

Us vs Them: Challenging Power Relations through Sustained Humor in Pakistan Saraiki Women's Conversation

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Abstract

This article explores how sustained humor serves as a tool to delineate group boundaries and illuminate unequal power dynamics and social hierarchy within conversations among Pakistani Saraiki women. The study is grounded in an extended humorous exchange extracted from an audio-recorded conversation among female relatives of a middle-class Saraiki family. They engage in dialogue about one participant's encounter at a parent-teacher meeting held in a private English medium school, where her struggle with the English language becomes apparent. Following Attardo's (2019) theoretical framework on sustained humor, the study examines co-constructed humor, mode adoption (e.g., responding to irony with irony; Attardo, 2002; Whalen & Pexman, 2010), humor support (Hay, 2001), and extended speaker-dominated turns (such as sharing personal anecdotes or jokes). The findings reveal that Saraiki women predominantly construct a cohesive and continuously sustained humorous discourse through extended speaker-dominated turns. They utilize techniques like irony and self-deprecation, engage in joint fantasizing, and support humor through laughter, overlaps, repetition, and verbal endorsement, thereby heightening involvement. Through self-mockery and playful teasing, these women distance themselves from established social hierarchies, demarcate in-group and out-group boundaries, challenge unequal power dynamics, and articulate their marginalized position within society. This research amplifies the voices and concerns of Saraiki women and contributes to our understanding of humor dynamics in natural conversational settings.

Keywords: sustained humor, power relations, Pakistani Saraiki women, conversations, humor support, joint fantasizing, mode adoption

1. Introduction

Humor, a multifaceted phenomenon, has garnered extensive attention for its social, emotional, and cognitive functions over the past few decades (Martineau, 1972; Ziv, 1984; Collinson, 1988; Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 1992; Graham, Papa, & Brooks, 1992; Martin, 2007; Hay, 1995). Functioning both as a unifier and divider, humor can create and maintain solidarity among group members while also delineating in-group and out-group boundaries and power relations (Meyer, 2000; Holmes & Marra; Hay, 2000; Tannen, 1993). Moreover, it can act as a subversive force, challenging societal norms and values (Coser, 1960; Crawford, 1995).

In this paper, I argue that humor serves as a tool for marking group boundaries and highlighting asymmetrical power relations within social stratification. I examine how Pakistani Saraiki women employ humor in their everyday conversations to accomplish this. Pakistan, a society characterized by power dynamics, often utilizes the English language as a symbol of status and dominance among the elite (Haque, 1983; Rahman, 2002). English holds significant symbolic value due to its historical association with the elite, relegating Urdu and other regional languages to lower status. Consequently, those who do not understand English or speak regional languages are marginalized as outsiders.

Saraiki, one of Pakistan's seventy-four regional languages, boasts an estimated 25-40 million speakers worldwide (Shackle, 2001; Atta et al., 2018; Bashir, Connors, & Hefright, 2019). Despite its prevalence, Saraiki is often stigmatized as a language of low prestige, reflecting the marginalization of its speakers. While some research has explored Saraiki's linguistic and ethnographic features, much remains unexplored, including its use in humor.

Existing studies on humor in the Pakistani social context primarily focus on representations of women in jokes circulated on social media platforms (Rashad & Azher, 2018; Iqbal, Mahmood, & Azher, 2020). These studies shed light on gender dynamics and societal inequalities, highlighting the potential of humor to challenge prevailing stereotypes.

Identifying a gap in research on humor within naturally occurring conversations in the Pakistani social context, this study aims to explore how sustained humor dynamics are utilized by Pakistani Saraiki women to mark group boundaries and challenge asymmetrical power relations. Drawing on an excerpt from a humorous conversation among female cousins of a Saraiki family, the study examines various humor strategies employed by Saraiki women to achieve these goals. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

How do Saraiki women use sustained humor in their everyday conversations to mark group boundaries and asymmetrical power relations generated by social stratification in Pakistan?

1.2 Humor and Boundary Relations

Humor is a force that possesses the ability to both unite and divide. Numerous researchers have explored its role as a boundary marker (e.g., Hay, 1995a; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Vine et al., 2009; Hui, 2014), delineating who belongs to which group. Boundary humor, as described by Hay (2000), is employed to establish boundaries by mocking someone as either a member of the group or an outsider who has inadvertently

breached social norms. Studies have demonstrated how humor can create and uphold cultural (Holmes & Hay, 1997; Linstead, 1985; Davies, 1982), in-group and out-group (Hay, 2000), gender (Hay, 2000; Vine et al., 2009; Schnurr, 2009), ethnic (e.g., Holmes & Hay, 1997; Vine et al., 2009), and organizational and institutional boundaries (e.g., Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Humor plays a role in shaping boundary relations by regulating group membership and appropriate behavior.

While numerous studies have explored how women use humor to foster bonds and rapport, they also utilize humor to demarcate boundaries within and between groups. For instance, Hay (2000) noted that females are slightly more inclined than males to use humor for maintaining or clarifying boundaries, especially in mixed-gender settings. Similar findings were observed by Vine et al. (2009) in the workplace, where women used humor to navigate workplace dynamics and construct a gender identity in male-dominated environments. They joked about the challenges of being a woman in a male-oriented world, expressing their disdain for males as symbols of power and dominance. These studies underscore humor's dual role in expressing in-group solidarity while also emphasizing social distance from out-groups.

1.3 Humor and Power Relations

The relationship between humor and power has been extensively studied, with humor being recognized as a tool for creating, maintaining, and challenging hegemonic power structures. Scholars have linked power to the control of others' behavior (Hui, 2014; Coser, 1960; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Hay, 2000; Martineau, 1972; Graham et al., 1992; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001), the reinforcement of societal norms (Linstead, 1985; Collinson, 1988; Bergson, 1911; Duncan, 1982), the assertion of one's status and dominance within a group hierarchy (Bitterly, 2017; Coser, 1960; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001; Hay, 2000; Spradley & Mann, 1975; Sayre, 2001), and the maintenance of the status quo (Dwyer, 1991). Humor is viewed as a strategy for exercising, reinforcing, or challenging power and status differences, shaping societal norms, and exerting coercive influence in interpersonal interactions.

During interpersonal interactions, humor reinforces societal norms by imposing them on group members. Nonconformity to these norms may be met with humor, using laughter as a means to control and discipline violators. Collinson (1988) identified various humor strategies, such as aggressive teasing, sarcastic put-downs, practical jokes, and witty repartee, used among male shop floor workers to uphold group norms and status quo. Deviation from societal norms was met with teasing and practical jokes, encouraging conformity. Humor also plays a role in managing power relations within family hierarchies. Tannen (2003, 2007) and Hui (2014) explored asymmetrical power

relations within families, highlighting the coexistence of power and solidarity. They observed that power dynamics within families aim to strengthen the family unit and foster connections, suggesting that power and solidarity are not mutually exclusive.

Studies on women's use of humor to reinforce or challenge power often focus on gender differences (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Hay, 2000; Kotthoff, 2006; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001; Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Coates, 2014). These studies generally find that women tend to use humor for solidarity and self-protection, while men are more inclined to use aggressive humor to assert or challenge power and dominance (Coates, 2014; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). In mixed-gender groups, men often target and control women through humor. Hay (2000) identified four power-based humor strategies, including fostering conflict, controlling audience behavior, and highlighting group divisions, with both men and women employing these strategies, albeit to varying degrees. Despite these nuanced dynamics, humor remains a potent social phenomenon capable of both maintaining and challenging power relations across various social hierarchies.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

To achieve the set objective, this research adopts the key concepts of sustained humor (Attardo, 2019) as a methodological framework.

1.4.1 Sustained Humor

The concept of sustained humor, introduced by Attardo (2017), describes an extended humorous exchange where speakers consistently maintain a humorous tone without reverting to serious discourse. Humor is sustained when both speaker and listener mutually agree to maintain a humorous atmosphere throughout the conversation. The term "key" refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is performed, which may include nonverbal cues such as gestures or facial expressions (Hymes, 1967). These cues, such as laughter and smiles, indicate the intention to sustain humor in the conversation (Mulkay, 1988). Sustained humor necessitates collaborative effort from two or more speakers to sustain humorous discourse, although not all participants may actively contribute to the humor. Examples of sustained humor include co-constructed humor, mode adoption, humor support, and extended speaker-dominated turns (Attardo, 2019).

1.4.2 Joint Fantasizing

Joint fantasizing, a form of co-constructed humor introduced by Kotthoff (2007, 2009), involves participants collectively creating an imaginative scenario by sequentially adding turns to the conversation. This collaborative storytelling process allows

participants to disassociate from reality and construct humorous fictional scenarios based on contextual cues and previous contributions. The coherence of the created scenario is maintained through participants' alignment with preceding turns and the introduction of absurd details to heighten the humor.

1.4.3 Mode Adoption

Mode adoption occurs when listeners adopt the same humorous mode initiated by the speaker, responding in a manner consistent with the speaker's intentions (Whalen & Pexman, 2017). This mutual alignment allows listeners to support the speaker's humor and sustain the humorous discourse. Mode adoption is often observed in response to verbal irony, where listeners mimic the structure and intention of the speaker's remarks to maintain the conversation's ironic tone (Clift, 1999). It is considered a strong form of humor support, indicating full appreciation for the speaker's intentions and promoting solidarity among participants (Attardo, 2002; Whalen & Pexman, 2017).

1.4.4 Extended Speaker-Dominated Turns

Extended speaker-dominated turns refer to sustained stretches of conversation where the speaker maintains control of the discourse, while listeners provide feedback through verbal and nonverbal expressions (Whalen & Pexman, 2017). Listeners signal their engagement and enthusiasm through backchannels, such as generic utterances or specific commentaries, encouraging the speaker to continue the humorous narrative.

1.4.5 Humor Support

Humor support involves responding to humor with additional humor and other support strategies during conversation (Hay, 2001). This may include laughter, repetition of words or phrases, overlaps, and self-deprecating humor, among other techniques (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001). These support strategies demonstrate the listener's recognition, understanding, and appreciation of the humor, contributing to the sustained humorous atmosphere of the conversation (Attardo, 2020).

2. Methodology

2.1 The Data

The humor sequence analyzed is an excerpt from a thirty-four-minute-long naturally occurring conversation among female relatives of a middle-class Saraiki family residing in Multan, a major city in southern Punjab, Pakistan. The selected humorous sequence was transcribed following Dubois et al. (1992) transcription conventions (see Appendix 1). However, the entire conversation was reviewed to grasp the full dynamics

of the participants and the context. Turns were identified as humorous based on Attardo's (2012) triangulation method, primarily considering paralinguistic, prosodic, and discoursal clues. These clues included the speaker's intention to create humor, their tone of voice, the presence of script opposition (incongruity), audience response such as laughter, smiles, and humor support, along with the researcher's understanding of the group, conversation context, and participant relationships. A total of 57 instances of humorous turns were identified. Among these, 16 examples consisted of single turns attended with laughter or a responding turn from the audience, three were unattended/ignored, 29 examples occurred in one sequence with audience humor support and irony, and nine other examples occurred in another sequence supported by audience response. The humor sequence comprising 29 consecutive turns was selected for the present research to examine the features of sustained humor in the Saraiki language. Many instances were found to serve multiple functions simultaneously.

2.2 The Participants

The participants, aged approximately 35 to 45 years, are parallel first cousins from the same ethnic and linguistic background. They were selected for the research due to their shared linguistic background, intimate relationship, frequent interactions, and similar sense of humor recognition. The participants were invited by the researcher for a family get-together over tea. The conversation was recorded while the participants were seated in the lounge before tea was served. While the participants were aware of being recorded, they remained unaware of the purpose of the recording and continued discussing topics of their choice. They speak in a Saraiki dialect known as Jhangi, as they all originate from the same region and share linguistic habits. Although they are multilingual, proficient in Saraiki and Urdu, their proficiency in understanding English is limited. The participants are educated, holding high school, bachelor, and master's degrees in various social science disciplines. The researcher took on the role of an observant participant, aiding in the interpretation of the data and understanding the speakers' intentions. Pseudonyms were used for all participants except the researcher.

2.3 The Context

The analyzed excerpt revolves around a humorous discussion of Farah's experience at a parent-teacher meeting with her son, Motasim's, teacher. Farah humorously recounts her inability to understand the teacher due to her lack of proficiency in English. Motasim attends a pre-junior level at an English medium private school in Multan, Pakistan. English serves as the official language of Pakistan and is associated with more privileged elite institutions such as the military and bureaucracy. The educational system in Pakistan is segregated based on English or Urdu as the medium of

instruction, resulting in two distinct groups of people since British rule, a divide that persists to this day. This segregation has disrupted the education system, categorizing students based on their English language proficiency.

4. Analysis

Examining the humorous excerpt in the conversation, the following strategies of sustained humor were used by Pakistani Saraiki women to mark group boundaries and asymmetrical power relations. Here we briefly illustrate five of them: extended speaker dominated turns, ironical mode adoption, joint fantasizing, self-deprecation and humor support.

4.1 Extended Speaker-Dominated Turn

Extended speaker-dominated turn to narrate funny personal anecdote serves to sustain humorous mode of the conversation. The speaker takes 16 intonation units to recall/share her personal funny experience of attending a parent teacher meeting (PTM) in the example below.

Example: 1

Farah:	aj mε~ Motasim de: school gaieã: na:	91
	Today I went to Motasim's school,	
	te: oh ka:fi - -(3)	92
	and that a lot ...	
	ka:fi- -	93
	a lot--	
	jehri ohdi teacher ha:i na:	94
	the one who is his teacher	
	Motasim de: ba:re: e:ch bhai:...	95
	about Motasim, friend	
	gala: dasendi: baithi: ha:i,	96
	told things, was sitting	
	lekin oh ↑ka:fi jehriã: galã: ha:en na:	97
	but a lot of those things	
	English e:ch dasiã:	98
	(She) told were in English	
	jehri @mere: utũ: hi tap giã: @@@	99
	which went over my head, hhhh	
All	@@@ (3.0)	100
Farah:	@ te: mε~ na:.. @@@	101
	And I ...@@@	
	ohnũ: e:nj response dita:	102
	responded her such a way	

	ji:wǔ: ke: mε~	103
	as if I	
	?bahūr: ghour na:l teri gal sam- - @ @ @	104
	was understanding your talk with full attention	
All	@ @ @ (2.0)	105
Farah:	@ander ander	106
	Inside	
	mε~ suchendi: baithi: hamūr:	107
	I was thinking	
	mainūr: tā: koi: samj hi nā:hi - - @ @ @	108
	that I could not understand anything hhh	
All	@ @ @ (2.0)	109

The exaggerated humorous story helps the speaker hold the floor for numerous units and is supported with the recurrent sequences of laughter, smiles and approving/appreciating gestures as back-channel strategies from the participants. Self-deprecating humor is used as a face-saving strategy for sharing the anecdote of embarrassing situation. Self-deprecating humor also indicates the carefree attitude of the speaker. Laughter, though not generally considered an appropriate response in case of self-deprecating humor, serves to approve the mode in example 1. The extended turn sets the mode of conversation as humorous.

4.2 Mode Adoption

The women adopt irony and self-deprecation as a shared mode to sustain the humorous discourse and jointly agree to participate contribute in the given context.

4.2.1 Ironical Mode Adoption

Farah's extended humorous turn serves as an invitation to the ironical mode adoption that lets the participants sustain the humorous episode.

Example: 2

Bina:	@@ šukar ker...	120
	Be thankful...	
	Ke: tu: šakal tūr:	121
	that on your looks	
	ohnūr: paṛhi: likhi: mahsoos hondi pai: haūr: @ @ @	122
	you were thought to be an educated person	
All:	@ @ @	123

This is an example of irony on “joking relationship” and a sense of ownership. Farah’s humorous anecdote is followed by the humor support of irony from the participants. Bina laughingly teases Farah for her inability to understand English and being treated as an educated person due to her groomed appearance. The ironical surcharge is supported with general laughter by the participants that works to reinforce solidarity among group members.

In response to the ironical mode initiated by Bina, the participants adopt the same mode to “jointly participate in the pragmatic functions” (Whalen & Pexman, 2017, p. 374) and continue keying the situation as humorous.

Example: 3

SHAHINA:	@tu:, e:h soch	131
	You, be thoughtful	
	ke: tenūr: wekh ke:	132
	that seeing you,	
	os English hi: boli: ke: tu:- -	133
	she spoke English that you...	

The ironical mode may be adopted with the humor support strategies of repetition (Hay, 2001) and elaboration of the same stance. The participants collaboratively adopt the ironic tone to humorously highlight the topic of Farah’s incompetence and the teacher’s positive perception of Farah by choosing to speak in English instead of Saraiki or any other local language.

Example: 4

Bina:	@or ŷukar kar	136
	And be thankful	
	os tainūr: wekh ke:	137
	she, seeing you	
	Punjabi nā:hi boli:,	138
	did not speak Punjabi	
	bhai e:hnūr: ke:hi: baghuter nūr: samejh@	139
	that what sense does this duffer has	

The ironical mode is adopted in terms of tone, structure, theme and the intention. Examples 3 and 4 reveal that the participants contribute to the ironical mode with similar structural, tonic and thematic patterns. This adoption endorses the stance projected by Clift (1999) that the nature of ironic remarks encourages the hearer to respond with another ironic remark, thereby extending and continuing the conversation’s ironic tone; both the structure and the intention of the utterance can be mimicked by listeners. The

mimicry serves to build a sense of association among the participants which in turn paves the way to proceed with the conversation that may otherwise be very risky.

The participants' ironical comments are responded with a clarification from Farah, that she was treated as an educated person by the teacher because she was wearing a Covid mask and the teacher could not judge her properly.

4.2.2 Approving Self-Deprecating Humor

The self-deprecation mode can be seen predominantly happening throughout the conversation. Example 5 illustrates the way Farah uses self-deprecating humor as a face-saving strategy.

Example: 5

Farah:	@ @nahi nahi,	115
	No no,	
	Thora: m ε~ @ @ @	116
	a little bit	
	apna ?hulia bhai set ker key gai ham	117
	I went there after maintaining my appearance	
Bina:	@ @[kam az kam]	118
	At least	
Farah:	ke: itni: wi: oh na lagã:- -@ @	119
	That I should not look that much	

Self-deprecation may be used as a face-saving humorous strategy to share embarrassing experiences and to express a carefree attitude. This example also supports Schwarz's (2010) stance that self-deprecation triggers shared ridicule. Bina mockingly endorses Farah self-deprecation with an agreement that at least Farah should not look like an illiterate person. Humor helps disclosing personal awkward experiences and shields inferior positions in comparison to the upper social strata.

Example 6 illustrates that self-deprecation humor strategy may trigger the same mode of self-deprecation among the participants.

Example: 6

Farahhunr mε~ itni: wi <u>ja:hil</u> namũr: @ @ @	169
	...now I am not that much ignorant	
Shahina:	@hey pai: meri tara:h thori: thori:@//	170
	You are (ignorant) like me a little bit	
All	@ @ @	171

In response to Farah's self-deprecation, Shahina approves and adopts the same mode to humorously relate Farah with herself for being ignorant. The participants' laughter in response to self-deprecating humor strategy indicates not only their appreciation and but also agreement to the speaker's stance.

These examples affirm that self-deprecation triggers shared ridicule and same mode of interaction among the participants. However, they are contrary to Hay's (2001) findings that in humorous discourse the participants support humor by offering sympathy, or contradicting self-deprecating humor". Self-deprecating mode can be seen as approved in the present conversation.

4.3 Joint Fantasizing

The funny clarification from Farah generates intense feelings of mirth and a series of fantasizing remarks from the participants. The participants withdraw themselves from reality and construct an illusory scenario about the teacher's behavior by adding a sequence of turns and sequentially forming a humorous fiction. The participants visualize the teacher's inability to judge Farah's expressions (lines: 144-152).

Example: 7

Bina:	@oh <u>sa:hi</u> tara:h wekh na: sagi- -@	144
	She could not see you properly	
Farah:	ha...	145
	Yes	
All	[@ @ @]	146
Farah:	@ohnũ: pata: hi na: laga: hosi ke:- -	147
	She could not know that	
SHAHINA:	[oh judge hi: na: kar sagi: hosi: ke: eh- -]	148
	She could not judge	
Farah:	Bhai: e:h.. kia:- -	149
	Dear friend, this...	
	..e:hde: ander kia: <expressions>- -	150
	inside her, what expressions	
	Kia: chalde: paey hen.	151
	What, are going on	
All	@ @ @	152

The participants take continuous turns and heighten the fiction by adding more absurd details into the humorously keyed situation. The fantasy is intensified with incomplete sentences, exciting overlaps and othering expressions like "oh" (she) and "ohnu:" (her). The uncontrollable laughter causes the turn into an incomplete sentence, which further triggers laughter from all. "...speakers who mimic the facial cues of

humorous intention may end up experiencing the same emotion of mirth that the other speaker is experiencing and this in turn may lead them to have the intention of producing more humor, hence triggering a virtuous circle that may continue for extended periods of time” (Attardo, 2019, p. 190).

Joint fantasizing may continue with an addition of new topical and fanciful element in the established scene (Whalen & Pexman, 2017). In the example below, the participants are seen to further co-construct a fictitious story out of the established one. The two frames of communication gap in the previous PTM and the foreseeable similar situations are established. Shahina shares her apprehensions about experiencing the same type of situation on visiting her daughter’s school in future in example 8.

Example: 8

SHAHINA:	@ mɛ̃ tã: apɽni dhi: der gaie: u:m	182
	(If) I go to visit my daughter,	
	Tã: uneed hey	183
	Then, hopefully	
	merey tã: sarey ser tũ: guzer waesi:, @ @ @ @	184
	everything would go over my head	
Bina:	tu a:khen,	186
	You should ask (them)	
	bhai: meray na:l angrezi na: bu:laey,	187
	not to speak English with me	

The participants jointly fanaticize the situation how Shahina would behave in case of visiting her daughter’s school in future and how she should manage the interaction with her daughter’s teacher who expectedly would communicate in English with Shahina. Shahina ironically fantasizes that everything would go over her head and she would not understand anything. Humorously constructed joint fiction works as a glue to strengthen group solidarity and highlight boundary relations between upper and lower strata due to communication gap on the basis of proficiency in English.

The participants continue fantasizing the unforeseeable situation and unanimously agree to challenge and raise their voice against the prevalent practice of communicating in English during PTMs.

Example: 9

SHAHINA:	Ha: bhai unhã: nu a:khsaen	192
	Yes dear friend, (I) will ask them	

	merey na:l Urdu ech gal karo	193
	to speak in Urdu with me	
Bina:	eh na: howey na:,	194
	It may not be that	
	oh shikaetan keren,	195
	they make complaints	
	tu: a:khen ta'areef kr den paey hen.	196
	and you think, are admiring her	
	they are admiring her	
All:	@ @ @	199
SHAHINA:	@mε̃ g hã: g hã: kiti: rakhã:@	200
	I should continue saying, yes ma'am, ye ma'am	

The expression of stance indicates speaker's effective position regarding what is said (Wu, 2003). To curtail Shahina's trepidation, the participants have come to an agreement by taking a stance that they would ask the teacher to communicate in Urdu to make things understandable, rather than in English and be responded with "yes ma'am". The fanciful discourse is colored with irony, self-deprecation, mimicry and humor support of laughter, overlap and adding more humor to sustain humorous discourse as the participants negotiate, elaborate and repeat their stance about the behavior in question.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study reveals that the Saraiki women construct a coherent and sequentially sustained humorous discourse mainly through extended speaker dominated turns by sharing personal funny anecdotes, ironical mode adoption, self-deprecation, joint fantasizing and humor support. They use extended speaker dominated turn to share personal funny experience, to set the scene and invite the participants to add and contribute in the humorous frame. The extended humorous turn is backed with humor support of laughter, smiles, approving facial expressions and verbal endorsement. The Saraiki women disassociate themselves from reality and construct a joint imaginary discourse about the future parent teacher meetings and their inability to communicate in English. By indulging into the dynamics of sustained humor, the women collaborate to construct a humorous episode with the support of laughter, overlaps, repetition and verbal endorsement of the stance and heightened involvement.

Two modes are adopted through the co-construction of the humorous discourse: verbal irony and self-deprecation. The heightened involvement of the participants stimulates them share similar stance and adopt the same mode. They respond irony with irony. The ironical mode adoption as found in the present conversation is in accordance with Whalen and Pixman (2017) and Clift (1999) that the ironical remarks from the speaker trigger the participants to respond with same ironical tone, structure, intention

and thematic patterns. The women are seen to adopt the ironical mode with humor support strategies of repetition (Hay, 2001) and elaboration of the same stance. They tease one another for being incompetent on “joking relationship” to strengthen their group solidarity and mark us vs them divide in the system of social stratification. In-group is identified as incompetent and the out-group as competent and proficient in English. Self-deprecation as suggested in Hay (2001), generally appeals sympathy from the audience and is responded with contradiction. Contrary to this, self-deprecation is approved, responded with endorsement, and adopted by the participants. Adopting the same mode indicates agreement on the speaker’s stance. Self-deprecation mode indicates feelings of inferiority and an acute sense of marginalization against the dominant and more privileged class. One may demean oneself in realization of the inferior and lesser position in social stratification.

The study rejects this idea that only making fun of outsiders serves a boundary function, sometimes self-mockery is an indicator of less favored position and clarifies who belongs to which group. Through the humorous discourse, the Saraiki women disassociate themselves from the established social hierarchical group and voice their less privileged position in the society. Humor as a self-deprecation strategy highlights the worth of the other group as a representation of the societal values as society. Though these findings support (Hui, 2014; Coser, 1960; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Hay, 2000) for their claims on humor as a strategy to control the behavior of others and (Linstead, 1985; Collinson, 1988; Bergson, 1911; Duncan, 1962) for viewing humor as a tool for reinforcing societal norms in hierarchical situations, however, here teasing is more for indicating marginalized position and incompetence and as misfit in the social settings. While they try to control the behavior of one another and use humor as an instrument for reinforcing social norms, the women depict themselves as marginalized against the dominant.

To conclude, it can be said that the humor can be used to reinforce norms and make explicit the boundaries of acceptability. The dynamics of sustained humor let the Saraiki women exhaustively highlight the communication boundaries between upper and lower social strata on the basis of proficiency in English and implicitly raise an important debate of whether communicating in local languages is a marker of illiteracy and incompetence. As Bergmann and Luckmann, cited in Kotthoff (2009, p. 213) have pointed out, explicit moralizing is dis-preferred in the postmodern world. Going into humorous fiction could be the better alternative to give hints as to what one thinks and how one feels in regard to certain topics.

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Appendix I

Transcription Conventions (Dubois et.al., 1992)

[text]	Overlap
@ @ @	Laughter
?	Question
--Two Hyphens	Truncated Intonation Unit
-Single hyphen	Truncated word

< >	Code switching
“ ”	Quotation
Capital	Spoken louder than the surrounding text
...	Pause
:	Turn beginning
^	Primary accent
=	Prosodically lengthy syllable
(())	Comment from the researcher

Appendix II

- Farah: khatam ho wan aala hey, gherelu type drama hay, acchha
This is about to be over, it is family type drama, okay
- Bina: Rang Mehal wi accha hai
Rang Mehal is also good
(12)
- Farah: aj mε~ Motasim de: school gaieã: na:
te: oh ka:fi - -(3)
ka:fi- -
jehri ohdi teacher ha:i na:
Motasim de: ba:re: e:ch bhai:...
gala: dasendi: baithi: ha:i,
lekin oh ↑ka:fi jehriã: galã: ha:en na:
English e:ch dasiã:
jehri @mere: utĩ: hi tap giã: @ @ @
Today I went to Motasim's school, and that a lot ... the one who is his
teacher, told a lot of things about Motasim, but a lot of those things she told
were in English which went over my head, hhhh
- All: @ @ @
- Farah: @ te: mε~ na:.. @ @ @
ohnũ: e:nj response dita:
ji:wẽ: ke: mε~
?bahũ: ghour na:l teri gal sam- - @ @ @//
And I ... @ @ @ responded her such a way as if I was listening your talk with
full attention
- All: @ @ @
- Farah: @ander ander
mε~ suchendi: baithi: hamũ:
mainũ: tã: koi: samj hi nã:hi - - @ @ @
Inside I was thinking that I could not understand anything hhh
- All: @ @ @
- Bina: @ @ šukar ker...
Ke: tu: šakal tũ:
ohnũ: pañhi: likhi: mahsoos hondi pai: haũ: @ @ @

- All Be thankful...that on your looks you were thought to be an educated person
[@ @ @]
- Bina: @ @kam az kam - - @ @
At least
- Farah: @ @nahi nahi,
Thora: m ε~ @ @ @
apna ?hulia bhai set ker key gai ham
No no, dear friend, I went there after maintaining my appearance a little bit
- Bina: @ @[kam az kam]
At least
- Farah: ke: itni: wi: oh na lagā:- - @ @
That I should not look that much
- Bina: @e:h wi bahūr: wadi: gal he: @
This is really something big
- Sahina: @tu: e:h soch
ke: tenūr: wekh ke:
os English hi: boli: ke: tu:- -
You must think that seeing you, she spoke English because you..
- Bina: [ha]
yes
- Shahina: ehnūr: samejh sakdi: he: pañ: @
Can understand this
- Bina: @or ṣukar kar
os tainūr: wekh ke:
Punjabi nā:hi boli:,
bhai e:hnūr: ke:hi: baghuter nūr: samejh @
And also be thank full that seeing you she did not speak Punjabi that what
sense does this suffer has
- Farah: nā:hi mere: face te: mask laga: hoia: hai: na:,
te: oh - -
...ke: nā: he: pia: na: te:- -
No I had a mask on my face and that ...what is the name
- All [@ @ @]
- Bina: @oh sa:hi tara:h wekh na: sagi- - @
She could not see you properly
- Farah: ha...
yes
- All [@ @ @]
- Farah: oh nūr: pata: hi na: laga: hosi ke:- -
She could not know that
- Shahina: [oh judge hi: na: kar sagi: hosi: ke: eh- -]
She could not judge
- Farah: Bhai: e:h.. kia:- -
..e:hde: ander kia: <expressions>- -
Kia: chalde: paey hen.

- All Dear friend, this...what expressions are going on inside her
@@@
- Shahina: @accha:
Fari os ke:hi ke:hi gal kiti:
jehṛhi samajh na: a:i?@
Okay, Fari what did she talk that you could not understand
- Bina: @oh ʃhodi nūr: a:we: ha: ta: koi:- -o@
That poor, if she could understand any
- Farah: bas jehṛi:- -
only that
- Shahina: [nā:hi koi: ya:d howe: lafz]
No, any thing you remember, a word
- Farah: <simple...simple> gala: hae:n
jḥṛi os dasiā:
Simple...they were simple things she told
- Shahina: [nā:hi ho sakda: he:
koi tenu: samajh na: a:i:] ho:we:
bas lafz ya:d howe:
No, it is possible that you did not understand any one, you remember a word only
- Farah: ji:wē: “very good”,
nahi oh kafi skilldly bulendi paei hai,
mēnu: koi: samajh na:hi aai:
Like “very good”, no she was speaking very skillfully, I could not understand anything
- Shahina: //enjoy boli wendi hai:?
Did she continue talking like this
- Farah: Hā:, matlab,
ziada ji:wē: banda baceyā: di: gal krēn da: hey pia:
Yes, means, mostly like one talks about kids
- Kashf: <Urdu: ta’areef hi ki hay na:>
She only admired him
- Farah: <Hā: ta’areef hi ker ra:hi thi:,
wese keh ra:hi thi:
“mē~ Motasim se bohat zia:da - -
wo keh ra:hi thi: ke mē~ satisfied han”>, bhai.
Yes, she was admiring him, any way she was saying : “I am very much satisfied with Motasim” dear friend.
- Bina: E:h nu: kia: pa:ta laga: hosi?
What could she know
- Farah: NA:HI NA:HI
...os jehṛi <English: simple wording use> ki:ti,
@oh tā: menūr: pata: lag gia:@
hunṛ mē~ itni: wi ja:hil namūr: @@@
No no, I could understand the simple wording which she used, that,...now I

- am not that much ignorant
- Shahina: @hey pai: meri tara:h thori: thori:@//
You are (ignorant) like me a little bit
- All @ @ @
- Shahina: @ mē~ tã: ap̄ni dhi: der gaie: u:m
Tã: upeed hey
merey tã: sarey ser tūr: guzer waesi:,
mē~nū: tã: koi: samajh na:hi awan̄i: @ @ @ @
If I go to visit my daughter, hopefully everything would go over my head, I
would not understand any thing
- Bina: tu a:khen,
bhai: meray na:l angrezi na: bu:laey,
mē~nu: koi: samajh na:hi amndi:
You should ask them not to speak English with you..I do not understand
- Shahina: ha
Yes
- Farah: Sidhi: gal hey
that's is a right thing.
- Bina: es ech kia: harj hey
What is wrong with this
- Shahina: Ha: bhai unhã: nu a:khsaen
merey na:l Urdu ech gal karo
Yes bro, I will ask them to speak in Urdu with me
- Bina: eh na: howey na:,
oh shikaetan keren,
tu: a:khen ta'areef kr den paey hen.
It may not be that they are making complaints and you think, are admiring
her
- Shahina: [mē~ a:khã:
ta'areef kr̄n̄ den paey hen.]
I (might) say that they are admiring her
- All: @ @ @
- Shahina: @mē~ g hã: g hã: kiti: rakhã:@
I should continue saying, yes ma'am, ye ma'am
- Bina: Tu: ta'areef samejh key
khush ho key a: jawe:n
You might get happy taking it as an admiration