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# Dysphemism and Hope-crushing Humor in Iraqi Street Interviews: A Pragmatic Case Study of ‘Ma’a Al-Aziz’

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### Abstract

Iraqi street interviews have become a source of humor and entertainment for Iraqi society. However, this humor often comes at the expense of the interviewee’s suffering. In the widely-watched street interview program “Ma’a Al-Aziz,” the interviewer uses dysphemism and hope-crushing humor to target participants’ positive face, trivialize their hardships, and indirectly comment on social or political issues. The current study analyzes twenty interviews from “Ma’a Al-Aziz,” an Iraqi televised program circulated on social media. A qualitative approach is employed, drawing on an eclectic model that integrates Attardo’s (1994) theory of humor, Culpeper’s (2005) model of impoliteness and face attack, and Allan and Burridge’s (2006) framework of dysphemism. Findings reveal that Al-Aziz consistently employs ridicule, irony, and offensive comparisons, often presented as humor, to attack both positive face (the need for approval) and negative face (the need for autonomy). Dysphemistic strategies identified include exaggeration, taboo expressions, de-agentivization, objectification, synecdoche, and overgeneralization

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## مجلة التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة، تصدر عن كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / جامعة الموصل



### اللغة التنقيصية وفكاهة كسر الخواطر في المقابلات الشعبية العراقية: دراسة تداولية

#### في برنامج "مع العزيز"

يونس إبراهيم بني ويس ID<sup>1</sup>

قسم اللغة الانجليزية/ كلية اللغات والعلوم الانسانية / جامعة گرميان<sup>1</sup>

#### الملخص

#### معلومات الارشفة

أصبحت المقابلات الشعبية في العراق مصدرًا لفكاهة والتسلية بالنسبة للمجتمع العراقي. ومع ذلك، فإن هذه الفكاهة غالبًا ما تأتي على حساب معاناة الشخص الذي تجرى معه المقابلة. ففي برنامج المقابلات الشعبي واسع الانتشار "مع العزيز"، يستخدم المقدم أسلوب التعبير الخشن والفكاهة المحبطة للأمل لاستهداف الوجه الإيجابي للناس، والاستهانة بمعاناتهم، وتوظيف ذلك أحيانًا ضمن تعليق اجتماعي أو سياسي غير مباشر. تركز التحليلات في الدراسة الحالية على 20 مقابلة من برنامج "مع العزيز"، وهو برنامج عراقي متلفز يتم تداوله على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وقد أُجري تحليل نوعي باستخدام نموذج انتقائي مستمد من نظريات الفكاهة (أتاردو، 1994)، والخطاب غير المهذب (كولبير، 2005)، والتعبير التحقيري (الآن وبوريدج، 2006). وأظهرت النتائج أن "العزيز" يوظف بشكل متكرر السخرية، والمفارقة، والمقارنات المهينة، غالبًا في إطار يُقدّم على أنه فكاهة، لتهديد من الوجه الاجتماعي الإيجابي (الحاجة إلى القبول) والوجه السلبي (الحاجة إلى الاستقلالية). أما الاستراتيجيات التحقيرية التي تم تحديدها فتشمل: المبالغة، والتعابير التابوية، ونزع الفاعلية، والشنيئية، والمجاز الجزئي، والتعميم المفرط

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## **1 Introduction**

In pragmatics, linguistic choices are context-sensitive acts that can mitigate or intensify social interaction. Humor, often seen as harmonious, can also function coercively. When humor trivializes suffering or devalues dignity, it becomes a form of pragmatic verbal attack, producing social and psychological effects beyond amusement.

Central to this study is dysphemism, the deliberate use of aggravated or offensive expressions. Dysphemisms heighten illocutionary force, purposefully violate politeness norms, and convey negative evaluations. Combined with humor, they attenuate offense with laughter while retaining face-threatening, socially diminishing, and ideologically loaded effects.

The research examines dysphemism in “hope-crushing humor” in Iraqi street interviews. The interviewer target ordinary citizens reporting struggles, employing ridicule, irony, and dysphemistic humor to trivialize participants’ struggles.

The study addresses three questions: 1) What linguistic devices or strategies are used to represent dysphemism and hope-crushing humor in Iraqi street interviews? 2) What pragmatic functions do dysphemisms perform in Iraqi street interviews? (3) What do these practices reveal about the socio-cultural dynamics of Iraqi public discourse?

The significance of this research lies in two dimensions: Theoretically, it reconsiders dysphemism and humor as pragmatic strategies with material social effects. Empirically, it offers an original contribution to Iraqi discourse studies, a relatively insufficiently studied linguistic context. More broadly, the analysis underscores humor’s dual capacity to both entertain and coerce, demonstrating how language use affects social perception, identity, and face in everyday interactions.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Face Theory, and Impoliteness**

Pragmatics provides a framework for understanding how language negotiates social relations, particularly through the politeness framework and face theory. Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced positive face (the desire to be appreciated), and negative face (the desire for autonomy) while face-threatening acts (FTAs) are those that compromise these desires. Impoliteness theory (Culpeper, 2011; Bousfield, 2008) extends this framework by emphasizing that linguistic verbal threat can be intentional, strategically deployed to challenge or dominate interlocutors.

## **2.2 Dysphemism**

Dysphemism, the use of offensive or socially taboo expressions, exemplifies this intentional attack (Allan & Burrige, 2006). Unlike euphemisms that mitigate face threats, dysphemisms intensify them and perform social and cultural functions such as ridicule, exclusion, or in-group bonding (Jay, 2009). Prior research highlights dysphemism in political discourse (Charteris-Black, 2018), media (Bednarek, 2014), and interpersonal contexts (Kádár & Haugh, 2013), though primarily in Anglophone settings. Iraqi Arabic, with its culturally complex dysphemistic set, remains underexplored.

## **2.3 Humor as a Pragmatic and Social Tool**

Humor similarly functions pragmatically, shaping social relations while potentially reinforcing hierarchies. Theories such as incongruity, superiority, and relief explain humor's cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions (Attardo, 1994; Dynel, 2011). Pragmatic approaches, including studies of mock impoliteness, show that humor can operate as a face-threatening or coercive tool (Culpeper, 2011; Holmes, 2006). In Arabic discourse, humor often intersects with power asymmetries, serving both resistance and oppression (Haeri, 2019; Suleiman, 2011).

## **2.4 Hope-Crushing Mechanisms**

The intersection of dysphemism and humor amplifies their social force. Humor provides a veil of playfulness, while dysphemism intensifies threat, creating a dual mechanism whereby the speaker threatens face while maintaining justifiable deniability (Dynel, 2013). This combination performs symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) by trivializing interlocutors' struggles, as seen in Iraqi street interviews. "Hope-crushing humor," a form of humor that ridicules suffering, remains largely undocumented but parallels concepts such as mock impoliteness, socially distancing humor, and face-attacking humor (Haugh, 2010; Dynel, 2011; Holmes & Marra, 2002). This study addresses the gap by examining how humor and dysphemism converge to assert power and marginalize participants in Iraqi public discourse.

## **3. Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative pragmatic methodology to analyze how humor, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and dysphemism are employed in Iraqi street interviews. The eclectic analytical model combines perspectives from Humor Theory (Attardo, 1994), Culpeper's (2005) model of impoliteness and face-attack, and Allan and Burrige's (2006) dysphemism framework. This combination provides a comprehensive framework for examining the pragmatic impact of humor that attacks, ridicules, or 'hope-crushes' interlocutors.

The data were collected from social media platforms between 2023 and 2025, focusing on the Iraqi television program “Ma’a Al-Aziz.” The corpus consists of 20 Iraqi street interviews published online. These interviews were purposively selected for their spontaneous humorous exchanges in which the reporter, Al-Aziz, employs ridicule, irony, and mocking remarks toward ordinary citizens. This setting provides a naturalistic context for examining the pragmatic functions of humor, dysphemism, and face-attacking strategies.

The interviews were transcribed literally in Iraqi Arabic and then translated into English, with attention to pragmatic and cultural equivalence. Utterances containing humor, dysphemism, or face threats were marked as units of analysis.

#### **4 Data Analysis**

**Interview 1:** Al-Aziz teasingly talks to an old man wearing protection mask

**Al-Aziz:** *“Are you wearing a mask because you’re scared of getting Corona? By next Thursday, they’ll be carrying you off [to your funeral]”*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwg-GJxHiz8>

#### **Analysis:**

On the surface, the remark follows the structure of a joke: a setup (a question about precautionary behavior) followed by a resolution. However, unlike conventional humor that resolves incongruity with relief or amusement, this utterance resolves it with fatalistic inevitability. The punchline substitutes support with despair, turning the listener’s protective action into the beginning of an unavoidable death. Humor arises from hyperbole, the absurd idea that the listener’s funeral is already scheduled for “next Thursday”, where the temporal deictic expression grounds the abstract threat in a specific, seemingly immediate time. This deixis intensifies the incongruity, making the exaggeration coercive rather than relieving. It compels laughter through shock, while simultaneously denying the possibility of safety.

The dysphemistic force of the utterance lies in its choice of imagery. Instead of a neutral or even mildly critical response, the speaker resorts to death and funerals, a taboo semantic domain that carries strong negative connotations. This substitution removes the act of mask-wearing of any rational motivation and redefines it through a grotesque metaphor: self-protection is reframed as a futile gesture against an inevitable end. In this way, dysphemism operates not only as a linguistic insult but also as a semantic intensifier, heightening both the humor and the despair.

From the perspective of FTA, the utterance constitutes a positive face attacking act. The listener’s positive face is attacked by the suggestion that their precaution stems from fear and that their efforts are meaningless. The humor is exploited: it mocks the

listener's agency, transforming a rational act into an object of ridicule. By presenting death as the only logical conclusion, the remark crushes hope and negates the relevance of individual action.

**Interview 2: Al-Aziz talks to a woman (perceived as looking older than her actual age):**

**Al-Aziz:** "when were you born?"

**Woman:** "I was born in 1967."

**Al-Aziz (teasingly):** Oh! Born in 1967 and you are wrecked like that? But look at you! You look like a totaled Saipa (car)!"

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/IHp0YHDyTr4>

**Analysis:**

"You look like a totaled Saipa" constitutes the central component of the FTA of the dialogue. The use of the very brand 'Saipa' is not by chance. It is a culturally transformed reference to an Iranian car brand often considered by Iraqis as poor quality, unreliable, and unattractive. This is a face-threat set owing to the fact that 1) comparing a human to a car is a dehumanizing (objectification), 2) specifying the brand (i.e., Saipa) adds a layer of cultural contempt (attacking her value her based on a cheap, local brand), and 3) describing her as 'totaled' implies a state of complete ruin, disaster, and uselessness. It is a totally 'public rejection'.

This metaphor is a dysphemistic instance of rhetorical precision. It communicates a multiple meanings in a single utterance. That is, the woman is not just old, she is a ruined, low-value, worn-out object (emphasizing deterioration, poor condition). This directly attacks her positive face by denying her any claim to being preserved, attractive, or maintained for her age. It publicly marks her as 'wrecked'. Besides, the imperative "*but look at you!*" functions as a coercive act, imposing on the addressee's negative face wants by constraining her freedom to avoid public close attention of her body. It forces deictic attention toward her physical appearance, transforming her into a semiotic object within the discourse and compelling both self-directed and audience-directed observation. The dysphemistic framing, foregrounding physical inadequacy, operates as a pragmatic intensifier, enhancing the force of the aggravation while embedding the FTA within a mocking act.

Additionally, the use of 'wrecked' functions as a dysphemism, as it is a term used for broken machinery, ruined buildings, or spoiled food. Applying it to a person is intensely degrading, implying they are damaged beyond use or repair.

The humor operates on a calculated incongruity. There is an incongruity between the expected, euphemistic response to learning someone's age ("You look great!") and the

horrifying, absurd comparison to a catastrophic car crash. The complete unpredictability and absurdity of the metaphor is the source of the "joke."

**Interview 3:** Al-Aziz encounters a young man in Baghdad carrying a dented aluminum tray. Curious about the tray's condition.

*Al-Aziz:* "I see this tray is old and dented. Why?"

*Young man:* "Yes, sir, it's old."

*Al-Aziz:* "Why?"

*Young man:* "I pierced it and chain it when I go home."

*Al-Aziz:* "Chain it?? Are you afraid someone will steal it?"

*Young man:* "Yes, perhaps."

*Al-Aziz:* "Aha! They will steal it!" ... "Seriously!, if even a dented tray in Al-Tayaran [an area in Baghdad] can be stolen, why would Iraq's oil not be stolen?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apJkdP1Hurs>

### **Analysis:**

The initial hope-crushing technique is aimed directly at the young man, using his dented tray as a symbol of his poor and unstable life. Al-Aziz's opening line "*I see this tray is old and dented. Why?*" is not a simple interrogation. Its pragmatic function is to highlight irrelevance. By pointing to the object's worthless state, he implicitly mocks the young man for possessing it. This is a FTA towards the young man's positive face, attacking his desire for approval by drawing attention to something that signifies his poverty.

The hope-crushing mainly works through the false doubt shown in the line "Chain it?? Are you afraid someone will steal it?". The exaggerated repetition "Chain it??" serves as a pragmatic signal of mockery. So, the humor here arises from incongruity: the proposed extreme security measure (a chain) contrasts absurdly trivial worth of the object (a dented tray). The interviewer's affirmation—"they will steal it!"—does not convey empathy but rather carries a scornful, belittling tone. The crushed hope here operates at a personal level, degrading the man's dignity rather than validating his concern. In other words, the hope for dignity, for being able to own something without fear, and for living a life where even trivial possessions feel secure, is denied. The interview frames the young man's reality as so pathetic that it becomes an object of mocking laughter.

After exploiting the young man's predicament to construct an exaggerated, almost absurd reality, Al-Aziz enacts a striking pragmatic shift. By physically turning from the individual to the camera, he performs a deictic reorientation that expands the reference point. In other words, the interactional centre moves from the immediate interpersonal context (I–you, here) to a broader national one (us–them, there).

The young man's dented tray is now semantically transformed. It is no longer the object of mockery, and instead functions as a metaphor, a synecdoche for the entire country. The hope-crushing now operates through forced implicature. The interviewer flouts the maxim of Relation by making an apparently illogical leap from a tray to oil reserves of a nation. This violation forces the audience to infer the connection: the same culture of disorder, unaccountability, and desperation that leads a thief to steal a worthless tray also allows those in power to steal a country's vast wealth.

The rhetorical question—"why would Iraq's oil not be stolen?"—is the ultimate collective hope-crushing device. Pragmatically, it operates not as a genuine inquiry but as a definitive assertion, it declares rather than asks. Hope is crushed on a societal level by representing systemic corruption as inevitable, predictable, and unstoppable. If petty theft occurs efficiently at the lowest levels of society, it is implied that those at the top execute it with even greater perfection. The hope for political accountability, ethical governance, and national prosperity is crushed by the absolute, cruel 'logic' of this analogy.

**Interview 4:** Al-Aziz uses humor to ridicule a man's social claim and appearance.

**Al-Aziz:** *"Are you the owner of the factory?"*

**The man:** *"Yes"*

**Al-Aziz ridiculously comments:** *"But a factory owner should be a fair-skinned, ruddy man (indicating signs of comfort and ease)"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwg-GJxHiz8>

The use of the deontic modal "should be" functions as a prescriptive rather than descriptive act. It is not a simple observation but an imposed normative standard that prescribes how a factory owner *ought* to look. This modal verb signals obligation and necessity, implicitly constructing an ideological expectation: proper factory owners must look in a certain physical appearance. By appealing to such prescriptive modality, Al-Aziz performs a positive FTA. The man's assertion "Yes" (claiming ownership of the factory) presents a self-image of authority and achievement. Yet, Al-Aziz directly challenges and delegitimizes that self-image, suggesting: *"Your claim is invalid*

*because you do not fit the required prototype.*” This is a cruel denial of recognition, depriving the addressee of the approval he seeks in front of a public audience.

The humor structure of the utterance relies heavily on the adversative conjunction “but”. Pragmatically, “but” signals a contrastive shift that cancels the positive presupposition established by the man’s answer. The expectation is: man claims ownership → interviewer confirms or moves on. Instead, “but” interrupts this sequential logic, creating incongruity between expectation and reality. The audience anticipates validation, yet receives an ironic punchline. The humor thus emerges from irony and incongruity, but it is hope-crushing humor because the incongruity ridicules the addressee rather than sharing laughter cooperatively. The “joke” functions as social punishment, mocking the man’s achievement by subordinating it to superficial and irrelevant aesthetic norms. The man’s pride is publicly diminished, replaced by laughter directed at his expense.

The dysphemistic mechanism intensifies the insult. Notably, Al-Aziz does not explicitly insult the man’s looks. Instead, he refers to an idealized stereotype: *“fair-skinned, ruddy.”* This functions as a dysphemistic construct because the invocation of a positive ideal forces the hearer (and the audience) to infer the negative opposite. The hearer is forced to perform the logical calculation: *If the ideal is X, and you are not X, then you are the opposite of X.* This indirectness makes the insult both greater (because the audience completes the insult themselves) and more deniable (because Al-Aziz could claim he only described an “ideal”). The dysphemism lies in the semantic contrast, which loads the man with stigmatized attributes without naming them directly.

Furthermore, the adjective “fair-skinned” signals broader issues of colorism and classism. In Iraqi (and wider Arab) sociolinguistic contexts, lighter skin is often associated with higher social status, privilege, and desirability, while darker or aged appearances are linked with labor, poverty, or marginalization. By drawing upon “fair-skinned,” Al-Aziz is not simply describing complexion but is activating an ideological discourse of exclusion: successful, respectable factory owners “should” look elite. The humor thus encodes a societal judgment, reinforcing discriminatory hierarchies of appearance while denying recognition to those who defy such norms.

**Interview 5:** Al-Aziz ridicules an electrician’s fat body

**Al-Aziz:** *“Man, you don’t have the body of an electrician, you’ve got the body of a heavyweight boxer [mocking his fat body]”*

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1DXyFAy6Ak/>

The utterance "you don't have the body of an electrician" functions as an invalidating presupposition, asserting a normative physical prototype for the profession and marking the addressee as anomalous. This constitutes a severe positive face threat, pragmatically attacking the electrician's professional identity by implicating that his physical form is incongruous with semantic features of the role (e.g., [-bulk, +precision, +agility]). The second clause, "you've got the body of a heavyweight boxer," further imposes a stigmatized identity, damaging positive face through coercive [enregistrement](#)

The phrase "body of a heavyweight boxer" serves as a dysphemistic substitute, removing the term of positive semantic connotation (e.g., strength) and assigning it derogatory features ([+mass, -agility, -fitness]). The repetition of "body" performs semantic reduction, metonymically shrinking the individual to a mere physical attribute. This de-agentivization erases his agency and intellect, reducing him to an object of mockery.

The humor arises from a contextual clash between the expected activity type (professional interview; focus: technical qualification) and the imposed frame (physical appraisal). This violation of relevance creates incongruity, positioning the electrician as the punchline through mocking humor. The shift pragmatically dismisses the professional context, depicting the addressee a target of ridicule.

**Interview 6:** Al-Aziz mocks the appearance of a 37-year-old man's working in the graveyard

**Al-Aziz:** *"How many years have you been in this work?"*

**The Man:** *"Twenty-five years?"*

**Al-Aziz:** *"No wonder your face looks like a dead man's."*

[https://youtube.com/shorts/Dv9ReeaHtZ0?si=INdjuSk\\_7cIHUh1](https://youtube.com/shorts/Dv9ReeaHtZ0?si=INdjuSk_7cIHUh1)

The utterance *"No wonder your face looks like a dead man's"* derives humor from exaggeration and incongruity. Here, the expected continuation of a professional interview about years of service is interrupted by an unexpected shift to a physical insult. The incongruity lies in linking the man's long service period at the cemetery with the idea that his face has itself taken on the appearance of death. The humor is dark, relying on a semantic association between the man's work environment (cemetery, corpses) and his physical appearance

The expression *"your face looks like a dead man's"* functions as a dysphemism. Rather than neutrally describing the man's appearance (e.g., "you look tired" or "you look aged"), the speaker selects an overtly offensive comparison to death, a taboo domain. This choice deliberately maximizes the negative connotations,

foregrounding unattractiveness and lifelessness. Pragmatically speaking, the utterance deprives the man of positive semantic features associated with vitality and replaces them with stigmatized features (e.g., [-life, -beauty, +decay]).

Furthermore, the utterance constitutes a direct positive face threat. The man's positive face is explicitly attacked by equating his appearance with a corpse. Unlike off-record humor or mitigated teasing, Al-Aziz's remark is bald on record, with little redressive action. The laughter that might follow serves more as a shared affiliation with the speaker than as a mitigation strategy for the addressee. In this way, humor functions as a masking device, softening the delivery but intensifying the insult social force.

The utterance also demonstrates contextual shift. What began as a serious exchange about professional experience is re-oriented toward ridicule. This shift redefines the man's professional identity not in terms of skill or endurance, but in terms of physical deterioration. The result is a reduction of the individual to a bodily stereotype, equating professional duration with decay, and turning the man himself into the gag line of the conversation.

**Interview 7:** Al-Aziz talks to two guys about their lost wallet

**Al-Aziz:** *"What are you doing here?"*

**The guys:** *"We're looking for a wallet that we lost."*

**Al-Aziz:** *"How much money was in it?"*

**One of them answers:** *"It didn't contain any money."*

**Al-Aziz comments (mockingly):** *"Of course—because you're just a couple of jobless bums."*

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1QUNsxiWJW/>

Al-Aziz's final comment functions as a clear dysphemism, replacing a neutral description of 'unemployment' with a socially loaded, derogatory term. The expression conveys not only the lack of employment but also moral and social inadequacy, marking the young men as 'idle', 'unproductive', and socially 'inferior'. The dysphemism aggravates the insult, foregrounding social shame attached to unemployment, and presents the men's failure to secure money as an inevitable consequence of their marginality.

This utterance constitutes an extreme positive FTA. By labeling the young men "jobless bums," Al-Aziz attacks their desire to be seen as competent, responsible, and socially valued. The remark also implicates their negative face: it imposes a social judgment and forces them into an uncomfortable position of public observation, as the

insult is delivered not only to them but also in the presence of an implied audience. The FTA is bald-on-record, lacking mitigation, and maximizes the imposition and potential embarrassment.

The humor here arises from hyperbolic exaggeration and incongruity. While the setup is straightforward, a simple inquiry about a lost wallet, the punchline escalates the situation by connecting the trivial fact of a wallet with no money to the men's personal worth. This pragmatic incongruity between the literal circumstances and the exaggerated social evaluation produces amusement, though at the expense of the addressees' dignity. The humor is coercive, since it derives from the social degradation of the young men rather than from a neutral or shared joke.

In addition, the utterance **crushes hope** by forming the young men's actions as inherently futile. Even a minor effort, such as searching for a wallet, is rhetorically linked to their supposed incompetence and social inferiority, implying that no action on their part can improve their situation. The dysphemism, hyperbolic evaluation, and implied audience together signal that their prospects and agency are hopeless, transforming what could have been a neutral or recoverable mishap into evidence of their permanent marginality.

## **5 Discussions and Findings**

The analysis of Al-Aziz's street interviews demonstrates a consistent use of hope-crushing humor and dysphemism to target both individual and collective identities. At the interpersonal level, ridicule is directed at personal possessions, appearance, and professional competence. Dysphemism is central to this process, as insults are often indirect, requiring the audience to infer negative contrasts from idealized norms or taboo references (e.g., "fair-skinned, ruddy man"; "your face looks like a dead man's"; "jobless bums"). De-agentivization and objectification amplify the social and physical reduction of the addressees, positioning them as the targets of coercive humor.

At the collective level, individual misfortune is transformed into societal critique. One case demonstrates a metaphor and synecdoche for systemic corruption, while overgeneralization and rhetorical questions (e.g., "why would Iraq's oil not be stolen?") extend the hope-crushing effect to national governance. Humor arises through pragmatic incongruity, contrastive shifts, and exaggerated comparisons, yet it remains coercive, reinforcing social hierarchies, stigmatization, and ideological judgments.

The linguistic devices identified—exaggeration, incongruity, de-agentivization, objectification, metaphor/synecdoche, taboo reference, and overgeneralization—serve distinct functions but converge in maximizing social punishment and audience alignment. Collectively, these strategies illustrate how humor can operate as a tool of social critique, simultaneously entertaining the audience and attacking the addressees’ dignity, revealing a complex interaction between language, social perception and face in media discourse.

Table 1 presents the linguistic strategies used to convey hope-crushing humor and dysphemism across the analyzed interviews:

**Table1: the strategies, their functions, and examples**

Strategy	Function	Examples
<b>Exaggeration</b>	Amplifies ridicule, creates hyperbolic humor	Tray, electrician, cemetery worker, jobless men
<b>Incongruity</b>	Violates expectations, generates irony	Factory owner, tray, electrician
<b>De-agentivization</b>	Reduces agency, objectifies target	Electrician, cemetery worker
<b>Objectification</b>	Treats person as an object of ridicule	Electrician, tray
<b>Metaphor / Synecdoche</b>	Represents individual or social phenomena	Tray → national corruption, face → decay
<b>Taboo Reference</b>	Uses socially sensitive imagery	Death, body descriptors
<b>Overgeneralization</b>	Links individual failure to systemic issues	Joblessness, oil theft

## 6. Conclusion

This study analyzed the pragmatic strategies through which Al-Aziz employs hope-crushing humor and dysphemism in televised street interviews. Across all interviews, humor was shown to function as a coercive tool rather than a mere source of amusement, targeting both individual and societal vulnerabilities. Al-Aziz consistently attacks addressees’ positive face, ridiculing personal traits, professional identities, and

social circumstances, while extending critique to broader social realities through metaphorical and synecdochic representations.

The analysis identified key devices, exaggeration, incongruity, de-agentivization, objectification, metaphor/synecdoche, taboo references, and overgeneralization, that structure this humor. Exaggeration and incongruity create immediate comedic effect while simultaneously degrading the target. De-agentivization and objectification reduce individuals to traits or objects, enhancing face threats. Metaphor and synecdoche link personal failings to systemic issues, highlighting societal dysfunction. Taboo references and overgeneralizations further amplify the social and moral judgment embedded in the humor.

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