



Building a Typology of Humor in Animated Comedies: Analysis of The Saudi Animated Comedy *Masameer* Classics

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Abstract

The current study investigates the emergence of humor in the Saudi animated comedy *Masameer Classics*. The aim is to identify the humor techniques used to generate humor in the show. To do so, an amended typology made up of four categories (Language, Logic, Identity, and Action) and their 46 subsequent humor techniques was developed, based on two existing typologies in the literature. The coding of the data using the amended typology revealed that all four categories were used to generate humor in the show, with varying frequencies to their more specific techniques. Language dominated, followed by Identity, Logic, and Action. The prevalence of categories of humor that emerged in the animated comedy shed light on topics and themes highlighted in the show. The typology can be utilized in future research to identify how humor is generated in animated comedies, along with providing comedy creators with an insight into the specific techniques used to trigger humor in animated comedies.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Humour has a high profile in our society” (Ross, 1998, p. vi). Its influence is seen all around us, from the political satire that might sway our views to using it as a way of building relationships while excluding others from our inner groups. Making use of the three main theories of humor Superiority, Release and Incongruity, many attempts have been made to build taxonomies that explain the emergence of humor in different humorous texts that included jokes, conversations, sitcoms, advertisements, etc. (Attardo, 1994; Berger, 1993; Dynel, 2017; Juckel et al., 2016; Keith-Spiegel, 1972; Martin, 2007; Meyer, 2000; Raskin, 1985; Veatch, 1998). The typologies that emerged (Berger, 1993; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Dynel, 2009; Juckel et al., 2016; Long & Graesser, 1988; Norrick, 2003; Shade, 1996; Sully, 1902) included different techniques of humor, with some having higher-order categories that underlie these more specific techniques.

The current investigation aims at adding to that literature by examining the emergence of humor in animated comedies. According to Wells (2002), animation is seen everywhere around us, describing it as being one of the most important creative forms in recent times. With the introduction and success of shows like prime-time series *The Simpsons* in the late 1980s, the genre moved away from its initial perception as a form that caters to child entertainment (Dobson, 2009; Mittell, 2004). It constitutes a popular mode of communication seen from full-length movies to sitcoms, either broadcast through television or web-based platforms.

Despite the popularity of this mode of humor, there is a lack of research on how humor is generated in animated comedies. This scarcity is even more evident in the context of Arabic (Aldawsari, 2019; Kazarian, 2011; Tamer, 2009). As such, the Saudi animated comedy *Masameer Classics* is analyzed in an attempt to develop a typology that examines humor generated in animated comedies. The content of this show was chosen for analysis in this study due to the growing interest in animated sitcoms as well as the ability of such shows to depict societal and cultural issues and address topics that might be seen as taboo in other formats, such as sitcoms or TV series. The popularity of the show itself both on YouTube and on Netflix as a comedy, offers a good opportunity to test how humor emerges and what techniques are used to generate it in the context of Saudi Arabic

The aim is to help fill the gap of taxonomies that explain how humor is generated in animated comedies, in addition to adding to the literature of humor studies in general and those that examine humor in the context of Arabic in particular. To do so, the typologies developed by Berger (1993) and Juckel et al. (2016) are adopted. The decision to incorporate both into the current investigations stemmed from the former being one of the most comprehensive in the literature, while the latter's examination of humor in audiovisual media, i.e., sitcoms, could account for both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of humor. Typically, investigations of this type result in amendments that include inclusions and exclusions of some of the more specific techniques, which are done and reported on here. Alongside the emerging amended typology, the prevalence of these techniques is reported on with the aim of explaining from where the show derives its humor.

The current investigation aims at answering the following question:

1. What are the categories of humor and the techniques associated with them that emerge in the Saudi animated cartoon series *Masameer Classics*?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Typologies of Humor

Berger first introduced his typology in 1976 where he examined verbal jokes as a mode of humor, justifying the use of jokes as being short and easy to reproduce, allowing for the 45 humor techniques that emerged to be dealt with in a direct manner. This typology was described as being one of the most comprehensive in the literature and one that takes into account the different humor theories (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Juckel et al., 2016). According to Berger (1993), there are four basic categories that underlie the techniques he put forward (p. 17):

1. Language: the humor is verbal
2. Logic: the humor is ideational
3. Identity: the humor is existential
4. Action: the humor is physical and nonverbal

Berger stated that these categorizations help give a sense of what type of humor is being generated but the techniques that fall under each are the elements that are analyzed and the elements that give rise to humor (Check Appendix A). He emphasized that these techniques explain what makes people laugh rather than why they laugh, the latter being another area of investigation in humor analysis.

He noted that despite its limitations, this typology is a useful tool for humor researchers and can be amended and adapted where more techniques can be added according to the data being analyzed. He also highlighted the universality of these 45 techniques, where culture specificity would show/exhibit in which techniques are more common than others and in which

combinations of these 45 techniques are used to generate humor. Berger went on to elaborate on his typology in other investigations using different types of humorous texts (Berger, 1995, 1997, 2016, 2020, 2023). Several studies that examined a variety of humorous texts made use of Berger's typology (Ali, 2022; Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Dalyan et al., 2022; Germeroth, 1998; Islami et al., 2024; Juckel et al., 2016; Lubaba & Riyanto, 2022; Priana et al., 2024; Rochmawati, 2017; Tianli & Chen, 2024).

Juckel et al. (2016) aimed to build a typology of sitcom humor techniques to fill in the gap of research that investigated the key components of this mode of humor through examining a selection of famous American sitcoms. Throughout multiple phases, they reviewed the typology devised by Berger (1993) in addition to the typology that examined humorous commercials developed by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004). Their investigation resulted in a typology that consisted of 22 techniques that are specific to sitcoms (Check Appendix B). They stated that their taxonomy was exhaustive since all the categories were found in all the TV sitcoms analyzed, even though not all techniques were realized. It has been suggested in the literature that some of these techniques, occurring solely, might not generate humor or be enjoyable to the audience, such as the techniques that belong to the Action and Logic categories (Berger, 1993, 1997; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Juckel et al., 2016). However, Juckel et al. (2016) maintained that these were still important components of humor in sitcoms when combined with other techniques. Other investigations made use of the typology developed by Juckel et al. to examine the emergence of humor (Gamage & Kondowe, 2019; Heidari-Shahreza, 2017).

2.2. Mode of Humor: Overview of Arabian Gulf Animated Comedies

Although animated cartoons appeared in the Gulf as early as the 1970s, these were in the form of dubbed American and Japanese animation. Acquired and broadcasted by government-owned channels, these were only shown after undergoing national censorship to make them appropriate in terms of topic and cultural and religious references (Aldosari & Khayyat, 2024; Elhersh, et al., 2024; Sayfo, 2017; Sayfo, 2021; Van de Peer, 2017). The process of localizing foreign animation helped fill in the gap of not having fully home-grown animations in the Arab world (Aldosari & Khayyat, 2024; Alrimawi, 2024; Sayfo, 2021; Van de Peer, 2017). The rapid developments that occurred in the early 1990s in broadcasting services and the easy access to the internet led to a surge in demand for home-grown Arab animation to compete with and eventually replace high-quality, cheaply dubbed foreign shows (Aldosari & Khayyat, 2024; Alrimawi, 2014; Sayfo, 2021; Van de Peer, 2017).

It was much later, in the early 2000s, that original animations that were written, produced, and directed by Saudi and Gulf creators and producers began to appear, following developments that were seen in other Arab countries like Egypt and Syria much earlier (Saadi, 2011; Sayfo, 2017; Van de Peer, 2017). By the mid-2000s, the Middle East saw a surge in the production of animated sitcoms, as many titles have been released in different countries (Aldosari & Khayyat, 2024; Alrimawi, 2014; Elhersh, et al., 2024; Sayfo, 2021). Set in a local environment and referring to local events, these comedies have characters that portray visual, behavioral, and linguistic stereotypes of the community they are being produced in. These animated sitcoms do not target only children but also adults as they present social and political issues, offering a critical vision of the community (Alrimawi, 2014; Saadi, 2011; Van de Peer, 2017).

The introduction of the internet and the variety of social media platforms such as YouTube made it possible for animated studios and even individual animators to launch their work beyond TV channels. In 2011, Riyadh-based Myrkott Animation Studio (currently known as Sirb Productions) released the YouTube animated series *Masameer* (Nijr & Almuzaini, 2011), showcasing social and cultural issues relevant to the Saudi society. The use of that outlet to distribute the episodes proved successful as it became a very popular series. This success led to its acquisition by Netflix in 2020, first with streaming *Masameer Classics*, the original episodes that were available on YouTube, and then with the making of *Masameer: The Movie* (Nijr, 2020), and more recently the production of two new seasons of the series under a new title, *Masameer County* (Nijr, 2021). The introduction of a fully homegrown animated show *Masameer* to the global audiences shows the growing popularity and status of animated comedies as a mode of humor. This helped Arab animation gain momentum and exposure to global audiences, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries (Aldosari & Khayyat, 2024; Sayfo, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Building a Typology of Humor in Animated Comedies

Through adopting the typologies created by Berger (1993) and Juckel, et al. (2016), an amended typology that catered to humor generated in animated comedies was built. Several decisions were made pertaining to the techniques that would be included in the amended typology and the few that needed to be either excluded, grouped under another technique, or relabeled. These decisions were based on an examination of previous literature on humor typologies along with the studies conducted on coding humor techniques using these typologies. In addition, the analysis of Episodes 4 and 7 from Season 1, to pilot the amended typology was performed.

One important decision was adopting the four main humor categories used in Berger's (1993) typology as this ensured the logical and theoretical grouping of the subsequent techniques. Juckel et al. (2016) stated that Berger's top-down development of these four theoretical categories is a better choice as it avoids being left with a miscellaneous category as was the case with the typology developed by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004) who adopted a bottom-up categorization of humor. Table 1 below lists the 46 techniques along with offering a brief definition for each.

Table 1

Definitions of Techniques Used in the Amended Typology of Humor in Animated Comedies.

Humor Technique	Short Description
Absurdity	Nonsense, a situation that goes against all logical rules
Accident	Stems from things like slips of the tongue (fluffs), letters left off or improperly placed in headlines (typos),
Allusion	Indirect reference
Before and After: Transformation,	Someone or something takes on another form or undergoes a metamorphosis; before/after

Development	and	
Learning		
Blatant Advertisement		Advertising a real product/service in a blatant manner, usually from sponsors of the show
Bombast and Rhetorical Exuberance		Pretentious or boastful talk
Caricature		The ludicrous and grotesque representation of people by exaggeration of their characteristic features
Chase		A pursuit or chase of someone or something
Coincidence		A coincidental and unexpected occurrence
Comparison		Comparison between two things (or two groups of things) that are typically considered unlike for the purpose of explanation and clarification
Condescension		Displaying arrogance by patronizing those considered inferior
Deceitful Behavior		Being deliberately misleading, concealing or distorting the truth
Direct address to audience/ Audience/Show	to Mention of	Directly addressing audience or mentioning them in the show Dropping the name of the show
Eccentricity		Someone who deviates from the norms, an odd character
Embarrassment		An awkward situation in which someone gets a sense of discomfort, uneasiness, or shame
Exaggeration, Tall Tales, Comic Lies		Making an exaggeration or overstatement; reacting in an exaggerated way; exaggerating the qualities of a person or product
Exposure		Exposure of stupidity or some other "hidden" quality of a person, no deception is involved
Ignorance, Naivete	Gullibility,	Someone acts or behaves in a foolish, naive, gullible, or childish manner
Imitation		Imitating a style or a genre of literature or other media
Impersonation	and	Taking on the identity of another person, intentionally or unintentionally
Recognition		
Interruption/Ignoring someone		Cutting someone off or ignoring their presence/role in the conversation
Irony		Saying one thing and meaning something else or exactly the opposite of what you're saying
Insults		Making obvious feelings of aggression and hostility
Literalness/ Literalness	Over	The inability of some character to take circumstances into account and interpret a request in a reasonable manner
Mimicry		Imitating a style or a genre of literature or other media
Mistakes		Based on some kind of error, inattention, poor judgement, or ignorance
Misunderstanding		Misinterpreting a situation; triggered by language
Outwitting		Outsmarting someone or the establishment by retort, response, or comeback

Parody	Imitating a style or a genre of literature or other media
Peculiar Music	Funny, unusual music (when not as part of program structure)
Puns, word play	Playing with the meaning of words
Repartee	Verbal banter, usually in a witty dialogue
Repetition, Pattern	Repetition or replay of the same situation
Repulsive Behavior	Offensive, aversive, disgusting behavior
Reversal, Contradiction	Reveals the absurd elements in life and offers insights that are amusing and sometimes profound
Ridicule	Making a fool of someone, verbally or nonverbally
Rigidity	Someone who thinks along straight lines, who is conservative and inflexible
Sarcasm	Biting remark made with a hostile tone; sarcasm is always a verbal put-down
Satire	Making a fool of or poking fun at well-known things, situations, or public figures
Self-deprecation	Expressing something negative about oneself
Slapstick	Physical pie-in-the-face humor often involving degradation of someone's status
Speed	Lacking dexterity or grace
Stereotype and Stock Type	Talking or moving in very fast or slow motion
Threats/Supplication/Du'a	Stereotyped or generalized way of depicting members of a certain nation, gender, or other group
Unmasking and Revelation of Character	Threatening to cause harm or asking for Allah's punishment to befall someone
Wit	Unexpectedly get caught while wrongdoing or saying something reprehensible
	Ingenious humor

Since Berger's (1993) typology was developed based on verbal jokes while the current mode of humor consisted of an animated show that involves some form of action, a number of Berger's techniques were either removed or grouped under one technique to more suit the nature of animated comedies. A total of 9 techniques were removed from Berger's typology: Definition, Facetiousness, Infantilism, Catalogue, Disappointment, Theme/Variation, Burlesque, Grotesque, and Scale. Four techniques (Conceptual Surprise, Malicious Pleasure, Peculiar Face, and Clumsiness) were removed from the typology developed by Juckel et al. (2016). These were removed because they were either not relevant to humor generated in animated comedies or were represented by other techniques.

Unmasking/Revelation under the logic category is an example of a technique that underwent relabeling and restructuring in the amended typology. Berger (1993) used the term Unmasking to mostly denote uncovering the wrongdoing done by a character and in earlier versions of his typology categorized it under Identity and not Logic. Similarly, Juckel et al. (2016) chose two labels to denote the surprise-factor that occurs with revelations of similar nature, one was Caught Out to describe revelations of characters' wrongdoing while the other

was Conceptual Surprise to code instances of misleading the audience through an unexpected change in concept, both under the Logic category. The choice to use the label Unmasking/Revelation was to have a term that denotes revelations of any type, i.e., character-related, concept-related, plot-related, etc. Other decisions followed a similar pattern. Following this stage, 44 techniques made up the amended typology.

Once the amended typology was built, piloting began through performing an analysis of Episodes 4 and 7 from Season 1 to test the typology and refine the definitions before the main coding began. The piloting stage confirmed the utility of the 44 techniques in classifying humor detected in the show. It has also helped in refining definitions to help differentiate between Mistake, Misunderstanding, and Accident along with distinguishing Irony from Sarcasm and satire. The pilot coding has also proven valuable in instances of humor that were detected but could not be coded using these 44 techniques, prompting the addition of four new techniques, resulting in the 46-technique framework eventually used in the main coding. Two new techniques were added under the Language category: Threats/Supplication/Du'a and Interruptions/Ignoring someone and two new techniques were included under the Logic category: Blatant Advertisement and Direct Address to Audience/Mention of the Show. Threats/ Supplication/Du'a was used to code instances where characters threatened each other, asked for Allah's punishment to befall someone else, etc. Instances where characters blatantly ignored or interrupted another character's speech or role in the conversation were coded as Interruptions/Ignoring Someone. In some instances, humor was generated through weaving in a product/service by one of the sponsors of the show in the events of a scene, which was labeled Blatant Advertisement. In other instances, a character might directly address the audience or mention *Masameer* in some capacity, which gave rise to humor in those moments of the show. This was labeled Direct Address to Audience/Mention of the Show. The decision to incorporate these techniques was based on an examination of the previous categorizations of humor and an analysis of the current data. The aim was to create a comprehensive list of techniques that can explain the emergence of humor in animated comedies. Table 2 below showcases these 46 techniques according to category.

Table 2

A Typology of Humor in Animated Comedies

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion ¹	Absurdity ¹	Before and After ¹	Chase ¹
Bombast ¹	Accident ¹	Caricature ¹	Peculiar Music ²
Exaggeration ¹	Blatant Advertisement ³	Condescension ²	Repulsive Behavior ²
Insults ¹	Coincidence ¹	Deceitful Behavior ²	Slapstick ¹
Interruption/Ignoring someone ³	Comparison ¹	Eccentricity ¹	Speed ¹
Irony ¹	Direct address to audience/Mention of Show ³	Embarrassment ¹	
Misunderstanding ¹	Ignorance, Naivete ¹	Exposure ¹	
Literalness ¹	Mistakes ¹	Imitation ¹	

Puns ¹	Outwitting ²	Impersonation ¹
Repartee ¹	Repetition ¹	Mimicry ¹
Ridicule ¹	Reversal, Contradiction ¹	Parody ¹
Sarcasm ¹	Unmasking/Revelation ¹	Rigidity ¹
Satire ¹		Self-deprecation ²
Threats/Supplication/Du'a ³		Stereotype ¹
Wit ²		

¹Berger (1993) technique

²Juckel et al. (2016) technique

³New technique created for this study

3.2. The Data

The data was collected from the 4 seasons of Saudi animated comedy series *Masameer Classics* which streamed on Netflix. Each season in *Masameer Classics* consists of 10 episodes that range in length between 11 minutes to 21 minutes. These episodes were then transcribed in preparation of the coding procedures. The transcripts underwent a process of segmentation, where the texts were broken down into smaller segments; i.e., units of analysis. In the current investigation, scene-by-topic was adopted as the unit of analysis. The rationale behind its use was that it overcame the ambiguity of other units such as 'beats' and 'scenes', especially with the fast-base nature of comedies and the issue of a certain topic being carried on across multiple scenes throughout the show (Juckel et al., 2016). Hence, as long as the scene revolved around a certain topic or the characters were talking about that same topic, it was segmented as a scene, a single unit of analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis/Coding the Data

Following transcription and segmentation processes, the segments underwent the coding procedures to answer the question of the study. Two measures were employed to help increase the reliability of the coding procedures used in the study. The first involved creating a clear codebook or coding scheme that included brief and more detailed definitions of each of these techniques, inclusions and exclusion criteria, and an instance of humor that exemplified each technique. This scheme was followed throughout the coding process. The second measure involved recruiting a second coder, who was trained on the use of the coding scheme, to code a subset of the data. The purpose of using collaborative qualitative coding in the current investigation was to overcome the issue of subjectivity in qualitative analysis and to measure the reliability of coding through examining agreement among the two coders (Chinh et al., 2019; Given, 2008; Lombard et al., 2004; Neuendorf, 2002; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020; Saldana, 2016; Tinsley & Weiss, 2000). Under this measure, both Subjective Agreement and Percent Agreement were conducted and reported on.

The decision was made to perform two stages of coding, the first one done independently by both coders while the second one involved a set of joint sessions where the two coders examined the coded material together. During the latter stage, intercoder agreement was checked through both Subjective Agreement and Percent Agreement. During the independent coding stage, the researcher coded all the episodes (excluding the ones used in the

piloting stage) while the second coder coded two episodes, chosen randomly, from Seasons Two, Three, and Four using the codebook, which made up 15% of the data. The decision to use this specific proportion of the data was based on recommendations where 10-25% of the data units, chosen randomly, would typically be used in similar research (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Once the independent coding was completed, the joint coding sessions began. During these sessions, both coders met to review the double-coded data that has been done independently. As mentioned above, intercoder agreement is an issue that has to be addressed and checked here to ensure the reliability of the coding process. First, Subjective Agreement was performed which involved examining instances of disagreement in the coding process. During these examinations, each instance was discussed to identify reasons for the discrepancy. The codebook was constantly consulted to both explain the reasons for coding and identify where the discrepancy in coding stemmed from. The aim was to reach a consensus on the presence or absence of the techniques in the segments examined.

In cases where disagreements were not resolved, a third party (a linguist familiar with qualitative analysis) was consulted to settle the disagreement. In such cases, the majority code was the one accepted. An additional measure that was taken during these joint sessions involved keeping a tally of every time an agreement or a disagreement in coding was detected in the data. This was done in preparation for conducting Percent Agreement, a further step to ensure the reliability of the coding procedures. The aim was to have an agreement of at least 80% as most agree that it should range between 80-90% as a minimal benchmark in similar research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Guest et al., 2012; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020; Saldana, 2016).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Unit of Analysis: Scene-by-Topic

Since scene-by-topic was chosen as the unit of analysis, Table 3 displays descriptive information about the average scene.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Scenes

Scenes	425
Scene per sketch	6.53
Scene per episode	11.18
Scene duration (seconds) X Bar	81.44
Scene duration min (seconds)	6
Scene duration max (seconds)	273
Total number of Humor Techniques	1139
Humor techniques per scene X Bar	2.68
Humor techniques per scene min	0
Humor techniques per scene max	10

The total dataset consisted of 425 scenes, where each episode had an average of 6 scenes. The average scene duration was just under a minute and a half ($M = 81.44 s$); the minimum duration was 6 seconds and the maximum was 273 seconds. The difference in length between these two scenes can be attributed to the nature of each, as some scenes are only a quick change of scene to show another character engaged in some other activity while longer

ones tend to be ones that have a certain character commenting on the status quo, a character engaged in some type of self-discovery, etc. Additionally, humor techniques ranged from zero to 10 in each scene, with an average of nearly 3 techniques per scene ($M = 2.68$). Since two episodes from Season 1 were randomly chosen to be part of piloting the amended typology and in the training sessions of the second coder, these were not included in the final results.

4.2. Reliability Measures

The two reliability measures utilized during the double coding and joint coding sessions were Subjective Agreement and Percent Agreement. The discussions and decisions that were made during this stage led to the refinement of the amended typology as definitions were evaluated and exclusion and inclusion criteria were elaborated on. During these joint sessions, a tally was kept of instances of agreements and disagreements in coding so that Percent Agreement could be calculated. The aim was to have an agreement of at least 80% after the joint sessions. Table 4 below showcases the results of the Joint Sessions and Percent Agreement:

Table 4
Joint Sessions and Percent Agreement Statistics

Episodes	6
Sketches	8
Scenes	72
Total Number of Humor Techniques	201
Humor Techniques per Scene X Bar	2.79
Agreements	191
Percent Agreement	95%

Since an agreement of above 80% was reached, the typology was finalized where each technique was put under its respective category. In addition, both a brief and a longer more elaborate definition was presented for each technique along with any inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4.3. Prevalence of Techniques and Categories of Humor in the Saudi Animated Comedy Masameer Classics

The coding of the data revealed that humor was generated through using all four main categories. The show mostly used Language to give rise to humor, followed by Identity and Logic, with Action being used the least, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Frequencies of Individual Humor Techniques by Category

Humor Category	Total	%
Language	425	37.31
Identity	334	29.32
Logic	305	26.77
Action	75	6.58
Total	1139	100

The analysis revealed that some techniques were more prevalent than others. While the Language category as a whole was used the most to generate humor in the show, a technique belonging to the Logic category (Absurdity) was the most prevalent technique used to give rise to humor in the episodes included in the current study. Thus, while the show depended mainly on language to generate humor, it leaned on absurd themes and events that defied logic. The following sections offer the frequency of the individual techniques under each category along with an account of the most prevalent techniques and an interpretation of their prevalence.

4.3.1. The Language Category

Table 6

Frequency of Humor techniques in the Language Category

Humor Technique	Count	%
Allusion	78	18.35
Bombast	17	4
Exaggeration	39	9.17
Insults	58	13.64
Irony	57	13.41
Interruption/Ignoring someone	5	1.17
Misunderstanding	25	5.88
Literalness	10	2.35
Puns	14	3.29
Repartee	22	5.17
Ridicule	53	12.47
Sarcasm	20	4.70
Satire	11	2.58
Threats/Supplication	12	2.82
Wit	4	0.94
Total	425	100

The prevalence of this category, where its techniques made up over a third of the total number of techniques used to generate humor in the show, could be attributed to the nature of *Masameer Classics* as an animated comedy. Built around the daily interactions and conversations between characters highlighting issues and topics in the Saudi society, language was used to deliver those messages in a comedic manner. This aligned with what Juckel et al. (2016) concluded about the prevalence of this category in their examination of several sitcoms. As Table 6 above shows, the techniques that were used the most under Language (n = 425) were Allusion (n = 78), Insults (n = 58), Irony (n = 57), Ridicule (n = 53), Exaggeration (n = 39), Misunderstanding (n = 25), and Repartee (n = 22). The prevalence of these techniques indicated that the show derives its humor from allusions to famous people and events, insulting and ridiculing other characters, the irony between what is expected and what actually happens, exaggerating events and happenings, misunderstandings that lead to humorous consequences, and the characters engaged in verbal banter.

Allusion was the most frequent technique used under the Language category. The show made allusions to famous people, events, and situations in the local Saudi scene and beyond to give rise to humor. Involving such characters as leaders, famous performers, and known public figures in the different scenes and having them interact with the characters of the show

enhanced the humorous effects. Having a similar effect were mentions of viral or popular events and situations which included adding the people involved in those situations as characters playing a role in the scene. One example was a scene in Episode 10, Season 2, where a viral video of some boys being disciplined by their uncle (Uncle Moaid) was incorporated through involving the uncle and one of the nephews. Sometimes tied to mistakes and errors done by others, the mere mention of a name or a word tied to the situation evoked laughter, making these allusions a useful tool to use by comedians and comedy writers. Also identified as a source of humor in the investigations done on various Arabic humorous texts by Alharthi & Almeahmadi (2024), Al-jahdali & Alaboud (2024), AlShurafa et al. (2022), and Al-Qudah and Hait (2022), these allusions are typically culture-specific and tied to the interests and particularities of a given society. While this might make their use advantageous to both comedy writers and the local audience, these allusions become hard to ‘get’ for someone who is not part of that society.

Insults and Ridicule, which involved some form of attack on another character, were two other frequent techniques. Insults are typically built around a play frame, occurring with other techniques, as was seen in the data. In instances where Insults were detected in the show, they were typically tied to Ridicule, Absurdity, Allusion, and Eccentricity. Muneer, an eccentric character who is depicted as a liberal, always calling for social reform, would typically engage in conversations and debates with other characters that eventually end up with him insulting others. Part of the appeal of this technique is that the audience are not the ones issuing the insults or receiving them, so no guilt or shame is associated with them in those instances (Berger, 1993, 1997). Hence, the audience is able to laugh and enjoy the humorous exchange with little to no consequence.

Ridiculing another character’s appearance, mannerisms, or actions was another frequent source of humor in the show. While mostly directed at other characters, Ridicule has also been directed at ideas and practices such as soccer fanaticism, office bureaucracies, gender roles, among others. One purpose of using Ridicule as a technique to generate humor is to cause contemptuous laughter and humiliation to their receivers. However, in ridiculing ideas and practices as the ones mentioned above, another aim of the technique is to scrutinize some of the notions held by a given society in a comedic manner. The prevalence of this technique was also seen in analyses done by Juckel et al. (2016) on sitcoms, by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004) on advertisements, by El Alaoui et al., (2020) on some Saudi YouTube shows, and by Tianli and Chen (2024) on American and Chinese talk shows.

Irony can be categorized into two types; verbal and dramatic/situational. The main premise behind something being ironic is that when one outcome is expected, another occurs, as there is a gap between what is said and what is meant. Both types were manifested in the show. Some characters used irony to highlight the difference between what was being said and what actually was occurring in the scene, giving rise to humor. The main issue with irony is that the intention of the ironist must be made clear so that others pick up on the irony and comprehend that the opposite is the intended meaning of the speaker. The confusion can be avoided by building a character that is ironic, where their comments and relaying of events are correctly interpreted as ironic (Berger, 1993). This was seen with Aqeel who led many of the satirical representations of certain issues in the society such as building a safe, accommodating environment for people with special needs, boarding a flight, and being a single man in the society. The remarks he gave were taken as ironic since his character came to be known as such. Irony also occurred when a certain outcome was expected by a character and the audience, only for another to occur, leading to humorous consequences. This typically

happened through a build-up either starting from the beginning of a given scene or from a previous scene. The outcome of such moments highlighted characters' stupidity/eccentricity (e.g., Alshaikh Bandar, Sa'ad, Waseem), exposed double standards (e.g., gender roles, marriage), or showcased societal issues (marriage, treatment of public property, etc.). The satirical and ironic representation of such topics and issues aligns with what Albarrak (2017), El Alaoui et al. (2020), Al-jahdali and Alaboud (2024), Alshhre (2025) found in their examination of humor in Saudi Arabic and what Al-Qudah and Hait (2022) detected in jokes in Jordanian Arabic.

While Exaggeration was another recurring technique, it was typically accompanied by other techniques such as Absurdity, Insults, and Satire for the intended humorous outcome to take effect. The exaggeration that occurred in the show ranged from exaggerating the events of a story being told, i.e., a tall tale, to describing other characters or the consequences of a simple action or event. Used to showcase some of the social and cultural issues in the show, Exaggeration has also been present in analyses of humor in Saudi Arabic (Alkhamash, 2024; Almohissen, 2015, 2023) as well as in Jordanian Arabic to highlight the narrative during COVID-19 (Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022). Tianli and Chen (2024) have also observed the presence of this technique in both American and Chinese talk shows to generate humor.

Misunderstanding, part of the comedy of errors, was another recurring technique where the ambiguity of language or the meanings generated when words are taken out of context gave rise to humor. The exchange between Dr. Adel and Tarrad from Season 2, Episode 3, exemplifies the ambiguity of Dr. Adel's first utterance where he says "I just left the television?" which triggered the Misunderstanding, evident by the reply given by Tarrad when he says "Where did you leave it?". Dr. Adel clears the confusion by saying "I used to work for a television station and then I quit".

4.3.2. The Identity Category

The prevalence of the Identity category (n = 334) revealed that humor was derived from characters' idiosyncrasies and mannerisms in the show (see Table 7).

Table 7
Frequency of Humor techniques in the Identity Category

Humor Technique	Count	%
Before and After	8	2.39
Caricature	6	1.79
Condescension	18	5.38
Deceitful Behavior	13	3.89
Eccentricity	78	23.35
Embarrassment	2	0.59
Exposure	8	2.39
Imitation	11	3.29
Impersonation	8	2.39
Mimicry	31	9.28
Parody	24	7.18
Rigidity	41	12.27
Self-deprecation	5	1.49

Stereotype	81	24.25
Total	334	100

An examination of the specific techniques used in this category to generate humor showed that the creators of Masameer Classics relied on stereotypes of Saudi society ($n = 81$), as well as other stereotypes and stock types from other backgrounds. Overgeneralized views and misconceptions associated with certain groups, in addition to some ideas and beliefs held by society, were amplified to give rise to humor in many instances in the show. This included stereotypes from the local scene and beyond, depicted in some characters' mannerisms, dialects, etc. Al-Shaikh Bandar, who made his fortune through finding some hidden treasure after being poor for a long time, is shown in many instances in the show engaged in practices that are stereotypically associated with wealthy people, while having no idea how to do them, such as being on a yacht, going hunting, holding extravagant dinners, etc. The popularity of building humor around stereotypes is that they lend themselves to other techniques such as Ridicule, Insults, and Exaggeration, in addition to others. Consequently, similar to Allusion (Language) and as has been found in previous investigations of humor in the Saudi contexts (Alshhre, 2025; AlShurafa et al., 2022), these are mostly culture-specific and might not be fully understood by audiences from other cultural backgrounds, which might lead to the humor not being picked up by everyone watching the show.

A close second was Eccentricity ($n = 78$), where the eccentric behavior of some characters was a prominent source of humor in the show. Humor was derived from the abnormal and deviant actions done by certain characters like Alshaikh Bandar, Rashid, Nafi', and Waseem, who acted in a way that defied societal and cultural norms, giving rise to humor. This reliance on the characters and their peculiarities was further observed in the use of Rigidity ($n = 41$) where characters were stuck in their ways and their opinions. The rigid nature of characters like Mani', Saltooh's uncle, and Hizam's father was the source of humor in many instances in the show. In the context of Arabic humorous texts, Al-Qudah and Hait (2022) also found that Rigidity was a recurrent technique in the data they analyzed. Another notable technique used to generate humor under Identity was Mimicry ($n = 31$), where characters mimicked either the other characters in the show or other dialects. In those instances, humor was triggered by some characters imitating the voice, language, or mannerisms of either another character in the show or some public figure, while still maintaining their identity. The Mimicry that occurred in those instances aimed at communicating a message or highlighting an issue in a humorous manner.

Under Parody ($n = 24$), characters mainly parodied other shows or styles of drama found around the region such as Kuwaiti dramas (Episode 3, Season, 4), the movie King Kong (Episode 6, Season 4), the classic fairytale Rapunzel (Episode 6, Season 1), and American cowboy-themed productions (Episode 8, Season, 3). These parodies highlighted issues such as gender roles, work bureaucracies, and social media consumption, among others. The main issue that arises with the use of Parody as a technique is that the audience must be familiar with the work or style of writing being parodied. Juckel et al. (2016) found that the prevalence of this specific technique in their analysis was due to the animated comedy Family Guy, where its creators relied on parodying many famous productions to generate humor in the show. El Alaoui et al., (2020) also observed the use of Parody in the Saudi YouTube shows they examined, where it was used to bring to light some of the issues in the society such as work bureaucracies and hyper-consumerism.

4.3.3. The Logic Category

Although the Logic category (n = 305) ranked third, one of its techniques, i.e., Absurdity (n = 141), was the most frequently used technique in the show to generate humor (see Table 8).

Table 8

Frequency of Humor techniques in the Logic Category

Humor Technique	Count	%
Absurdity	141	46.22
Accident	6	1.39
Blatant Advertisement	15	4.91
Coincidence	13	4.26
Comparison	15	4.91
Direct address to audience/ Mention of Audience/Show	10	3.27
Ignorance, Naivete	2	0.65
Mistakes	42	13.77
Outwitting	3	0.98
Repetition, Pattern	11	3.60
Reversal, Contradiction	7	2.29
Unmasking, Revelation	40	13.11
Total	305	100

The dominance of Absurdity might be the result of the absurd nature of the themes and storylines presented in the show. As an animated comedy, there was more room for the creators to push the boundaries of both logic and reality to include and present topics in a way that might not be possible in sitcoms. Some of these absurd depictions were in the form of some characters appearing as giants, characters losing their body parts, the appearance of mythical creatures such as dragons, and going back in time using a time-travel machine, among others. Juckel et al. (2016) also made the same observation: one of the comedies they analyzed was the animated show Family Guy, while the others were sitcoms. They attributed the prevalence of Absurdity to the nature of the show which allowed for these types of absurd themes to be presented. Absurdity has also been detected in investigations of other modes of humor such as jokes (Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022) and anecdotal texts (Islami et al., 2024).

Two other notable techniques under Logic were Mistake(s) (n = 42) caused by characters' inattention and poor judgment and the Unmasking/Revelation (n = 40) of characters' wrongdoings. Part of the comedy of errors, the prevalence of Mistakes revealed that the show derived its humor from characters' errors, inattention, poor judgment, ignorance, inadequate information, or stupidity. The chain reaction that was triggered by the mistake gave rise to humor, in addition to the feeling of superiority the audience would feel over the character making the mistake. In Episode 3, Season 3, Mani takes a medicine that was prescribed to his pet lion by mistake, leading to him losing all his hair and then growing it back at a fast pace. This led to a series of unfortunate events throughout the episode that gave rise to humor. Islami et al. (2024) have also identified this technique as a recurrent one in their 2024 investigation of Sufi jokes. Humor has additionally been derived from the element of surprise that accompanied instances of Unmasking/Revelation of characters' wrongdoing and deception along with plot-

twists in the show. As one behavior or outcome was expected, it was revealed that the reality was completely different. An instance of humor derived from an unmasking in the show appeared in Episode 7, Season 3, where Saltooh was taking a taxi to the airport to catch a flight to Russia to attend the World Cup without his friends. It is quickly revealed that the taxi driver was one of those friends, Tarrad, leading to the humorous effect.

4.3.4. The Action Category

Table 9 below shows the frequency of the techniques under the Action category of humor in the data.

Table 9
Frequency of Humor Techniques in the Action Category

Humor Technique	Count	%
Chase	8	10.66
Peculiar Music	2	2.66
Repulsive Behavior	10	13.33
Slapstick	49	65.33
Speed	6	8
Total	75	100

The Action category (n = 75) was the least one used in the show where Slapstick (n = 49) dominated the other techniques, followed by Repulsive behavior (n = 10). Humor was mostly derived from Slapstick, where characters acted in a way that lacked dexterity and grace, in addition to any type of degradation through action. The clumsiness of some characters and the pie-in-the-face type of humor was made possible by the nature of the show being an animated comedy. One example of Slapstick occurred in Episode 9 of Season 2 where Saltooh and Tarrad were struggling to control a goat they were trying to slaughter, only for Tarrad to be distracted by a phone call and lose control of the animal which ended up escaping and engaging in another instance of Slapstick humor with AbdulJalil, their worker. Another instance of Slapstick was seen in Episode 9 of Season 1 as Aqeel was engaged in an exaggerated, satirical commentary of his experience boarding a plane, where the flight attendant was pushing the passengers aggressively inside the plane as they were boarding it.

The variability between this category and the previous three, despite the show being an animated comedy that entailed the use of images, sounds, and movement, might be due to a number of reasons. One reason could be that the creators built the show around a number of recurring characters that possess certain characteristics, hence, relying on their peculiarities to give rise to humor. Furthermore, the reliance on character interaction, through mainly speech and conversation, led to many instances of humor being generated through the use of language-based techniques. Logic-defying themes used in the show could be one further reason for this variance as Absurdity was the number one technique used to generate humor in the show.

5. CONCLUSION

The present investigation examined humor in the Saudi animated comedy *Masameer Classics* with the aim of identifying the categories of humor that emerge in the show. An

amended typology based on Berger's (1993) Typology and the Typology developed by Juckel et al. (2016) was used to code the data in the present investigation and proved to have the capacity to deal with the different instances of humor in the show. A variety of techniques were used by the creators/producers of the show to generate humor. The results revealed that the Language category dominated, followed by Identity, Logic, and Action. This dominance revealed that the creators of the show relied on the linguistic elements in the interaction between the characters to give rise to humor. These characters, some being stables while others recurring, were also a main source of humor in the show as revealed by the prevalence of the Identity category and its underlying techniques. These categories and subsequent techniques were used in the show to put forward some of the issues present in the Saudi society such as marriage, women driving, treatment of public property, perception and treatment of single men in the society, treatment of intellectuals, status of airlines, status of roads, celebrities and celebrity culture, status of the media, sport fanaticism, etc. in a comedic manner.

The mode of humor was limited to animated comedies with one show, in Saudi Arabic, receiving the treatment to answer the question of the study. As such, the themes depict cultural and societal issues prevalent in the Saudi context. Nevertheless, the research results add to the literature on humor in general and humor in Saudi Arabic in particular, an area that needs more exploration. The findings of the current investigation on the prevalence of each of the specific techniques helped in identifying how humor was triggered in the show. Identifying these techniques and the broader categories they fall under have implications for both researchers and creators interested in humor in general and humor in animated comedies in particular.

Humor is an area that still needs more exploration as many areas can be tackled to help enrich the literature of humor studies in general and ones done on Arabic data in particular. The resulting typology would be a valuable tool in examining how humor is generated in different humorous texts. Other modes of humor such as sitcoms, stand-up comedies, YouTube series, etc. could be investigated to broaden the use of the typology and apply any amendments, if necessary. For instance, would non-animated sitcom rely less on absurd themes and would a stand-up comedy make use of techniques that fall under the Identity category? Investigating other Arabic animated comedies using the amended typology can be done to check its validity and add to the literature of the classification of humor categories and their more specific techniques. Additionally, applying the amended typology on shows from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds might either yield different techniques or help enrich the current typology by shedding light on the themes and topics prevalent in those shows.

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Appendix A

Berger's (1997) Typology of Humor

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed

Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment
Insults	Disappointment	Exposure
Infantilism	Ignorance	Grotesque
Irony	Mistakes	Imitation
Misunderstanding	Repetition	Impersonation
Over Literalness	Reversal	Mimicry
Puns, Word Play	Rigidity	Parody
Repartee	Theme/Variation	Scale
Ridicule	Unmasking	Stereotype
Sarcasm		
Satire		

Appendix B

Typology of Humor Categories and Techniques Developed by Juckel et al. (2016)

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Absurdity	Parody	Peculiar facet
Irony	Coincidence	Rigidity	Peculiar music
Puns	Conceptual surprise	Malicious pleasure	Clumsiness
Repartee	Outwitting	Condescension	Repulsive behavior
Ridicule	Caught out	Deceitful behavior	
Wit	Misunderstanding	Self-deprecation	

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