives is a target of their humor. This sense of humor was effectively employed during the revolution of January 25 in 2011. Albrecht Classen (2010), for example, pointed out, “Most people at one time or another engage in, and engage one another with humor, wit, jokes, comedy, ridicule, and the like, even though each country, language, religion, or society expresses itself somewhat differently, laughs about somewhat different objects, comments, or images” (p. 1). However, humor was used with a revolting flavor, that is, it was created to call for freedom, justice and better living circumstances.

2. Review of literature

Research in humor has started with Aristotle and Plato. These two great philosophers attempted to explain why people laugh. Aristotle, for instance, gave a sound explanation of humor. He differentiated between two sources of humor: words and events (or verbal and referential humor). Verbal humor related to choices of words and their displacement in a given text whereas referential humor related the nature of episode or anecdote narrated (Attardo, 1994). Plato, on the other, explained humor as "a mixed feeling of the soul"(p. 18). It is a mixture of pleasure (pleasure) and pain since we ridiculed the criticized qualities of our friends (Attardo, 1994).

These two simple explanations presented by Aristotle and Plato were not satisfactory to numerous writers and philosophers such as Hobbs Bergson, Horace. These writers had explained humor from different viewpoints. Their writings, along with many other writers such as Freud, Schopenhauer, had revolved around three main views: Incongruity Theories, Superiority Theories, and Release Theories.

2.1. Incongruity theories

This theory is related to the ideas of Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer and Holcomb. Kant indicates that humor results from a sudden transformation of our expectations into nothing. Schopenhauer, influenced by Kant's views, argues that humor is based on the contradiction between expectations and the world we experience in the joke. Holcomb, on the other hand, describes humor in new terms, but the essence of his explanation is similar to that of Holcomb and Kant. He argues that humor production is directly dependent on the presence of what he calls "nodal point". He defines the nodal point as a location in the "narrative where humor is perceptibly more concentrated than in the immediately surrounding texts" (Sala, 2003, p. 294). This nodal point is what is called later by linguists the punch line since its presence contradicts the evoked expectations.

2.2. Superiority theories

According to this theory, laughter arises from a sense of superiority to others. Thomas Hobbs and Henry Bergson were the main proponents of this opinion. Hobbs considered that laughter emerges from sudden conception of superiority in ourselves by comparison with infirmity of others. Using humor to criticize the flaws of others, Bergson argues, humor, has a corrective function. For

it is used by the society to correct deviant behavior. (Attardo, 1994, p.49-50)

2.3. Release theories

Release theories maintain that humor releases tensions, psychic energy, or that humor releases one from inhibitions, conventions and laws .it provides a relief to various tensions and allows repressed desires to be satisfied. When we laugh, we temporarily liberate ourselves from the fetters and limitations that oppress us, and we express emotion that would otherwise be forbidden (Ermida, 2008). The major proponent of this theory is Sigmund Freud. He considers humor as liberation or a sublimation of suppressed feelings, emotions and impulses. Then, humor, performs a vital psychological role in providing an environment in which subjects that are taboos, for instance, sex, politics, etc., may be explored through humorous texts.

2.4. Linguistic theories of humor

Compared with the philosophical and other explanations of humor, the linguistic account of humor has started quite recently. It started in the eighties, when Victor Raskin (1985) proposed the first linguistic theory of humor. His theory was known as the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH). After reviewing the previous explanations of humor, Raskin's theory advocated a new approach of humor. His theory of humor is based on two main conditions: in order for a text to be funny, it should be consistent with two scripts, and these scripts are opposite:

A text can be characterized as a single joke- carrying text if both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- a- A text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts.
- b- The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite. The two scripts with which the text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part in this text.(Raskin1985,p. 99)

In response to these limitations, Raskin and Attardo (1991) revised the SSTH and presented the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). The GTVH broadens the scope of the SSTH: it includes five other knowledge resources (KRs) that must be tapped into when generating a joke, in addition to the script opposition from the SSTH. These KRs are: script opposition (SO), logical mechanism (LM), the target (TA), the narrative strategy (NS), the language (LA), and the situation (SI).

These two theories, i.e., the SSTH and the GTVH are the most important linguistic attempt to account for humor. Although these two theories are not the only linguistic attempts for exploring humor because there are other models such as the IDM, Frame –shifting theories, the register theory and others. However these other models are very limited in scope while these two theories are universal since they have been applied to English, Russian, polish, French data.

It is worth- mentioning that humorous data has attracted the attention of many linguists. They have been studied humor in conversation, in sitcoms, in political speech, in stand- up comedies, and in newspapers and magazines. Kate Elwood (2000), Raskin (1985), Attardo 1994, 2001, 2005, 2008), Ermida (2008), Ritchie (2004), Ross (1998), for example, examined several types of humorous forms. These studies tackles various techniques used to create humor. These techniques included allusion to idioms and quotations, polysemy, homophones and homonyms, literalization of idioms, pseudo-morphs and lexical and grammatical puns and irony

However, studying Arabic humor has not attracted the attention of much linguists although the Arabs are well known for their sense of humor. The number of the linguistic studies of humor is very few compared with the endless production of humorous texts in the Egyptian context. Few studies examines specific aspects of humor like using satire, irony, pun, semantic shifts...etc. To examine the elusive nature of humor, the present study examines humorous texts deployed during the 25 January Revolution. It attempts to highlights the various aspects of these texts. It also examines using humorous as a powerful tool to express their unspeakable sufferings.

3. Methods of data collection

The data for this study were created during the eighteen days of demonstrations and sit-ins. Revolutionaries produced various texts that exposed the reasons behind their uprising. These texts were collected from two sources. The first is the social media network Facebook, and the second is two books that were published after the revolution and collected these humorous texts created by protesters. These two books are *ثورة التحرير تضحك: عبقرية المصريين* (Tahrir's Revolution is Laughing: Egyptians' Genius by Samir El-Gamal) and *نكت ثورة 25 يناير* / *Jokes of January 25 revolution*). The texts in question include one text taken from the 6 April Youth Movement page on Facebook, five texts from the first book, and four texts from the

second book.

The collected texts were categorized under four heading. The first includes texts that highlight economic corruption. The second comprises texts that expose political corruption. The third contains texts that target suppression and oppression, and the last is called hard living conditions, which consist of texts illustrating Egyptians' suffering under Mubarak's regime. The researcher translated these texts into English, yet this task was difficult due to the lingua-cultural specificity. These characteristics were highlighted by the use of many linguistic elements such as rhyme, allusions, parody, or wordplay. Moreover, translating these humorous texts included various contextually-based issues which are hard to explain or transfer in target texts. Thus, the translation of these texts is a problem translation: it is translating various problems the Egyptians faced under Mubarak's regime. Another difficulty in translating these texts is that humor usually involves oppositions which are hard to reflect in the target language due to the absence of contextual and paracontextual elements, which are often problematic to translate. These elements, which various scholars tackled in their treatment of transferring humorous texts, hinder the existence of the functional equivalence in the target texts (See Muhaidat, 2005; Chiaro, 2009, 2010; Vandaele, 1999, 2010, Elnamoury, 2012; and, Salem & Taira, 2012).

4. Methods of data analysis

Scholars from different fields studied humor. They introduced various theories such as the incongruity theories, the superiority theories and the release theories. However, the linguistic handling of humor started in the late eighties and since then various theories and models were proposed to account for humor from the linguistic perspective. They came up with various methodologies to analyze the different forms of humorous texts. They proposed Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH), Nodal Point Theory, Isotopy-Disjunction Model (IDM), General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), and other theories such as the incongruity based theories.

However, the present study uses two main linguistic theories to analyze the selected data. The first method is the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), which was proposed by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo in 1991; the second is the Cooperative Principle (CP) which explores interpersonal communication and puts forth some

rules which govern human's exchanges. These two frameworks are used together for two main reasons. The first is that the researcher's main aim in this study is to explain the functional uses of humor by the Egyptian revolutionaries during the period of the upheaval since these two theories include various parameters and maxims that will capture this purpose. The second reason is to enable the researcher to check the viability of these two theories for the analysis of these Arabic humorous texts.

4.1. The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH)

Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo presented this theory in 1991 as an extension to the SSTH presented by Raskin in 1985 to account for verbal humor. The present study uses this theory to analyze all the collected texts according to the six parameters of this theory: Script opposition, Logical Mechanism, Target, Situation, Narrative strategies, Language.

4.2. The Cooperative Principle (CP)

The CP has often been used as a tool to analyse humorous texts. Numerous scholars investigate the relationship between the CP and humor. Scholars, such as Grice (1975), Raskin (1985), Attardo (1994, 1997, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2011), Vandaele (1999), Ross (1998), Dornerus (2005), Ermida (2008) and Abdelgayyed (2012), argued that humorous texts did not conform to the CP and its maxims. These texts do not usually obey these cooperative maxims and the flouting of these maxims in these texts is a source of humor.

The Cooperative Principle (CP) was proposed by Paul Grice in 1975 to explore interpersonal communication. He first introduced this principle and its main tenets in his article *Logic and Conversation* that was later published in his book *Studies in the Way of Words*. In this article, he aimed at describing the nature of interpersonal communication; and, he explained that any talk exchange should be harmonious and meaningful: This discourse should have a purpose and an aim and follow certain rules. These rules require both of the participants to follow a general principle which he calls the *Cooperative Principle* (CP) that the participants should follow in their communication to have a purpose and meaning for their discourse. He pointed out that there are four categories of maxims under this general principle: the quantity maxim, the quality maxim, the relevance maxim, and the manner maxim. These four maxims and their

requirements determine the ways which keep the communication meaningful.

4.2.1. The maxim of quantity

This maxim relates to the quantity of information that is presented. This maxim has two main sub maxims:

- 1- Make your contribution as informative as is required(for the current purpose of the exchange)
- 2- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. (Grice, 1989, p.26)

4.2.2. The maxim of quality

This maxim has one super maxim and two sub-maxims. The super maxim states that the speaker should “try to make [his/her] contribution one that is true.” The two sub-maxims are:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. (Grice, 1975, p. 27)

This maxim stipulates that the speaker should provide true information.

4.2.3. The maxim of relation

This maxim requires the participants to “be relevant” (Grice, 1975, p. 27) to the topic of their communication and if anyone of them is trying to change the topic he/she should inform the other participant.

4.2.4. The maxim of manner

This category describes the how-part of the talk. It is not related to the content of what is being said but to how what is being said is said. This category includes the super maxim- "Be Perspicuous"-and four sub- maxims:

- a- Avoid obscurity
- b- Avoid ambiguity
- c- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- d- Be orderly. (Grice, 1975, p. 27)

These four maxims govern any communicative, purposeful exchange between speakers. However, any breaking of these maxims, on the part of one participant, means one of the following conditions that Grice presented: violation, opting out, maxim clash or flouting. The latter

denotes that the speakers is transgressing the maxim to transfer an implicit message to the listener; it gives rise to conversation implicature.

5. The analysis

The texts in this study include different texts. Some of them target corruption, either economic or political. Others demonstrate the suppression and the oppression the Egyptians suffering as well as the hard living conditions they experienced under Mubarak's administration.

5.1. Economic corruption

Various humorous texts were created to highlight the regime's economic corruption from which Egyptians suffered intensely. Through using these humorous texts, protesters criticized the favoritism and nepotism which spread due to the officials' jobbery and profiteering. For example, in the following joke, protesters criticized the widespread corruption of the regime's officials. Here, the president's sons were using the trick of opening small shops in the north and the south of the country to seize the whole country by merging their two shops:

1- الرئيس صحي من النوم على مظاهرة كبيرة من أهل اسكندرية، سألهم: "في إيه؟"، ردوا عليه: "علاء بيه أخذ حته أرض متر في متر بوضع اليد في اسكندرية". رد حسنى: "بقي جات على الواد الحيلة، سيبوه بينى مستقبله، الواد عايز يفتح محل وبعدين دي أرض متر في متر". الناس مشيت بعد أما الرئيس رضاهم. تانى يوم الرئيس صحي على مظاهرة تانية من أهل أسوان، سألهم: "في إيه؟". ردوا عليه: "جمال بيه أخذ حته أرض متر في متر في أسوان". رد عليهم حسنى زي ما رد على بتوع اسكندرية. الناس روحت بعد أما الرئيس رضاهم. تالت يوم صحي على مظاهرة من مصر كلها. سأل: "فيه إيه؟"، مش إحنا خلصنا من موضوع المحاللات بتاعت الولاد". ردوا الناس: "المشكلة ياريس إن الاتنين عايزين يفتحوا المحلات على بعض".

(El-Habib, 2011, p. 16)

(The president got up on a massive demonstration in Alexandria. "What is going on?" he asked. "Mr. President, your son Alaa seized a small plot of land approximately 1 square meter in Alexandria," he was told. "Oh! Let my little dear son secure his future life; he wants to open a shop, and the size of the land is very small," he said trying to calm the angry protesters who walked away after his speech. Next day, he was awakened on the news of another demonstration in Aswan. "What is the matter?" he asked in surprise. They told him that his son Gamal appropriated a piece of land in Aswan. He also pacified the people as he did with those in Alexandria,

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and the people dispersed. On the third day, there were massive demonstrations all over the country, the president asked, “What is going on?” asked the president. “Did we not finish the problems of my sons' shops?” he wondered. “The problem is that the two brothers want to merge their two shops,” the people explained.)

SO: opening shops and connecting two opposite ends in the country
Vs. appropriating the whole country

LM: garden-path

SI: president's sons open shops

TA: regime's corruption and favoritism

NS: narrative including a dialogue

LA: sarcasm & allusion

The situation in this joke is that the president's sons started their own business by opening small shops in Alexandria and Aswan. This activates the script of hard-working persons who did not depend upon their father's position. This script is also enhanced by the president's justifications for his sons' actions to assuage the angry citizens. However, the final punchline, “they want to merge the two shops”, is incompatible with this ongoing script. This punchline demonstrates the malicious intentions of the president's sons who were planning to take over the whole country through their wicked idea of merging their two shops, which activates the script of nepotism and avarice.

The two scripts that the text activates are partially opposed. This partial opposition is justified through the garden path logical mechanism since in the first situation the president's words trigger the idea that the president's sons are hard-working persons. However, after reading the punchline, our first thought proves to be false since they were planning to seize the whole country. Therefore, one has to backtrack to review and re-interpret the initially activated script in terms of our world knowledge about this regime.

The target in this joke is Mubarak and his regime. Here, this text targets the corruption and nepotism. He is presented justifying his sons' illegal seizure of land instead of punishing them or holding them back from such illegal acts. Trying to assuage the angry people, he presents meaningless excuses for his sons' crooked plans through alleging that their intentions are merely to open a small business to earn a living.

The humor in this text is also highlighted by the use of the

sarcastic tone. Here, the country's resources are alluded to as shops. This ridiculed the officials' avarice whose main goal was to control the whole country. The sarcastic tone is also evident in Mubarak's justification. Here, Mubarak is presented defending illegal acts done by his two sons. In addition, this sarcastic tone and allusive aspects of the text bring about a flouting of the cooperative principle's maxims. Here, the quality maxim is flouted in presenting the president's son trying to run small shops. It is also flouted in their attempt to merge their two shops. However, the flouting of the quality maxim evokes conversational implicatures: they expose the regime's corruption; and, they ridicule officials' hypocrisy.

Another text that criticizes the widespread corruption of that regime is the following. It exposes people's suffering due to the avarice of the regime's businesspersons who exploited poor citizens to make profits. Here, the president's son is presented as having fifty percent share in a taxi owned by a poor man:

1 - مرة واحد راكب تاكسي لقي سواق معلق في العربية صور جمال عبد الناصر وأنور السادات وحسنى مبارك. الراكب استغرب وسأل السواق: "مين اللي انت معلق صورهم عندك؟"، قال له: ده جمال عبد الناصر الزعيم المصري الراحل، وده أنور السادات قائد حركة الأمن والأمان في البلد، وده حسنى مبارك أبو علاء شريكى في التاكسي".

(El-Habib, 2011, p. 14)

(One day a person took a taxi. He noticed that the driver was putting the pictures of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak in the taxi. "Who are there?" asked the passenger. "This is Gamal Abdel Al-Nasser, the Egyptian leader; this is Anwar El-Sadat, the leader of safety and security movement all over the country; and, this is Hosni Mubarak, the father of Alaa, my partner in the cab," the driver answered.)

SO: Patriotism vs. corruption

LM: contrast

TA: Mubarak and his son

SI: a driver put Egyptian presidents' pictures in his taxi.

NS: narrative ending with dialogic ending

LA: sarcasm

The situation in this joke is that of a taxi driver who put Egyptian presidents' photos in his taxi. They are pictures of Gamal Abdel-Nasser (1954-1970), Sadat (1970-1981) and Mubarak (1981-2011). When asked by a passenger about these persons, the driver's answer activated the script of his love for those patriotic leaders through praising Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Sadat. However, when he

talked about Mubarak, he presented him as the father of his business partner, Alaa. His introduction of Mubarak is incompatible with the ongoing script of his admiration for former leaders. It activates the script of exploitation, corruption as well as suffering. This opposition between these two scripts is justified with the contrast mechanism through juxtaposing the driver's view about Mubarak and about his two predecessors.

The target of this joke is Mubarak's corrupt administration. This joke ridicules implicitly the spread of corruption that extended to everything. It also highlights the economic control by the president's sons, which was encouraged by their father since he facilitated their seizure of land. Moreover, it underlines corrupt policies and strategies that Mubarak followed and contrasts it with his patriotic predecessors.

Finally, the flouting of the quality maxim is also crucial to the resulting humor. The text presents an exaggerated information about the president's son: having a share in a taxi. This flouting implies a severe criticism of the regime that encouraged exploitation and enabled the officials' sons to make profits at the expenses of the middle-class people's small projects.

5.2. Political corruption

This section handles another example of suffering. It highlights the political corruption in the country. Texts in this section underline instances of corrupt political environment under Mubarak's administration. For example, officials in the National Democratic Party (NDP) controlled everything in the country. They cared mainly for their interests and benefits. This led to various dissatisfactory aspects such as the spread of corruption, nepotism and oppression that increased the suffering of the people. The following text, for example, unmasks the false appearance of this party and strips it down to its real ugly face:



(The National democratic (NDP) is not a place for making policies but a place for making sandwiches)

(<https://www.facebook.com/6AprilYouthMovement>)

SO:the opposition is between what is actual vs. what is non-actual: politics vs. food: policy vs. sandwiches

LM:false analogy

TA:the regime's officials

SI:the NDP is a restaurant serving sandwiches

NS:advertisement

LA:rhythm, sarcasm, and allusion

The humor in this text results from numerous resources: the script oppositions, the logical mechanism, the target, the situation, and linguistic elements, as well as the flouting of the cooperative principle. The opposition is between what is actual and what is non-actual. The mentioning of the NDP triggers the script of the political party, its officials and their policies. However, the second part of the statement triggers another script which shifts our line of thought about politics to the regime's sandwiches. Here, the world information illustrates that the NDP was the ruling party under Mubarak's administration, and it was responsible for making the country's policy. Nevertheless, the text presents the NDP as a place for making sandwiches, which creates a partial opposition between these two activated scripts.

This partial opposition between these two activated scripts is resolved through the use of the false analogy logical mechanism. The NDP is depicted here as a place for corruption and inefficiency. It is presented as a political party that does not care about making policy for the sake of the country but it is presented as a place for making profits for its favored members through protecting their corruption.

The choice of the NDP as a target for this text is very effective. This text makes fun of the NDP, which controlled and determined the country's policies that instead of lessening the people's suffering

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aggravated their miserable conditions. This regime comprises a handful of corrupt businesspersons who were self-interested and cared only for having their shares of the country's resources.

Moreover, the humor in this text is reinforced by alluding to the advertising register of a famous sandwich shop, "Mo'men", a local sandwich shop whose advertisement uses this formula: "MO'men is a shop for sandwiches". Here, this text used the logo of these shops as well as its linguistic formula to allude to the regime's avarice.

Finally, the flouting of the CP in this text is instrumental in the resulting humor. Here, the flouting of the quality maxim implies that the NDP is not a political party that attempts to improve the Egyptian country but it is a place for making money.

Similarly, the following text exposes the corruption within the NDP. Here, the regime's official is defending the political diversity in the party; he is trying to convince his interviewee that his party is representative of the whole country:



(An NDP's official tells a TV reporter, "Within the NDP, We have tall persons and short persons; thin and fat ones; and, one with a moustache and another without. This indicates the diverse political formation of the party".)

(El-Gamal, 2011, p. 250)

SO: different physical appearances vs. political diversity

LM: reasoning from false premises

SI: describing the variation within the NDP

TA: NDP

NS: an interview

LA: wordplay & sarcasm

The situation in this example is that of an NDP's official affirming that his political party represents a model of multiplicity of

people by including various physical appearances. This statement activates the script of individual differences in physical appearances since there are tall and short men, fat and thin ones...etc. However, the final statement is incompatible with this activated script since it is related to the ideological or political variation script. The activation of the latter script is realized by the use of the semantic shift trigger "political diversity". This wordplay enhances the resulting juxtaposition of the two activated scripts that are in partial opposition.

This partial opposition is realized by the difference between two types of variation: physical and ideological variation. The first has to do with characters while the second is related to politics. However, this opposition is justified by the logical mechanism of faulty reasoning from false premises since the official argues that the existence of physical differences is an evidence of the political variation.

The target of this joke is the official who interpreted and restricted the field of variation within the party to physical differences. This interpretation shows lack of common sense which refers to the increasing political corruption under the regime's administration.

Finally, in this joke, there is a flouting of the relation maxim since the official used physical differences to indicate the existence of ideological multiplicity. However, this flouting implicitly indicates the spread of corruption and inefficiency under Mubarak's administration.

Similarly, political corruption is also evident through the regime's corrupt and inefficient officials who worked hard to satisfy the president. They propose foolish and unpractical ideas. For example, in the following situation, the minister of education proposed a solution to the problem of the president's quarrelling sons:

1 - جمال مبارك وعلاء بيتعاركوا مين يمسك الحكم، وبعدين دخل عليهم أبوهم ومعاه وزير التربية والتعليم، فالريس قال: "أنا مش عارف أعمل إيه مع العيال دي، الاتنين عايزين يكسوا الحكم وطبعاً ده ماينفعش". فرد الوزير وقال: "ينفع ياريس: فترة صباحية وأخرى مسائية".

(El-Habib, 2011, p. 17)

(Gamal Mubarak and his brother Alaa are quarrelling over who will succeed their father. Then, the president and the Minister of Education come in. "I do not know how to deal with these two sons: both of them want to be the next president, and as you know, that is impossible," the president complains. "O Mr. president that is possible if we make the presidency a two-shift job: a morning shift and a night one," the minister proposed.)

SO: real vs. unreal: possible vs. impossible: presidency office vs. school timing

LM: faulty reasoning

SI: Mubarak's sons are quarrelling over presidency

TA: Mubarak and the regime

NS: narrative with a dialogic ending

LA: sarcasm, register humor

The situation in this example is that of the president's two sons who were fighting over the presidency. It activates the presidency office script. This script is enhanced by the complaining statement of Mubarak since this position requires only one person. However, the minister of education provided a solution which is totally incompatible with the activated script; the proposed solution provides a two-shift office time, which is meaningless and irrelevant to the previously activated script. The minister's recommended solution is compatible with the script of Egyptian educational system which applies the two-shift system in places where there are large number of students and limited space available.

The incongruity between these two evoked scripts is obvious. In this example, there is a local antonym between the presidential office with the two-shift educational system. This opposition is resolved through the logical mechanism of faulty reasoning since the minister falsely claims the viability of the two-shift solution for the presidency.

The target in this joke is the regime's officials who are responsible for making policies and decisions. This text ridicules them through presenting their foolish, nonsensical solutions for the country's problems; it also exposes the political corruption that was rampant under the administration of this regime.

Finally, there is a flouting of the quality maxim in this joke. Here, the minister presents faulty information in his proposition to make the presidency's office a two-shift system like government school in Egypt. However, this flouting of the quality maxim implicates the spread of corruption as well as the absence of efficient officials who could propose sound solutions to problems.

5.3. Suppression and oppression

The state under Mubarak's administration was a model for a police state. The regime imposed strict measures to prevent any opposition. Egyptians during their protests created various humorous texts to expose the regime's oppression and suppression. They humorously

and implicitly, and often explicitly, exposed the brutality of the Ministry of Interior in dealing with the citizens. They also reveal that the regime had thousands of informants to report any opponent or opposing voice. The following text implicitly expose the brutal means the state security used to torture citizens:

2 - مبارك ماشي في الصحراء شاف تمثال، قال لحبيب العادلي: " شوف لي التمثال ده بتاع مين يا حبيب". ربع ساعة رجع له حبيب وقاله: " ده رمسيس الثاني يا فندم". مبارك قاله: "عرفت منين؟"، العادلي رد: "اعترف يا فندم".

(El-Gamal, 2011, p. 193)

(While walking in the desert, Mubarak saw a statue. "Whose is that?" he asked Habib Al-Adley, the Minister of Interior. After fifteen minutes, Habib came back and said, "It is a statue of King Ramses II". "How did you know?" Mubarak asked. "He confessed, Mr. President," said Al- Adley.)

SO: real vs. unreal: hum\an torture vs. statue's interrogation

LM: exaggeration; personification

SI: a statue is forced to confess after being interrogated by Al-Adly

TA: the atrocity of the minister of Interior

NS: narrative with dialogic ending

LA: sarcasm

The situation in this joke is about a statue in the desert, found by Mubarak. He asked Al-Adly, the minister of interior, to find out its origin. This activates the script of determining the origin of a statue, perhaps by some modern scientific means; and, the minister's initial answer intensifies this script. However, when asked by Mubarak about how he knew that it belonged to Ramses II, the minister said that the statue had confessed. This answer is completely incompatible with our previously activated script. In contrast, it is related to an inferential script about the brutal treatment and severe means used to interrogate suspects.

The opposition between these two scripts is a partial one since it did not emerge from the local antonym between scripts but rather from an inferential antonym between what is said and what is triggered. This opposition between these two scripts is resolved through the employment of the exaggeration mechanism. This mechanism evoked a script exposing the inhuman treatment of citizens at the hands of the security apparatus.

The target of this joke is Habib Al-Adly. He was accused of employing severe means to silence or get confessions from the

regime's opponents, which was one of the main reasons behind the breaking out of the revolution. It triggers the people to call for the change of this regime, under which human rights were abused.

Finally, the flouting of the quality maxim is also evident in forcing the statue to give information about its origin. In fact, this flouting of the maxim implicitly indicates that the brutal treatment of the ministry of interior leads both humans and inanimate objects to act abnormally.

The following joke exposes the citizens' fear of the regime informant who would write them up if they did not support the president and the regime:

3 - رئيس الوزراء يقول للرئيس والله ياريس دي الناس بتحبك جامد لما بيستمعوا السلام الجمهورى وبيشوفوا صورتك بيفضلوا يسقفوا لحد ما تطلع. فذهب الرئيس ليرى على الطبيعة وبالفعل وجد الناس حتتهار من التسقيف وذهب لأكثر من سينما فوجد نفس الكلام فتنكر، وذهب إلى سينما مجهولة ووجد الناس تصفق بحرارة وهو لم يصفق طبعا وفوجئ بأحد المتفرجين يضربه على.... ويقول له: "صفق السينما كلها مخبرين".

(El- Habib, 2011, p. 17)

("Mr. President, I swear to God that people love you very much. When they hear the national anthem and see your picture, they keep clapping their hands until your picture goes out," the prime minister assured the president. Seeking to verify the prime minister's statement, the president went to a cinema. He found the people exhausted from clapping. When he went to more than one cinema, the people were doing the same. Then, he went to a remote cinema in disguise. He found the people enthusiastically clapping their hands but he did not. Suddenly, a spectator gave him a slap on his..., "Clap your hands; the cinema is full of informants," he warned him.)

SO: Love vs. fear: non-actual vs. actual

LM: garden path

SI: Mubarak went to cinema to see how much people love him

TA: Mubarak

NS: narrative with a dialogic ending

LA: sarcasm

The situation in this joke is that the prime minister claimed that people loved Mubarak and were satisfied with him. Wanting to make sure of this claim, Mubarak went to different cinemas. Wherever he went, he saw people after the singing of the national anthem and the display of his picture. This situation indeed activates the script of people's love for Mubarak. Then, Mubarak went to a remote cinema,

he found the people clapping vigorously but he did not. One spectator noticed that he did not clap, he beat him to warn him to clap because all the people at the cinema were informants. This final punchline is incompatible with the first activated script. It activates another script: the script of fear and oppression.

Moreover, the opposition between these two scripts is complete because of the complete overlapping between the two scripts. This complete overlapping leads to the existence of a local antonym, which is justified through the logical mechanisms of garden path. We are triggered to construe the people's cheering and vigorous shouting as an evidence of the prime minister's claim. However, the punchline refutes our previously activated interpretation through shifting our line of thought to the script of fear, arrest, and detention for not clapping on seeing the president's picture.

The target in this joke is Mubarak's oppressive means that spread fear among the people. The people were only allowed to express their absolute support for the president and his policies. This joke sheds light on the autocratic ruler who controls his people by intimidating them. Finally, the flouting of the maxim of quality in alleging that the people loved Mubarak is a source of humor. The providing of the exaggerated information that all the spectators were informants even in a very remote cinema implies that Mubarak's regime recruited thousands of informants all over the country.

5.4. Hard living conditions

The widespread corruption and rampant nepotism as well as Mubarak's bad management were all elements which led to disastrous living conditions for the Egyptians. Ahmed Ali (2012), an Egyptian writer, skillfully demonstrated the impact of the Mubarak regime's policies upon the country's state, as well as the citizens' in different fields as follows:

Egypt was staggering under the economic policies that were designed to make the rich richer, the poor poorer and the corrupt more corrupt; under social conditions that made the depressed more depressed; under a state of moral degradation that made the talk of adhering to traditional as well as religious moral values no more than detachment from reality. (p. 1)

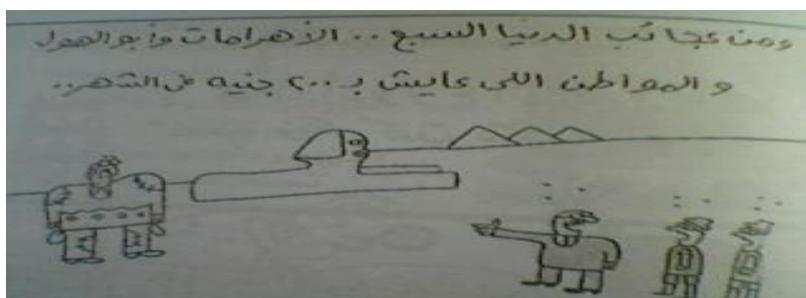
The impact of the regime's administration and the adopted policies upon the Egyptians made them frustrated because of the spread of corruption, ignorance, negligence, bribery and fraud. To

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remind the people of this regime's destructive policies, revolutionaries in Egypt's various squares coined up numerous texts to highlight the corruption of that regime and to expose officials' corruption. They used various humorous texts to refer to their suffering and living conditions.

For example, in the following texts, the Egyptian citizen who can live on 200 pound per month is viewed as one of the Seven Wonders of the world:

4-



(El-Gamal, 2011, p. 183)

(The Seven Wonders of the world include the pyramids, sphinx, and the Egyptian citizen who is able to survive with only 200 pound per month," a tourist guide told tourists.)

SO: real vs. unreal: World Seven Wonders vs. Egyptian citizen's income

LM: false analogy

SI: a tourist guide tells the tourists about the Seven Wonders of the World

TA: the regime policies

NS: statement

LA: parallelism & sarcasm

The situation in this caricature is that of a tourist guide who was telling the tourists about the Seven Wonders of the World. This activates the script of ancient, wonderful monuments. The mentioning of the pyramids and Sphinx enhances this script. However, the last item he mentioned was the citizen who could live on 200 pound a month. This item is incompatible with the previously activated script because our world knowledge interprets this item as irrelevant to the script of the Seven Wonders. It activates another script which is related to the script of the Egyptian citizen's suffering, whose living

condition is considered one of the world's greatest mystery.

These two activated scripts are completely opposed and partially overlapping. Their complete, local antonym lies in the mention of pyramids and sphinx as World Wonders along with the Egyptian citizen who is not. However, the partial overlapping of the two employed scripts is realized through the fact that these three items defy the rule of existence: the first two items defy time while the third item defies explanation and description since living on such a small amount of money is an enigma. This partial overlapping is also realized by the use of the logical mechanism of false analogy since the third item is presented as a thing which triggers our astonishment and curiosity as the other two items did.

The target in this text is the regime's policies. Here, the regime policy made the Egyptian citizen to be grouped among the World Seven Wonder, and his miserable life – as well as, perhaps, to the tourists- to be among the world biggest mysteries. Finally, there is a flouting of the quality maxim. In this text, the tourist guide provides information which is untrue. Here, the Egyptian citizen is introduced as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This flouting implies an implicit criticism to the ruling regime which did not care for citizens 'living condition, who were leading hard lives.

Similarly, the following text illustrates the people's suffering because of the government's policies and its exploitation of the poor citizens:

5-



(El-Gamal, 2011, p. 52)

“Parse the prices of the government,” the teacher orders the student.
“The prices are in the nominative case and the government is

embezzling us,” the student said.)

SO: asking about declension vs. expressing a personal view

LM: ignoring the obvious

SI: a teacher asks a student to parse a phrase

TA: the government’s policies

NS: dialogue

LA: wordplay& sarcasm

The situation in this caricature is that of an Arabic class. The teacher ordered the student to parse a phrase. This activates the script of a teacher and a student in school. Moreover, our world knowledge triggers some expectations about the student’s reply. However, the student’s reply is incompatible with this activated script. The student’s answer does not match our information about inflecting a word nor our expectation derived from our world knowledge. Instead, his answer activates another script related to commenting on the “phrase” instead of parsing it.

In this example, the student ignores the obvious question and provides an answer that denotes a criticism of the government’s policies. This triggers an opposition between the two activated scripts since the student’s answer has nothing to do with the teacher’s question. However, these two scripts are partially overlapping since the student’s answer employed some syntactic items which are related to the activated script. These items are related to wordplay through using declension terms, such as “مرفوعة” and “ناصبة”. Despite this complete opposition and the partial overlapping, the activated scripts’ incongruity is justified through the ignoring of what is obvious. This means that the student ignores the teacher’s question as well as the rules of the declension to express his criticism of the government.

The target in this text is the government’s policies which made prices go up. Here, the government is presented as embezzling Egyptian citizens who were leading tough living conditions. Although any government should have tried to alleviate those bad policies, the government was only increasing its exploitation of poor citizens.

Finally, there is a flouting of the relevance maxims. Here, the teacher asked the student to parse a phrase, but the student’s answer was not related to question or the expected answer. On the contrary, his answer led to a conversational implicature, which revealed his attitude towards government’s policies upon poor citizens.

A remarkable humorous text that ridicules that regime’s polices

is the following text. Here, the regime is presented as increasing the people's suffering instead of seeking to alleviate it:

6 - مبارك قال لعمر سليمان: "أيه أخبار الشعب بعد الغلاء؟". قاله: "الشعب بيأكل زفت". قاله: "غلى الزفت".

(El-Gamal, 2011, p. 194)

("What did the people do after we raised the prices?" Mubarak asked Omar Suleiman. "The people are eating tar," Suleiman said. "Increase the price of the tar," ordered the president.)

SO: real vs. unreal; idiomatic vs. literal interpretation; eating tar vs. increasing its price; and, alleviating suffering vs. increasing it

LM: ignoring the obvious & contradiction

SI: Mubarak asks Suleiman about the people's living conditions

TA: the regime's policies

NS: dialogue

LA: idiomatic meaning and ambiguity, literalization of the idiom.

In this situation, Mubarak asked Suleiman about the people's living conditions after the prices went up. This activates the script of a president who seeks to alleviate his people's suffering. However, Mubarak's order to increase the prices was incompatible with his initial question. His latter order activates an opposing script wherein Mubarak is presented as seeking to aggravate the Egyptians' suffering. Regardless of the meaning of Suleiman's response, Mubarak asks him to increase the price of tar which the Egyptians have turned for sustenance after the prices went up.

The opposition between these activated scripts is justified through the logical mechanism of ignoring the obvious and the resulting contradiction between being responsible for alleviating the people's suffering and seeking to increase it. Here, Mubarak ignores the denotation of the idiomatic expression "eating tar" and takes it literally. He used the word tar in the script of eating and asked to increase its price.

The targets in this example are the regime's officials and the president. During his administration, the inflation was increasing, the people were suffering, and the regime was increasing the people's bad living condition. Therefore, this joke presented the regime as unwilling as well as uninterested in assuaging the people's suffering.

Furthermore, the use of sarcastic tone also enhances the resulting humor. Here, Mubarak is presented as a president who lacks the required linguistic competence to differentiate between the literal

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meaning and an idiomatic one. He cannot identify the idiomatic expression which Suleiman used to express the suffering of the people. Thus, Suleiman's answer pushed the president to mistake tar as one of the edible items although our world knowledge indicates that human beings cannot eat tar.

Moreover, this idiomatic expression provided by Suleiman is a flout of the quality as well as the manner maxims. The flouting of the manner maxim is evident in Suleiman's answer which provided an ambiguous answer that was misunderstood by Mubarak. He also flouts the quality maxim since tar is not eatable. The flouting of these two maxims gives rise to the implicature that Mubarak was not an efficient ruler since he did not care about his people or their suffering.

Conclusion

In this study, various reasons for the people's suffering were exposed. It highlights four aspects of the maladministration of the ruling regime which increased the people's hard living conditions. Firstly, it underlines the spread of the economic corruption which enabled the regime's officials to exploit the poor citizens. Secondly, it highlights the political corruption, which exposes the autocratic reign disguised as a democratic one believing in diversity and election. Thirdly, it demonstrates another means of controlling Egyptians through intimidating them. Finally, it exposes the regime's policies in aggravating the people's suffering instead of securing them better living conditions.

The texts in this study employed various elements and mechanisms to convey the Egyptians' suffering. They employed different types of opposition and overlapping. They also used different logical mechanism to justify this opposition. The situations revealed the different aspects of their suffering: economic corruption, political corruption, suppression and oppression, and hard living conditions. The linguistics devices in these texts depended mainly on employing the sarcastic tones along with word play.

In addition, the texted in question flouted the Cooperative Principle. This flouting gave rise to various conversational, and in some cases conventional, implicatures, which revealed the people's attitude towards Mubarak and his regime.

Moreover, the evident existence of the referential humor affects the script distribution within these texts. Scripts activated in these texts were asymmetrically distributed due to the lack of proportion between the Foreground Script (FS) and the Background Script (BS). The first is the one activated by the existence or the establishment of an opposing meaning to the previously evoked via the existence of the BS. The background script usually sets the stage for the FS (Amadeu Viana, 2010, p.508). The distribution of FSs and BSs is not equal in the section. It is also noteworthy that numerous texts present only the foreground information that the model reader will automatically contrast with his linguistic as well as world knowledge. This use of the inferential scripts presented a challenging task in the analysis as well as the appreciation stages since readers would not get the implied meanings without being aware of the BSs. This employment of inferential scripts made it easier for them to safely convey many

messages about the ruling regime. However, this made the appreciation process by any reader a challenging one.

Finally, the texts in this section highlight an important aspect concerning the hierarchical nature proposed by Attardo and Raskin of the knowledge resources. They argued that these KRs followed a specific order in the process of humor invoking: SO, LM, SI, TA, NS, and LA. However, one noticed that the TA parameter occupies the highest position in these texts. This parameter determined the employed opposed scripts that will define the employed LM, SI, NS, as well as the LA parameters. The following diagram shows the difference between Raskin and Attardo's (1991) hierarchy of KRs in their GTVH and the one that these texts demonstrated during the analysis process:



Figure 1: Attardo and Raskin's hierarchical order of the KRs in the invoking of humor—carrying text.



Figure 2: The hierarchical order that the analyzed texts revealed

The higher position that is occupied by the LA KR is compatible with aim of these texts. These texts were all created either to ridicule the present or to expose his bad administration. Therefore, the choice of the LA will demonstrate that there was a change in the order of the content KRS in opposition to a stability in the order of the tool KRs. Moreover, the tool resources is reduced to minimum significance in these texts since the use of the referential humor underlines the importance and the role played by the content KRs more than that of tool KRs in the process of creating the humorous texts.

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