Linguistic Analysis of Humor in Jordanian Arabic among Young Jordanians Facebookers

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Abstract
This study presents preliminary analysis from a sociopragmatic perspective of the speech act of humor in Jordanian Arabic as used by Jordanian Facebookers. The data of the current study was collected from Facebook status updates. A total of 1535 status updates were collated and classified according to their communicative functions. Of this number, 210 humorous messages matched Nastri et al.’s (2006) description of humor and were analyzed to determine the pragmatic functions utilized in writing a humorous status update on Facebook in Arabic. The findings indicate that generally the Jordanians tend to be more serious and less humorous. In terms of gender differences, the findings reveal that female participants were less humorous than their male counterparts. These findings suggest that certain aspects of humor are more culture-bound, as in masculine societies such as Jordan, women are perceived to be subordinate to men. Within these societies, men are supposed to be talkers, whereas women are expected to be listeners. The findings also highlight that the function of humor is governed by three pragmatic functions, namely, love, life and work. It was also found that female participants were more interested in posting hilarious romantic anecdotes, whereas male users were more concerned with discussing humorous daily life activities.

Keywords: Arabs, Facebook status updates, Jordanians are very serious, online humor, online speech acts,
Introduction
There has been a proliferation of language and gender studies in the last few decades (Newman et al. 2008). Linguists have explored the relationship between the usage of language and gender differences by employing various methodologies and a wide range of variables. Research on humor has also seen rapid acceleration among researchers. The field now has journals devoted exclusively to the study on humor. Examples of such journals include: The European Journal of Humor Research, International Journal of Humor Research, International Society for Humor Studies, as well as other periodicals on language usage such as Journal of Communications, Journal of Pragmatics, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communications and Journal of Personality and Individual Differences. There are many hypotheses and stereotypes postulating gender differences in the use and appreciation of humor, but there is an obvious lack of studies exploring how Jordanians use humor in social networking sites (SNSs), especially in Facebook. This paper is an attempt towards bridging this gap.

In the virtual community, SNSs may perpetuate a mirage of a real life community and provide a platform for the real life discourses (McNeill, 2008). An essential part of interactions among people in a community entails the use of humor in daily conversations that could range from teasing, banter to self-mockery (Norrick and Chiaro, 2009). Sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Carr et al., 2012; Dimicco and Millen, 2007; Kloučková, 2010; Mcneill, 2008) have contended that humor serves an essential social function in SNSs. In this respect, the researchers concentrate on online humor as a key example of everyday life among its users. It is well-documented that humor in all its complexity is a major element of human culture that merits researchers’ close attention. The everyday online social interactions could provide deeper insights and reveal the thought process that could assist in understanding the particular online speech community.

SNSs play a major role in the Jordanian society, especially among the young generation. Among the many SNSs that are available, Facebook seems to be one of the most popular SNSs, and Jordanians are particularly attracted to it. According to CheckFacebook.com, the number of Facebookers in Jordan was over two million in 2012, which accounts for half of internet users in Jordan. Jordanian users between the ages of 18 and 24 years comprise 44% of the total Facebookers (Ghazal, 2012). Mcneill (2008) and Bjørnsson (2011) contend that Facebook is growing in popularity among young people who are of or approaching university age. The sample in the current study is taken from Jordanian undergraduate Facebookers aged between 18 to 24 years.

In addition to features such as 'profiles', 'friends', 'comments', and 'private messaging', Facebook is flexible because it allows its users to update their status messages anytime. The status messages reflect users’ comments, views and feelings and allow them to share the updates of their activities with each other at any time (Das & Sahoo, 2011; Ellison and Boyd, 2007). Wilson et al. (2012) also assert that Facebook offers a unique opportunity for researchers to examine a wide variety of social phenomena in a realistic setting. Based on this claim, the current study chooses Facebook status messages as an analytic tool to investigate naturally occurring humor acts in the Jordanian context.

It is widely assumed that Jordanians are less humorous compared to other nationalities as reflected in some newspaper articles, cartoons, Facebook groups or pages and academic writing. This is probably due to the fact that Jordanians frown a lot, even in the public places (Freij, 2012). In an effort to substantiate empirically whether Jordanians are less or more humorous than
others, it would be appropriate and relevant to examine Nastri et al.’s (2006) findings with regards to the Jordanian context. In their study, Nastri and his colleagues investigate how participants use language to construct their instant messages. They found that almost one-fifth of the data included some attempts to evoke laughter.

In the present study, the researchers extend Nastri et al.’s work by providing an empirical analysis of the frequency of humor production in Facebook status updates. This extension has two objectives: first, to find out the frequency and manifestations of humor in Facebook status messages among young Jordanian Facebookers, so as to compare between the frequency of humor of this study and those found in Nastri et al. (2006); and second, to understand the pragmatic function of humor in Facebook status updates because the analysis of how people present themselves through humor may give a deeper understanding into the value system of the Jordanian young community as reflected in their speech. These objectives are guided by the following research questions:

**Research Questions**

1. What is the frequency of humor produced in the Facebook status updates messages (FUSM) among male and female Jordanian Facebookers?
2. What function does humor play in the FUSM among male and female Jordanian Facebookers?

**Literature Review**

There is an ample amount of literature on humor, documenting and revealing how it is performed by speakers with various features in different social contexts (Lynch, 2002). Social scientists from different disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and gender studies have explored the features of humor and joking (Shifman & Lemish, 2010). Linguists have studied and approached humor from different angles, including sense of humor (Martin & Sullivan, 2013), humor appreciation (Carretero-Dios & Ruch, 2010), and humor as a coping strategy (Samson & Gross, 2012). This literature review represents an assessment from the body of studies available. It reviews the features of humor which provide relevant background information to the current paper.

Despite the great number of studies exploring humor, no satisfactory definition has yet been reached (Samson et al., 2013). Researchers define humor in different ways. Berger (1976), for example, defines humor on the basis of the audience’s interpretation as a “specific type of communication that establishes an incongruent relationship or meaning and is presented in a way that causes laughter” (Berger, 1976 cited in Duncan, 1982, p.136). In his definition, Berger highlights laughter as a main thrust of his definition. Winick (1976), on the other hand, concentrates on the speaker’s intention and defines humor as “any type of communication that has a witty or funny intent that is known in advance by the teller” (p.125).

Based on the given definitions of humor, it can be seen that although the definition of humor is possible, its application to the selection of instances from real life data is difficult to determine. There is unavoidably some subjectivity involved, and the researchers may use some sort of their understanding to the data. Researchers may put the emphasis on a particular aspect based on what they are interested in. Hence, the essential dilemma is to make obvious which criteria are being applied, so that the reader may understand what is meant when the word “humor” is used in any study.
One of the most well-known definitions of humor is the one propounded by (Lynch, 2002). According to him, humor is an “intended or unintended message interpreted as funny” (Lynch, 2002: 423). This definition is adopted in the current study because it is more comprehensive than the others, and it has a high frequency of use in online humor research studies (e.g., Carr et al., 2012; Nastri et al., 2006). Lynch, in his definition, takes into his consideration the fact that humor is a matter of subjectivity. Although different people are able to appreciate the humor in the same joke, there would also be those who would not find it funny. In other words, while unsuccessful humor fails to make a listener laugh, it is still an attempt to evoke hilarious responses.

Different theories have started to look at the functions that humor plays in a particular context (Tracy et al., 2006). They have explored the psychological motivations of humor, theorizing that individuals may find certain messages to be funny due to superiority, relief, or incongruity (Lynch, 2002). First, the superiority theory suggests that people are motivated to use humor as they can feel superior over others or even over one’s own previous situation. Superiority humor is usually found either in the form of laughing at others’ inadequacies, or self-derision (Cooper, 2008; Gruner, 1978). However, the superiority theory is too limited because not all funny situations make individuals feel superior.

A second psychological theory considers humor as a tool for relief from physical and emotional problems (Lynch, 2002). This means that a joke or laughter is used to reduce tension or boredom. According to this theory, humor can be an appropriate means for breaking the ice among individuals. It increases trust among parties and helps individuals to save face in their interactions. The third theory is incongruity theory. According to Cooper (2008), this theory focuses on the object that is the source of the humor (joke, cartoon, etc.). More specifically, incongruity theory proposes that humor is based on intellectual activities rather than a drive to be superior or to reduce tension (Lynch, 2002).

These three main theories—superiority, relief, and incongruity—continue to dominate theoretical understandings of humor motivations and origins. However, regardless of motivation or origin, humor has been unilaterally perceived as an essential activity in everyday interactions (Carr et al., 2009; Lynch, 2002). Drawing on status messages posted by Facebook users, Carr (2012) found that online humor is used as a means of engaging in interpersonal communication with others, and it functions as a mechanism for identity creation.

In his study, (Lynch, 2002) tried to explain how a communication approach can be used as a medium between the psychological and sociological studies of humor. He proposed that there are general functions which humor serves in a society such as identification, differentiation and resistance. He claimed that in contrast to psychological or sociological research that gives more attention to what humor does for the individual or for a society, sociolinguistic researchers should give more attention to explore how humor serves as a social function among individuals or among the particular speech community.

Huang and Kuo (2011) found in their study that humor could be a source of power and influence, enabling organizations to foster unique dynamic environments, perhaps improving the competitive advantage of the organizations. They concluded that humor plays a significant role in promoting team spirit and forging cohesive units in organizations that unanimously are concerned with their own survival and profitability levels. Their findings are supported by other
studies which concluded that humor is a useful tool to facilitate communication; build relationships; mitigate tensions; create open atmosphere that improves listening, understanding and acceptance of messages; enhance romantic relationships; influence perspective; deflate self-importance or undue emphasis on a particular project or policy and encourage concentration and motivation (Cahill & Elke, 2008; Gardner et al., 2005; Locke, 2011).

In order to explore how participants use language to construct their away messages, Nastri et al. (2006) investigated the social applications of instant messaging (IM). More specifically, they examined what specific types of speech acts were used by participants to create their away messages. Data was analyzed based on Searle’s (1969) speech act taxonomy. Away messages were first coded into descriptive categories such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. Then, they were analyzed for humor and were marked as either containing humor or not comprising any humor. The findings indicated that the messages were constructed mostly with assertives, followed by expressives and commissives, but rarely with directives. It became evident that humor was frequently detected in away messages. Almost one-fifth of the data included some attempts to evoke laughter and amusements (humor). The researchers concluded that away messages were constructed with two communicative goals in mind: to entertain and to inform. These findings are upheld by other researchers who asserted that away messages away messages often express both informational and entertainment meanings (Baron 2004; Carr et al. 2009).

In the Jordanian context, literature on humor is very scarce. One of the recent studies by Alzoubi (2012), examined the different types of humorous animated cartoon texts on political, economic and social topics. She hypothesized that each culture has its own unique way of expressing humor which may not easily be understood or comprehended by people from different cultures. In order to test her hypothesis, she collected data from different Jordanian websites such as www.sawaleif.com, www.mahjoob.com, and toons.kharabeesh.com. The animated cartoons were transliterated and translated into English. Then, analysis was executed based on three sources of humor, namely, linguistics, context and character. The findings revealed that humorous texts primarily serve three functions. The first function deals with social issues related to the Jordanian culture. It was observed that humor was used to criticize, disapprove, and complain about inappropriate behaviors in the society. The second function is related to economic issues. The humorous texts in this context were used to raise people’s awareness and attention to economic issues that surround them which affect their lives. The majority of these texts revolved around the role of corruption as one of the main problems of Jordan’s economy. The third function deals with political issues. The political humorous texts were regarded as effective tools to criticize political corruption, government, politicians, bias, inequality and society. The researcher concluded that humorous texts that contain pragmatic ambiguity are easier to understand than those that contain linguistic ambiguity or culture-specific meanings.

The studies reviewed above examined the speech acts of humor through different data collections methods such as the Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT), animated cartoons and IM. It should be noted that there are other studies on online humor which were conducted in English speaking countries (e.g., Carr et al., 2009; Lynch, 2002). However, studies on online humor based on non-western languages are very scarce. To the researchers’ best knowledge, there has been no serious attempt to study the act of online humor in the Arabic culture in general and particularly, in the Jordanian speech community. This venture into exploring speech acts through
a new and widespread social medium has set the purpose of the study, that is, to examine humorous status updates posted by Jordanians on Facebook.

As such, the current study has significant potential value for four reasons. First, it would extend the pragmatic analyses of humor by examining a large body of real-life data. Secondly, it will deal with a group of participants who (from a linguistic perspective) are relatively under-studied, and whose communications are formed by the online media affordances of a relatively novel communicative context. Thirdly, it would familiarize Arab EFL learners with the way native Jordanian Arabic speakers use humor in Facebook status updates, since what is considered funny and hilarious in one culture may seem inappropriate or even serious in another. Finally, the studies reviewed above used conventional instruments to collect data which include DCT, animated cartoons and IM. However, with regards to humorous Arabic texts posted in Facebook status updates, a method of investigation has yet to be determined for the speech act of humor. Therefore, this study attempts to expand previous research of speech act of humor and online messaging by examining how individuals use the Facebook status updates to communicate humorously. More specifically, it is an attempt to understand the role of humor in Facebook status updates through examining the frequency of humor as appearing in speech acts.

Methodology
Social scientists have distinguished between two different approaches the Internet can be used in research. These are named as ‘Web as corpus’ and ‘Web for corpus building’ (Hundt et al., 2007). The 'web as corpus' allows the researcher to create corpora from the Web directly. While, the 'Web for corpus building’ needs the researcher to select manually the data to build offline corpora (Meinl, 2013). The current study was conducted by following the ‘Web for corpus building’ approach, as the data has been extracted manually from the Facebook status updates. In order to facilitate the collection of these status messages, a Facebook account was created. The sample for the current study is selected using a snowballing technique. Snowball sampling is often used to recruit and find new informants. With this approach the sample emerges through a process of reference from one user to the next (Denscombe, 2010). The researchers used this technique to find as many potential users related to the search terms. Snowball sampling is often used to recruit and find new informants. With this approach the sample emerges through a process of reference from one user to the next (Denscombe, 2010). The researchers used this technique to find as many potential users related to the search terms. This technique is repeated until the required target sample size is achieved or until the additional data does not yield any new valuable information (Ahn et al. 2007). All the participants involved in the study are Arab Jordanians by birth. The sample was evenly balanced for gender, with 30 males and 30 females. All participants are from different disciplines including social science, computer science, engineering, economics and nursing.

It may be recalled that this study is an investigation into the humorous status updates posted by native Jordanian Arabic speakers on Facebook. In other words, the data of the current study was collected through Facebook status updates, which, according to Ellison (2007) & Wilson et al. (2012) display sufficient naturalistic behavioral data. These status updates could provide a rich source of information for researchers interested in understanding the linguistic features of online language. Through status updates, individuals not only express their feelings but also share information on their everyday life and activities as to what they are doing or what was going on in their lives at that moment (Ilyas & Qamar, 2012).

All undergraduate participants were studying at different universities that are located in either the southern or northern part of Jordan, namely, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Yarmouk University, Mutah University, TafilaTechnical University and Al al-Bayt University.
Different universities were chosen to represent the various regions and to produce a clearer picture of Jordanian humor that exists in the Jordanian culture.

In order to observe the status updates as they occur normally and naturally, the participants were not informed about how often their profiles would be checked or what particular elements of their Facebook profiles would be observed. Status updates were collected daily until they reached a saturation point (five months). A total of 1534 status messages were collected from 60 participants over a period of five months. Although these written status messages included different types of speech acts, only humorous texts were considered for such analysis. Coding for the use of humor was determined by the presence or absence of the humor features. Nastri et al. were of the opinion that humor production embraces any statement that has the following features:

1. Jokes (e.g., "I've decided to go to class.... not falling asleep and paying attention are NOT guaranteed :O");
2. verbal wit (e.g., "You are the apex of sexy danger");
3. sarcasm or irony (e.g., "Just call me sniffles");
4. teasing or facetious remarks (e.g., "Sleep Kicking some Dartmouth a** tomorrow night on the turf... be there or you smell A LOT").
5. Laughing Emoticons and Smileys (e.g. :, ;), XD, :'D, =D) are also used to show humorous acts; or onomatopoeia laughter such as, hahahahah (in Arabic, ﻲَّٓٓٓٓٓٓ), hehehe, (ٍٍٍٍّْٓٓٓٓ), and so on.

**Data Analysis**

The initial analysis of the data was first conducted by the researchers of this study. In order to achieve the reliability of data, two raters were asked independently to confirm that the status updates matched the data in light of Nastri et al.’s (2006) description of humor. The two raters are PhD candidates in applied linguistics. Both are Jordanian native speakers of Arabic and they have an adequate experience in the analysis of speech acts coding scheme. The researchers provided the raters with the collected status messages and asked them to code each one as having a sense of humor or not.

To answer the first research question, a total of 1535 status updates were collated and classified according to their communicative functions. Of this number, 210 humorous messages that matched Nastri et al.’s (2006) description of humor were examined and analyzed in order to describe the pragmatic functions used in writing a humorous status update on Facebook in Arabic. This means that only 13% of status messages contained some modicum of humor.

The amount of humor found in the update messages in this study were significantly lesser than those found in Carr et al.’s (2012) and Nastri et al.'s (2006) studies by 20% and 21%, respectively. This reduction in humor content may reflect the nature of Jordanian speech community. In order to be 'Zalameh' or a real man in Jordanian slang, one has to be less humorous and more serious. Based on one of the researchers’ experience as a native speaker of Jordanian Arabic, the concept of man in the Jordanian culture is the one who is fearless, emotionless, resourceful, stoic, serious and less humorous. In other words, in the Jordanian culture, it is the expected norm for men to suppress any kind of emotional expression, including humor. This norm or behavior is often encouraged and supported by the society to instil the
qualities as espoused in the stereotype the heroic male (Zalameh), who is featured prominently in the Jordanian culture.

In addition to the strict traditions that have led to a general expectation of frowning among Jordanians, the political and economic crises have worsened the situation in Jordan. Jordan has been affected by the deterioration in the security situation in the neighboring Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and the continued flood of Syrian refugees into the country. Along with Syrian refugees, a large number of Iraqis and Palestinian refugees flee to Jordan during the Gulf war in 1992 and 2003 (Bouckaert, 2006). As a result, Jordan has become one of the most expensive countries to inhabit in the region (Alzoubi, 2012). This economic situation has created a wide gap between income and expenditure, thus, making the provider of the family obsessed and rather bad-tempered about all those expenses that are due. Moreover, the shedding of innocent Arabs’ blood in other Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Palestine is another reason behind Jordanians’ bad temperament and emotionless behaviors.

In terms of gender differences in using humor, findings revealed that female participants (45%) were less humorous than their male counterparts (55%). A total of 115 humorous status messages were posted by the male participants compared to 95 by female participants. This phenomenon could probably be explained by examining Hofstede et al.’s (2005) cultural dimensions. Based on these dimensions, Jordan could be categorized as collectivistic and masculine society. In masculine societies such as Jordan, women are perceived to be subordinate to men. Within these societies, men are supposed to be talkers, whereas women are expected to be listeners (Nemati & Bayer, 2007). Based on this, an assumption is made that only men in Jordanian speech community can tell joke, while women are permitted to laugh at their jokes. This assumption is also supported by some of related studies that found that women prefer someone who make them laugh, while men desired someone who understands and laughs at their jokes (Bressler & Sigal, 2006; Force, 2013).

The second research question was formulated to describe the pragmatic function of humor in Facebook status updates. A content analysis of status messages indicated that humorous texts could be categorized into three pragmatic functions. The researchers called these pragmatic functions as knowledge resources. They are as follows:

1. **Love**: this dimension includes funny romantic posts, a status that shares issues about marriage, or hilarious posts that address the opposite gender. The following are examples of the “Love” dimension:

   "هوي بنام ع صورت حبيبتي أنا بناليد ع صورت صرصور الليل حتى صرلو يومين مو مبين افقترووو والله
شكلو بحب الواطلي"

   Translation
   (He falls in sleep while he is listening to his girlfriend’s voice, but for me I spent the whole night listening to the sounds of cockroaches. Even this noise I did not hear since two days. I think those bastard cockroaches fall in love, as well).

   "البيت العربيه!!! أول حب الها دايمًا. ابن عمها او ابنة خالها بعدين تنتقل للاحتراف الخارجي هيهيهيهيهه"

   Translation
   The Arabic girl, the first love for her is always either her cousin or the son of her uncle, after that she moves for professionals abroad, hahahah)
The above status is posted by a male participant. He makes witty remarks on Arab girls in general as the first love for them is always one of their relatives. Then after getting experience being romantically involved, they start falling in love with foreigners. Most of the times, humor is used to deliver messages in a tender way for other individuals to recognize. In other words, humor can be a mechanism to draw out suppressed attitudes and feelings to criticize society without the restrictions and limitations that are imposed on them by that society.

2. **Work**: this dimension includes issues like studying, journey or future work. See the following examples:

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أوبيها ... يا سولار ويا كاز
أوبيها ... ويا ينزين ممتاز
أوبيها ... ولي يرفع الأسعار
أوبيها ... تقع في جرة غاز
لولولولولولبيبنيش
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**Translation**

(The poet said “who desires to score high marks in an exam, should study every night” I stayed up for all night, the day, afternoon, and morning, but zero is what I got)

In this status update, the speaker complains about his exam marks. Although he tried his best to study for the whole day and night, he failed in the exam. In the status message, humor is expressed as a tool to mitigate the feelings of anger and sadness. According to release/relief theory, humor is a way to reduce tension and stress, solve problems and overcome some risky or awkward situations.

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واخيرا خلصت صيفي لولولولولبيبنيش
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**Translation**

(I am in a state of euphoria as I finished my short semester, Looloolooeeeeesh ).

In this status update, the speaker reflects her happiness as she would get a long holiday break after she has finished her short semester. Looloolooeeeeesh is a form of Jordanian chant of jubilation (ululation) which is usually performed by women during festivals or weddings to demonstrate happiness and joy. This status message indicates a lively and cheerful speaker who is elated and happy that she finished her semester.

3. **Life**: this dimension includes any status that does not fit in either of the above categories (e.g. daily life events, social occasions, hilarious moments in sport events, and funny personal stories). See the following examples:

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أوبيها .... يا سولار ويا كاز
أوبيها .... ويا ينزين ممتاز
أوبيها .... ولي يرفع الأسعار
أوبيها .... تقع في جرة غاز
لولولولولولبيبنيش
```

**Translation**

(Awiyeha .... oh oh Solar and gas..... Awiyeha .... oh 99 Octane petrol .... Awiyeha .... anyone intents to raise petrol prices.... Awiyeha .... may gas cylinder explode in his face... looololoooooosh)

The speaker in this status update used a new form of humorous ululation which is called in Jordanian Arabic as Zalagheet. This ritual form of speech act is usually uttered by women at weddings and festivals as an expression of happiness. As an indigenous type of ululation in Jordanian culture, a Zalagheet has structure in that it starts with “Awiyeha. . .” and ends with
“loolooloosh” or “leeleeleeesh”. By posting this witty status message, the speaker tries to highlight the problem of poverty in Jordan in a humorous and sarcastic way. He attempts to shed the light on a serious problem, namely, the high price of gas in Jordan.

Translation
(What killed me only was that the guy used fake photos of other muscular guys for his Facebook profile picture but in reality he has big paunch as big as the boxing bag hahahahahhah)

The status update above conveys a sense of irony about guys who use fake photos of other muscular guys as profile pictures for their Facebook, while in reality they are totally different. It should be noted that due to strict cultural and traditional norms, the majority of female participants do not use their real photos in their Facebook profile. Alternatively, they use photos of well-known actress or pictures of wedding gowns, or photos of babies / children.

The findings highlight that female participants were more interested in posting hilarious romantic anecdotes (51%), followed by witty comments on daily life activities (40%) and issues related to their academic life (7%). On the other hand, male participants were more interested in discussing humorous daily life activities by (71%), followed by love (31%), and work (13%). The findings on differences in humor between males and females suggest that females were more likely to appreciate self-deprecating humor, while males are more inclined towards wit and appreciation of jokes. It is also evident that the male participants were most apt at telling jokes about the opposite sex, whereas females were found most likely to share amusing stories about real experiences about occurrences that happened to themselves. See the following examples:

Translation
(I read a comment a little while ago on a Facebook page by a girl. Her nickname is the white knee hahahah)

This status is posted by a male participant. He ironically remarks on how Arab girl gives herself a weird nickname on Facebook.

Translation
"(At night, lovers miss each other; they cry for each other, they stay up all night with each other. But for me, I thank God, I just feel hungry at night)"

The above status is posted by a female participant. She makes witty remarks about herself that she does not have a boyfriend while others do.

Conclusion
The current study was conducted to substantiate the perception on the low occurrences and manifestations of humor among Jordanian Arabic native speakers. The data of the current study was collected through Facebook status updates. A total of 1535 status updates were collected and categorized according to their communicative functions. These status messages were coded as humorous if they appeared to be funny, witty, ironic or facetious. With regards to the first research question on the frequency and manifestations of humor among the Arab Jordanian
youths, the findings indicate that out of 1535 status updates, only 210 status messages were identified as humorous. The reduction in humor content was due to social, economic and political situation in Jordan. In terms of gender differences and the humor use, the findings reveal that male participants made more humorous status updates compared to their female counterparts. This is in line with the observation by Force (2013) who found that women prefer someone who could make them laugh, while men desired someone who laughs at their jokes. Similarly, for the second research question that seeks to understand the pragmatic functions of humor in Facebook status updates, the findings reveal that the function of humor is governed by three pragmatic motives, namely, love, life and work. It has also been found that female participants were more interested in posting amusing romantic anecdotes, whereas, male participants were more interested in discussing humorous daily life activities. Both Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) submitted that in saying something, a speaker may be doing something or be performing an action. They postulated that communication is a series of communicative acts that are used systematically to achieve specific purposes. In the current study, when respondents posted their status updates, they were saying something. In other words, humor is a form of speech act in which the speakers convey their message in an indirect way.

Although this study has generally answered the given research questions, there is still a need to do more extensive research on the speech act of humor by Jordanians in order to have a clearer picture on the use of humor in the Jordanian context. The general findings may be constrained by the following limitations. First, this study concentrated particularly on a limited number of samples. Future research on usage purposes of Facebook could broaden to involve a wider demographic base, both internationally and geographically, to further examine to what extent the findings are generalizable. Second, the researchers believe that this study should be conducted in other settings to further test the findings. Third, the speech act of humor could be also observed among Jordanian EFL learners. Regardless of these limitations, the findings of the current study provide some valuable insights. For example, the findings showed that Jordanians were more serious and less humorous since only 13% of the total status messages were identified as humorous. In contrast, other studies indicate approximately 21% of their data were humorous (Carr, et al. 2012; Nastri, et al. 2006).

The current study contributes to sociopragmatics studies and research on SNSs. It also presents methodological approaches for collecting data from online users. In this respect, Morkus (2009) states that the use of the SNSs (e.g., Facebook) in speech acts, research is pertinent as the language used in online interactions is totally different from either spoken or written language but it contains features of each, and therefore, it warrants examination in its own right. Morkus also claims that the use of digital medium is significant because there are new possibilities for collection of data that are not available in face-to-face communications. The current study, thus, adds an important contribution of how online humor is comprehended and produced by the Jordanian native speakers of Arabic. It has been noted that the humorous behaviors are always embedded and guided by the social norms of a particular culture and interacted with the daily life activities.

A content analysis of humorous status messages suggested that humorous texts revolved around three basic needs, namely, life, love and work. Therefore, these findings could assist in developing materials for specifically, teaching and learning pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The educational implications of the current study can also benefit designers of Arabic language
curricula to shed more light on the speech act of humor. Moreover, these findings can function as “situated-learning platforms” especially for newcomers who are entering Jordanian universities and undergoing socialization. What is considered as humor in one culture may not be considered similarly in another culture. Consequently, understanding and acquiring the Jordanian culture and the manner Jordanians express speech acts of humor through the Arabic language are necessary to improve the socialization process of the Jordanian society.

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