"MA SHA ALLAH!" CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH HUMOR PRACTICES
IN A DIVERSE ARABIC LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP CLASSROOM

By

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ABSTRACT

"MA SHA ALLAH!" CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH HUMOR PRACTICES
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Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* (CoP) framework, this study explores the shared repertoire of humor practices in the creation of community within the context of a culturally diverse and multilevel adult Arabic language classroom consisting of two native speakers, five heritage language learners (HLLs), and three second language (L2) learners. These learners were the first cohort of students to participate in a new government-funded university Arabic Flagship Program. Employing both a macro-level ethnographic analysis and a micro-level discourse analysis of video-taped classroom interaction, this study analyzes how participants displayed their individual and *relational* identities (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997), community membership, and levels of participation in this classroom community through conversational joking and responses to canned joke-telling by the teacher.

I analyze the data through notions of *frames*, *footing*, *keying* (Goffman, 1974, 1981; Gumperz, 1982), *double-voicing* (Bakhtin, 1986), and other contextualization cues. I also draw on the findings of previous research on humor in conversation (e.g., Bell, 2002; Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Norrick, 1993, 2004; Sacks, 1995) and humor in the classroom (e.g., Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004) in interpreting my data.

The findings reveal humorous interactive processes and negotiations of meaning which make up the shifting participation of learners in this classroom community. They show patterns of language in interaction by learners, such as teasing classmates by code-

switching into other dialects of Arabic which differed from a student's own heritage

dialect, teasing the teacher or classmates with Arabic colloquialisms, parodying the

teacher's voice, and a hierarchical display of responses and peer scaffolding to canned

jokes told by the teacher.

I argue that these humor practices were not only sites for identity display and

relational identity display by my participants, but they also helped to mitigate tensions,

soften face-threatening acts, and protect members' positive face needs in the classroom,

ultimately contributing to the creation of a very inclusive, close-knit community with

relatively low language learning anxiety for all its members. I also suggest that these

humor practices created beneficial contexts for scaffolding and learning of Arabic culture

and dialect. The findings are additionally discussed in terms of the CoP framework as

well as more recent expansions and critiques of this framework (e.g., Haneda, 2006).

DEDICATION

To the Egyptian people: it was your linguistic creativity, humor, and wit that made me a lover of the Arabic language, and during the stress of writing my dissertation, your revolution inspired me and motivated me to keep pushing onward toward my goals.

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Among my friends and colleagues at MSU, Emma Trentman, Amy Thompson, Kimi Nakatsukasa, and Jennifer Behney deserve special thanks for providing me with support and mental stability during times of stress and academic insecurity. Discussions with them contributed to both my intellectual and personal growth throughout my doctoral studies.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

ARB: Arabic class

CoP: community (or communities) of practice

ESL: English as a second language

HLL: heritage language learner

IL: interlanguage

L1: first language

L2: second language

LPP: legitimate peripheral participation

MSA: modern standard Arabic

NNS: non-native speaker

NS: native speaker

OPI: oral proficiency interview

SLA: second language acquisition

SLL: second language learning

Ss: students

T: teacher

ZPD: zone of proximal development

Chapter 1

Introduction

During the past decade there has been a changing landscape of foreign language

programs, courses, and learners, due to significant demographic shifts, the growth of

various ethnic groups in the United States, and new types of government funding for

critical and less commonly taught languages such as Arabic. One new type of language

learning program is the Language Flagship, funded by the U.S. Government, which aims

at creating graduates of American colleges and universities who are professionally

proficient in key languages, such as African languages, Arabic, Central Asian Turkic

Languages, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Persian, and Russian and Eurasian languages.

With a greater focus on advanced language education, Flagship courses are

accommodating a large number of heritage language learners (HLLs) (Sweley, 2006),

who are commonly defined as students "who are raised in a home where a non-English

language is spoken, who speak or at least understand the language, and who are to some

degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés, 2001, p. 38) or as learners who

have "a language of personal relevance other than English" (Fishman, 2001, p. 169).

These HLLs participate in their Flagship courses alongside second language (L2)

learners, who typically have no prior exposure to a language other than the L2 classroom

itself and through short-term study abroad experiences.

This changing landscape has created more culturally diverse and multilevel

language classroom communities, as learners bring with them various levels of linguistic

and cultural expertise in the target language and culture, and have multiple linguistic and

ethnic identities, roles, and ideologies about the target language and culture. In discussing

classrooms comprised of diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, Barnard and Torres-Guzmán (2009) noted that "the interactions between the teacher and students with respect to co-constructing what it means to create a community of learning can be even more complex" (p. 7).

This qualitative dissertation study explores the use of humor in the creation of community within the context of a culturally diverse and multilevel adult Arabic language classroom consisting of two native speakers, five heritage language learners (HLLs), and three second language (L2) learners. These learners were the first cohort of students to participate in a new government-funded university Arabic Flagship Program. The Flagship Program at this large Midwest university hosts a diverse group of students with a common interest in being part of a community of Arabic speakers and sharing this culture at an academic and social level. Students enjoy the benefits of small Arabic language classes, specially designed general education content classes taught in Arabic, and co-curricular and extra-curricular Arabic events. This unique community of diverse Arabic language learners provided an ideal context for exploring social actions and face-to-face interaction in classroom language learning.

Employing both a macro-level ethnographic analysis and a micro-level discourse analysis of video-taped classroom interaction, this study analyzes how participants displayed their identities, community membership, and levels of participation in this classroom community through *humor practices* including conversational joking and responses to joke-telling by the teacher. I argue that these humor practices were not only sites for identity display and *relational* identity display (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) but they also helped to mitigate tensions, soften face-threatening acts, and protect

members' positive face needs in the classroom, ultimately contributing to the creation of a very inclusive, close-knit classroom community of practice with relatively low language learning anxiety for all its members. I also suggest that these humor practices created beneficial contexts for scaffolding and learning of Arabic culture and dialect.

Motivation for the Current Study

As a graduate assistant working for the Arabic Flagship Program, I had the opportunity to get to know the first cohort of Flagship scholars very well through advising them and organizing extra-curricular activities for the Flagship Program. I even audited a few of their content Flagship courses, being an advanced Arabic L2 learner myself. As both an observer and participant, I found the dynamics of this group of learners interacting together to be fascinating. The diversity of the students in terms of their proficiency levels and various heritage/ethnic backgrounds created a unique learning environment in which students heard a variety of Arabic dialects and were exposed to various cultural perspectives. Additionally, L2 learners had the benefit of receiving native-like input from their HLL and native speaker peers as well as from the Arabic teacher. Lastly, I observed bonds of friendships not typically seen in a university foreign language class where students might only interact with each other during class hours for one semester. These students shared multiple Flagship courses together, attended extra-curricular Flagship activities together, and some of them even lived together. This contributed to an environment where students enjoyed being together in class and where there was little exclusion. It also contributed to an environment where a repertoire of humor was built and laughter was prevalent. Therefore, I was motivated to investigate this diverse cohort of students and their classroom community more, broadly seeking to

understand how this unique organization of social interaction intersected with their L2 learning.

To my knowledge, no study has been published on teacher-student or student-student interaction within the context of an Arabic second/foreign/heritage (I use these terms interchangeably in this dissertation) language classroom. In fact, empirical research on Arabic L2 learning is extremely sparse as a whole and therefore I wished to address this dearth of research and contribute something meaningful to the field along these lines.

<center>Arabic Diglossia and Arabic HLLs</center>

For this study, it is important to note that Arabic is considered a "diglossic" language, denoting the existence of a higher and a lower register used in semi-exclusive contexts (Ferguson, 1959). The higher register is usually referred to as *fuṣḥa* or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and it is more highly coded. It is the language of newspapers, formal speeches, newscasts, and other kinds of formal writing and speaking. The lower register is usually referred to as colloquial Arabic or dialect and it is used for more casual everyday interactions, family contexts, movies, sitcoms, as well as in some writing like cartoons and novels (Palmer, 2007).

In reality, the diglossic situation is much more complex than the simple higher-lower dichotomy. As Trentman (2011) points out, the situated context such as the interlocutors, the topic, and the situation, all play a role in determining the register used, and higher and lower registers are often mixed together in complex ways, instead of just using one or the other. Holes (2004) calls the concept of Arabic as a "diglossic" language an oversimplification and refers to it as a "constant style shifting" (p. 49). At one end of

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the continuum is "pure" MSA and at the other is "pure" regional dialect, but these pure forms exist more in the idealization of the Arabic language, rather than in reality.

Versteegh (2004) sheds light on the fact that "the colloquial language as the language of family and home is associated with the in-group, with intimacy and friendship, whereas the high variety is associated with social distance and official relationships. The use of [Modern Standard Arabic] may thus be a sign of respect, but also of creating a distance between speakers" (p. 195). Palmer (2007) discusses how students who have only studied MSA are kept outside the in-groups.

In this study, I use the general term *Arabic* to mean both MSA and dialect unless specified. I also use the general term *Arabic culture* to refer to those societal features which are shared across most of the Arab world, even though there are distinct societal differences between Arabic-speaking countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt, to name just a few.

It is also important to this study to consider just who is an Arabic HLL. In terms of Arabic HLLs, the *Standards for Foreign Language in the 21st Century* (2006) describe at least three categories of Arabic HLLs: "those who come with 'kitchen' language; those who come with lots of cultural knowledge but virtually no language proficiency at all; and those who are quite proficient in their dialect and have fair to (sometimes) very good command of the formal variety" (p. 116). Ibrahim and Allam (2006) in their short survey study of Arabic HLL's demographics and motivations, categorized four types of Arabic HLLs:

1)   Students whose parents were both of Arab origin and who heard or spoke one of the Arabic dialects at home;

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2)   Students who had only one parent of Arab origin and did not speak Arabic at home;

3)   Muslims who came from many other non-Arab countries and were exposed to only one variety of Arabic through their learning of the *Qur'ān* or aspects of religion; and

4)   Arabs who lived in Arab countries and regularly heard and spoke one of the dialects, but attended international schools and never learned to read and write Modern Standard Arabic (p. 443).

Types 1 and 2 resemble the more commonly cited definitions of HLLs (e.g. those cited by Valdés, 2001 and Fishman, 2001). However, types 3 and 4 present a more complex picture of who should or should not be considered an Arabic HLL. Non-Arab Muslims do not have familial or ancestral ties to Arabic, and yet Arabic is obviously a language of some "personal relevance" to them (Fishman, 2001 as quoted in Ibrahim & Allam, 2006, p. 438). Additionally many Muslims may be simultaneously types 1 and 2, with for example, one or two parents of Pakistani origin who speak Urdu in the home.

Type 4 highlights Arabic's diglossic situation. Learners may be fully functional in one of the dialects of Arabic, which is used for everyday conversation, but not know MSA; for example, learners may claim identities as native speakers of Egyptian or Levantine Arabic but not MSA. These types of HLLs might differ from types 1 and 2 in that they might be fully proficient in a dialect and since they live in Arab countries, have more familiarity with the culture as well.

In some ways, Arabic HLLs are very much like native Arabic speakers in that they are exposed to a colloquial variety first, and then they are expected to learn MSA

when they take Arabic language classes. This creates a kind of complexity in that MSA is not exactly a heritage language, since as Maamouri (1998) wrote, "[MSA] is nobody's mother tongue and is rarely or almost never used at home in the Arab world" (p. 33). Yet, since pure forms of the two registers do not exist in reality, most HLLs have probably had some exposure to MSA in their home life, particularly if they have Arabic satellite television in their home or were read books to in MSA.

Theoretical Framework: Communities of Practice (CoP)

My theoretical framework is grounded in Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* (CoP) as well as more recent expansions and critiques of this framework (e.g., Haneda, 2006). A CoP is a group of individuals who come together because of a common interest or goal and co-construct practices for their interaction, which in term is what creates the community of practice. The workplace is one common example of a CoP. People come together to do some type of work and in the process of doing the work, they develop practices that are, to some degree, unique to their own group. Learning and knowledge creation is dynamic and shared and takes place as people model, collaborate with, and mentor one another about the practices for how they get the work done (Hellermann, 2008). Central to Wenger's (1998) conception of a community of learning is that of an expert teaching a novice or apprentice not only the primary tasks necessary to carry out the work, but also pragmatic and interpersonal conventions which are appropriate for doing that work.

Investigating the formulation and inner workings of CoP is critical for understanding the interplay of knowledge, learning, and identity construction within a particular social context. Within a CoP framework, members come together with a

common goal or *joint enterprise* and through their co-presence and *mutual engagement*, they interact with each other in a variety of ways, binding together as a social unit. Through this, they co-construct a *shared repertoire* of situated social practices (e.g., vocabulary, jokes, stories, routines). These practices, in turn, play an important role in forming their identities as members of that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Also important to the CoP framework is that learning is viewed as a socially situated endeavor with learning occurring as a member transitions from legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) in a particular community to full participation (Lave & Wenger 1991). Members with LPP status become full members by interacting with experts or old-timers and gradually gaining competence in the practices of that particular CoP. Hellermann (2008) wrote that learning in a CoP is a "dynamic, contextualized process of members' progression from a socio-cognitive identity as inexperienced outsider to that of more experienced or more fully competent member of a particular community" (p. 14).

It is important to note that there have to be novice members in a CoP or it would disappear over time if there were no new members coming in to replace old members who have left. This is the reason these novice members have legitimate status even though they are engaged on the periphery of activity within a community.

Drawing on Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), Hellermann's (2008) five concepts of *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise*, *shared repertoire*, *reification and participation,* and *economies of meaning,* offer a way of understanding the relevance of CoP theory for adult language learning classrooms. I explain these in turn below:

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Mutual engagement has to do with what commits people to one another and the community. Hellermann described how in adult language learning classrooms, one can see mutual engagement in the attention that a student cohort gives to the teacher and the attention they expect back in return from the teacher. Students also usually show mutual engagement to one another as they discuss in class or work in small groups. Students soon come to know what to expect of their teacher and their peers through their mutual engagement in interaction in the classroom community of practice. Hellermann noted that this "allows for the local development of a history of shared experiences in which members understand one another's competencies and roles" (p. 10).

Joint enterprise is related to participants sharing a common goal. Most adult language learners attend language classes voluntarily and see language learning in their classes as a joint enterprise. As Hellermann pointed out, this may be different from young learners, who by law are required to be in a classroom and study certain subjects.

Shared repertoire is perhaps the most relevant for the language learning classroom. Wenger's (1998) broad notion of a shared repertoire includes 'routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts' (p. 83). All of these activities may occur in a language classroom, but it is the language practices that are used and develop as part of shared repertoire of communication in the community of practice that is particularly relevant. Hellermann discussed the "reflexive relationship between language use and participation in the development of a shared repertoire" and how the "use of the shared repertoire facilitates participation while participation facilitates use of the shared repertoire" (p. 11). Not only

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will individual classroom communities develop different shared repertoires but they are also distinguished by the language itself and by language proficiency.

Reification and participation has to do with the fact that mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire are not predefined in classroom CoPs but are co-constructed through the negotiation of practices by members. The reified aspect might be represented by the language curriculum, the class syllabus, lesson plan or activity of the teacher. Participation takes place with talk-in-interaction once students are presented with these tasks or topics. This is the dialectic of participation and what is already set in place in the classroom. Hellermann suggested that student-student interaction in adult language learning communities of practice is an ideal site for examining this dialectic.

Lastly Hellermann (2008) discussed Wenger's (1998) concept of *economies of meaning* which is the idea that participants in a CoP have shared ownership in the meaning of practices. Practices have meanings given by experts as well as novices who are asked to interpret practices. The more that meaning is shared within the community, the more potential there is for participation for all members. When there is exclusive ownership of meaning of a routine, this requires more work between participants to enable their performance and participation (learning) can be impeded.

Although the focus of this dissertation is not directly on learning, per say, it is important to note that researchers employing a CoP framework view learning as demarcated by change in community participation by members over time. In a language classroom, Hellermann (2008) suggested that the teacher as well as the students who participate using the language they are studying, may be considered community experts if they use that language in a way that is appreciated by the teacher and their peers.

Hellermann also suggested that even students who talk a lot but whose language deviates from the teacher's language system or their peers may be considered peripheral. Students can also participate peripherally by just observing or using their L1. There is an expectation that all language learners will all be peripheral with respect to fluent native-speakers, but the expectation is that through using the language, their increasing participation in the classroom CoP will coincide with increasing participation in the CoP of proficient target language users. In other words, the more experience students gain in the language learning classroom and in the language they are studying, the more they become core participants both in the language classroom and outside of the classroom.

The CoP framework has been increasingly adopted as a framework for L2 classroom research (e.g., Haneda, 1997; Hellermann & Cole, 2009; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004; Toohey, 1996, 1998, 2000). Researchers investigating CoPs have viewed this framework as useful for investigating the relationship between L2 learners' identities, language learning and classroom practices—in particular *how* language learners gain entry and exposure to the situated social practices of an L2 classroom in order to gain competence in the practices and eventually gain full membership. Students' identities are often intertwined with issues of inclusion and access to language learning opportunities within a classroom CoP.

<div align="center">Theoretical Perspectives on Identity</div>

Contemporary scholarship has offered a variety of ways to understand identity. Norton (2000) used the term *identity* to reference, "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). Crawshaw, Callen, and

Tusting (2001) and Hall and du Gay (1996) understood *identity* as a process of identifying or not identifying with a particular position in life and continually negotiating and modifying this position and attitudes toward it.

Scholars have also talked about subject or self-positioning in terms of identity negotiation (Turner, 1999; Wallace, 2004). People categorize themselves as belonging to certain groups and not others. This self-positioning inside some groups and outside of others can be based on such variables as ethnicity, nationality, cultural background, age, gender, and class. Within a language classroom, this may also include categories such as native speakers, HLLs, and L2 learners. In the process of subject positioning, people build their identities based on inclusions and exclusions vis-à-vis various communities of practice. As the self is defined, so is the other.

Of most importance to this study is that people display and perform their identities *through* their interaction with others and through that interaction they show their belonging to certain groups, or their desire to associate with or be like others (e.g., Erickson & Schultz, 1982; Goffman, 1959). They may choose to make visible, or relevant, particular components of their identity when talking to others in order to build affiliations or even to disaffiliate.

Likewise, in a CoP, identities are understood as emerging in practice. Therefore, identities are rooted in actions, rather than just categories. Bucholtz (1999) saw this as one of the benefits of using CoP theory over a speech-community model for her study analyzing the linguistic practices of "the nerd." A CoP is able to capture the multiplicity of identities during specific practices. In other words, it allows for identity to be examined from the point of view of the individuals who enact it.

Importantly, it is through language that individuals often enact identity. Researchers emphasize the fact that identity, self, and agency are linguistically constructed and negotiated (e.g., Belz, 2002). Language is viewed not only as the medium of identity negotiation, but also the source of identity interpretation of other and by others (Joseph, 2006; Warschauer, 2000). Poststructuralists argue that language *is* the site of identity construction and its negotiation (Crawshaw, Callen, & Tusting, 2001; Shi, 2006).

Linguistic Humor and Identity

Bringing together language, humor, and identity, Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) argued that through the use of humor, much identity construction and display takes place, particularly in conversational joking since it is more spontaneous. One of the most important functions of conversational joking can be the creation and display of identities. One possibility is individual identity display and the other is the "negotiation of a relational identity with others and *through* others" (p. 282, italics original). In terms of the latter, humor allows for people to display intimacy with others and show that they are friends, acquaintances, or members of an in-group. Teasing, which is directed at someone present in the conversation, can result in "bonding," "nipping," and "biting." If the teasing comes with a disclaimer such as a laugh or exaggerated intonation, then the metamessage is often interpreted as a nip, but if there are not appropriate cues, it can be taken more seriously and be a bite. Boxer and Cortés-Conde noted that the outcome often depends on shared schema between interlocutors. They claimed that this kind of relational bonding is more common among friends and acquaintances. They provided the following example of teasing that has the function of bonding and relational identity

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display. In this example, two female friends are on a weekend ski trip and the addressee teases her friends about not drinking hot drinks:

(9) Two close female friends on weekend ski retreat

Carol: Ooh, my feet got cold, I don't know why my feet got cold all of a sudden.
Jane: You need a hot drink. You're drinking cold soda.
Carol: I know. I can't drink a hot drink.
Jane: You don't drink hot drinks, it's not part of your religion.
Carol: Right [laughs].

(p. 285).

Boxer and Cortés-Conde claimed that this teasing bonds the two female friends, since Jane shows that she knows this information about her friend Carol and Jane is displaying their past history together. Relational identity is displayed through this insider knowledge.

Expanding on Boxer and Cortés-Conde's (1997) discussion of relational identity display, Habib (2008) found that teasing and disagreement can be used to not only establish relational identity display and development but also to reaffirm a preexisting relational identity. She additionally found that humor led to the acquisition of new notions such as pragmatic and cultural learning, and thus identity construction and negotiation took place as learners "reorganized a sense of who they were and how they related to the social world" (Norton, 1997, p. 411).

Norrick (1993) discussed how members of a class are constantly constructing their own individual identities within the whole class (e.g., class clown) and within its various sub-groups and how "joking allows participants to recognize their respective affiliations and to align themselves in terms of them and in spite of them" (p.5).

Importantly, the teacher's role should not be ignored when discussing humor and identity in the classroom. Norrick and Klein (2008) wrote that, "humor of various types

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offers a valuable tool in identity construction for pupils as well as for teachers" (p.85).

Humor can be used to influence the impression that students have of a teacher as well as

the impressions or expectations that the teacher might have of students. Norrick and

Klein also discussed how teachers not only construct an individual identity but also a

classroom atmosphere that may or may not be conducive to humor. This in turn can affect

the presentation of individual personalities and identities.

Defining Humor Practices

As typical for qualitative, ethnographic research, (see Davis, 1995; Merriam,

1998) I did not go into the Arabic Flagship classroom community with set research

questions, but rather observed and looked for perspectives and patterns that seemed

meaningful and significant to the participants, their social relations, their classroom

community, and their Arabic language learning. Among others, humor was one of the

situated social practices which came up again and again in this community.

Humor practices, including both *canned* as well as *conversational* jokes (Boxer

and Cortés-Conde, 1997; Norrick, 1993), was a large part of the shared repertoire of

members. The former involves memorized, scripted texts that can be told and re-told at

appropriate times. Conversational jokes or situational jokes, such as teasing and parody,

grow out of the context and learners often have to be there to fully appreciate the humor.

For the purposes of this dissertation and for understanding how students gain entry to and

display their membership and various degrees of participation in this Arabic language

classroom community, I define humor practices as verbal humor in the target language of

Arabic (or primarily in Arabic with some limited English code-switching) which elicits or

is intended to elicit laughter (such as a canned joke), or reveals a play frame (non-serious

interaction) in some way, through other contextualization cues. My understanding of humor practices relates to what Cook (2000, p. 71) referred to as "humorous language play," which is a kind of ludic language play which raises laughter, and what Sullivan (2000, p. 122) referred to as "playfulness" and "language play." Sullivan included in her use of the term, "teasing and joking, puns and word play, and oral narratives" and describes how "play entails fun" and that it "is often accompanied by laughter." My use of the term humor practices in this study is even broader and is probably most similar to what Bell (2002) interchangeably referred to as L2 humor, language play, and humorous language play, which encompasses everything from teasing to experimenting with L2 voices to wordplay to canned jokes. Various understandings of what constitutes language play in the classroom are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, in the data analysis section, I also present a more specific table detailing forms, types, and functions of humor found in my data.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2, I begin by reviewing previous studies on second language learning using a CoP framework. Additionally, I review studies on humor, language play, and second language learning, and discuss various theories about the social functions of humor. I conclude by situating my own study within this body of research and why it is unique and important.

Having situated my study within a CoP framework and previous research done on classroom humor, in Chapter 3 I describe my methodology. I first present the larger context and then provide detailed profiles of the participants and the practices of the classroom CoP under study. I draw on some of the interview data with the participants

here to give a fuller picture of how these students viewed themselves and their classmates in this classroom community. Lastly, I describe my procedures for data collection and review concepts from literature on humor and interactional sociolinguistics which assisted me in analyzing the classroom interaction data.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are devoted to presenting and discussing my data findings. I begin each chapter presenting some concepts from humor literature which is helpful for analyzing that particular kind of humor. Chapter 4 focuses on how students participated in the humor practice of conversational joking in dialect. Chapter 5 focuses on how students participated in the humor practice of teasing and parodying the teacher. Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on the humor practice of the teacher telling canned jokes to the class and how students responded to these jokes.

In Chapter 7, I conclude by discussing the findings of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 all together in terms of my larger arguments. I also discuss the benefits and drawbacks of using CoP as a framework to examine classroom interaction and the implications of my findings. Lastly, I present some further research directions based on my findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Language Learning Classrooms as Communities of Practices

Recently CoP theory has served as a framework for research investigating learning in classroom contexts (e.g., Bucholtz, 1999; Haneda, 1997; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001; Toohey, 1996, 1998, 2000; Zuengler & Miller, 2007). Toohey's (1996, 1998, 2000) ethnographic study of six learners over the course of three years in elementary school revealed how the socio-historical backgrounds of English language minority students impacts their learning and identity within a classroom CoP. In her 1998 article, Toohey focused on a Grade 1 classroom community and treated the class as a CoP by focusing on the learners' participatory opportunities in classroom practices. Although she found that the children were appropriating the local practices of doing school (e.g., "sitting at your own desk," "using your own things," "using your own words and ideas,"), she considered how the practice of seating English as a second language (ESL) children away from English-proficient peers limited their access to experts and to spoken English. She also considered how learners' identities were constructed through these practices. For example, children who were doing well in the classroom were all seated together in the back of the classroom. This was farther away from the teacher and the children were able to chat more. However, children who spoke English as an L2 or needed more help were seated closer to the teacher, and thus were able to chat less. This led to a marginalization of the latter children. She described how not being able to share with peers stratified the classroom, which in turn led to the exclusion of some students from certain practices and identities within this community. Differential legitimate peripheral participation (LPP)

statuses were assigned to students and these became normalized with little opportunity

for students to move in a trajectory of becoming fuller participants.

Leki (2001) also looked at issues of identity and roles in the classroom in a study

she conducted that investigated interactions between two nonnative English-speaking

university students and their native-speaking peers during group projects. Her findings

suggested that the particular social and academic relationships that developed within the

group work solidified the identities of the two students as non-native speakers and

hindered their ability to make meaningful contributions to the group projects. Although

Hellermann (2008) questioned the degree to which group work in university classrooms

constitutes a CoP, he noted that "her findings suggest that the different learners in the

group work did not see themselves as participating in a *joint enterprise* and struggled

with using a *shared repertoire* for their group interactions" (p. 8, emphases original).

Morita's (2004) multiple case study explored the academic discourse socialization

practices of Japanese graduate students in Canadian university classroom settings. The

research methodology included student self-reports, interviews and classroom

observations collected over a period of one academic year. Using the CoP framework,

Morita examined how these Japanese learners negotiated their participation and

membership in new graduate level classroom communities. She illustrated through three

case studies (Lisa, Nanako and Rie) how negotiating identities was an important part of

each of these learners' socialization. These co-constructed identities were not fixed, but

were context-specific and varied across classes and over time in the same class. For

example, Morita found that her participants' silence in different courses had various

overlapping meanings, including "limited content knowledge, personal tendency and

preference, learning goals, identity as a less competent member, outsider or marginal

status, role as a relative newcomer, role as someone with limited English imposed by

others and instructor's pedagogical style" (p. 587). Morita's study is important because

she showed the situated nature of identity construction and the affective aspect of

participation (Haneda, 2006).

Similar to Leki (2001) and Morita (2004), Norton (2001) presented examples of

how there may not always be full participation within communities of practice and how

adult language learners may become marginal rather than LPPs. Some of the participants

in Norton's study dropped out of their language learning classes because of their

marginal status in the CoP and an imagined community which conflicted with the actual

community. In this case the marginal members did not have the trajectory of being

peripheral but legitimate participants. They were not able to eventually become full

participants in this CoP.

Norton and Toohey's (2001) article compared two good language learners (an

adult Eva and a child Julie) based on their previous studies (Norton, 2000; Toohey, 1996,

1998, 2000 as cited in Norton & Toohey, 2001) and explored why these two learners

were more successful than other learners in their studies. All of their studies were

qualitative and data was gathered through means of interviews and journals (the adult

study with Eva) or participant observation, interviews and videotaping (the child study

with Julie). Norton and Toohey first examined how Eva and Julie's community practices

were structured. They discussed how Eva had a more difficult time as an employee than

Julie did as a kindergartener where active participation was encouraged. They then

looked at how these two learners exercised *human agency* in order to gain access to the

social networks of their communities. They discussed how Eva used intellectual resources like her knowledge of Italian and other countries to contribute to conversations with coworkers and Julie sometimes tried to teach Polish to her classmates. Importantly, both of these contributions were considered positive in their communities. Norton and Toohey pointed out that although Eva and Julie exerted agency, the value of this agency was determined by their social contexts, thus it was co-constructed. Both Eva and Julie also used social resources to gain access to their communities. They both had *allies* which positioned them more favorably in their communities. For Eva, this was her boyfriend who helped give her a positive status. For Julie, this was a cousin who spoke fluent English and Polish. These relationships helped to put them in more powerful positions with their coworkers and classmates and created more opportunities for conversations, ultimately helping them to be on the path toward full participants in their communities of practice.

Although these studies show language learners achieving various degrees of participation within classroom communities of practice and focus on the social construction of identity, they do not focus on classroom discourse and the details of language use in face-to-face interaction. Toohey (1998) does present examples of classroom talk, but does not really do a detailed discourse analysis.

Haneda (1997) was one of the first to explore the relevance of CoP in a multilevel foreign language setting. Drawing on audio-taped data from student-teacher conferences and students' sharing sessions regarding an in-class portfolio project, she focused on three students and how CoP was instantiated in the classroom. Specifically, she looked at gains learners made through collaboration with the teacher and with peers.

Hellermann's (2008) work was the first to use methods from conversation

analysis to document practices for interaction between learners and how those practices

change over time within a CoP framework. Specifically, he examined an extensive corpus

of classroom video recording made over a longitudinal period of four years, and

documented practices for interaction between learners and how those practices changed

over time. He showed language learning occurring through the change in the learners'

participation during dyadic task interactions in their language learning classrooms.

<p align="center">Humor, Language Play, and Second Language Learning</p>

Because this study focuses specifically on the co-constructed practice of verbal

humor in an Arabic language classroom community, some discussion of previous

research on humor and humorous language play and second language learning (SLL) is

necessary and useful for comparing with my own findings.

Bell (2007) noted that "the construction and comprehension of verbal humor in an

L2 constitutes a great challenge even to advanced L2 learners, as it often requires

sophisticated linguistic, social and cultural competence" (p.28). Even highly proficient

L2 learners "seem to systematically fail in the interpretation and production of humor"

(Vega 1989, as quoted in Wulf, 2010, p. 155).

How learners construct and comprehend verbal humor in the L2, or what has been

referred to as ludic (Cook, 2000) or humorous language play (Bell, 2002), and the effects

of this, has begun to receive more attention from researchers of SLL during the past

decade (e.g., Bell, 2002, 2007, 2009; Belz 2002; Belz and Reinhardt, 2004; Broner and

Tarone, 2001; Cook, 1997, 2000; Davies 2003; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Lantolf,

1997, Sullivan, 2000; Tarone, 2000). Much of this recent work suggests that playful uses of language may facilitate SLL.

Naturalistic data on L2 language play has been collected in a variety of settings including children in immersion classrooms (Broner & Tarone, 2001; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004, 2005), ESL learners with native speakers in peer conversation groups or naturalistic settings (Bell, 2005; Davies, 2002), a beginning foreign language classroom (Ohta, 2008), advanced foreign language classrooms (Belz, 2002; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007), an internet-mediated foreign language partner situation (Belz & Reinhardt, 2004), and an adult EFL classroom (Sullivan, 2000).

L2 learners have been found to engage in humorous language play in a variety of ways, many of them overlapping, such as: experimenting with different voices and role appropriations (e.g., a pedantic 'teacher' style) (Bell, 2005; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Tarone, 2000), repetition (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2000), playful semantic mislabelings and puns (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005), code-switching (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005), *verbal dueling* (Cook, 2000; Pomerantz & Bell, 2007), using pragmatic or prosodic resources in playful ways (Davies, 2002), irony (Bell, 2002), exaggeration or hyperbole (Bell, 2002; Ohta, 2008), sounds, rhythms, structures (Broner & Tarone, 2001), the shape of sounds (Belz, 2002), creating imaginary fiction or an alternate reality (Bell, 2002; Broner & Tarone, 2001), word formation (Belz & Reinhardt, 2004), morphological or syntactic play (Belz, 2002), and oral narrative play, (Sullivan, 2000).

Humorous language play is often multifunctional, but some identified functions of humor have included creating play zones or a *time-out* from the activity at hand (Cekaite

& Arronson, 2004), subverting classroom hierarchies (Cekaite & Arronson, 2004), subverting the school game or assigned conversation topic (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007), "flouting of FL rituals and conventions" (Belz & Reinhardt, 2004, p. 326), enjoyment or self-amusement (Cook, 1997, 2000), mediation (Sullivan, 2000), scaffolding (Davies, 2003), shared understanding and affiliation (Bell, 2002; Ohta, 2008), negotiation of identity (Bell, 2002; Belz, 2002), and protection of positive face needs (Bell, 2002).

Although there has yet to be significant research presenting evidence of L2 humorous language play as an aid to second language acquisition (SLA), Tarone (2000) suggested that language play may be facilitative of SLA, in particular by developing sociolinguistic competence as learners experiment with different voices. Other researchers (Bell, 2005; Belz, 2002; Cook, 2000) have suggested they view the ability to play with language as an important way to mark proficiency. Sullivan (2000) suggested that L2 language play is important to SLL because it raises awareness of L2 forms and Bell (2005) suggested that language play may result in deeper processing of lexical items, making them more memorable. Bell discussed how language play may be especially helpful in the acquisition of vocabulary and semantic fields. Lastly, Belz (2002) looked at language less in terms of how it may aid L2 acquisition, but focused more on how learners construct new selves and new social relations through language play and how learners *revealed* their proficiency levels and the multifunctionality of language through L2 play.

Ohta (1995) was actually one of the first to address language play and its relation to SLA. She analyzed two NSs of English in an intermediate Japanese class and compared their language use when they were in teacher-fronted vs. pair interactions. She

found that the learners used Japanese for a much wider variety of purposes (including collaborative language play) when they were engaging in peer interactions, than when they were in teacher-fronted interactions. Ohta saw language play as a way for learners to test hypotheses about the L2 and that this could help them develop their L2.

According to Lantolf (1997), language play is understood as practice or rehearsal, rather than just fun. Examples of language play that Lantolf presented to participants in his language play survey included: "talking out loud to yourself in Spanish; repeating phrases to yourself silently; making up sentences of words in Spanish; imitating to yourself sounds in Spanish; having random snatches of Spanish pop into your head" (p. 11). As Bell (2009) pointed out, many of these also have potential to be humorous to the learner. Based on findings from selected questionnaire items, Lantolf found that the highest frequency of language play was stimulated by conversation as opposed to studying grammar or doing drills and exercises in classes, and that language play seemed to have a positive effect on learners' confidence when using Spanish. While Lantolf stated that he does not believe that language play alone is sufficient for successful SLA, he believes that "without language play learning is unlikely to happen" (1997, p. 19).

While Lantolf saw language play as necessary but not sufficient for SLA, Tarone (2000) saw the role of language play in SLA as facilitative, but not necessary for SLA. She drew on two models of language in use to account for the prevalence of language play in the discourse of children and adults. The first model was Larsen-Freeman's (1997) chaos/complexity theory which views interlanguage (IL) as a dynamic complex nonlinear system which contains unpredictability. Second was the Bakhtinian model of language which views individual's language use as a site where normalizing forces are in

tension with forces of individual creativity. Bakhtin (1981) was interested in creativity, particular *double-voicing* (or using someone else's *voice*), irony, and parody.

Drawing from these models of language, Tarone (2000) speculated there are three ways that language play may be helpful for SLA. First, language play might lower affective barriers and increase the memorability of discourse used during language play. Language play may help dissipate affective factors such as anxiety which can block the process of SLA (Krashen, 1981). Positive feelings associated with linguistic elements involved in the play and often marked by laughter might make them more memorable. Second, Tarone suggested that semantic language play, such as learners experimenting with different voices, may lead to the development of sociolinguistic competence. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) concept of double-voicing, Tarone wrote that:

> L2 learners can hear more fluent speakers produce a variety of different voices, and can themselves try on different voices and language varieties for comic effect or for fit, and in the process may come to 'own' and appropriate those new varieties and voices as an expression of their own complex identities (p. 46).

For example, a learner may humorously imitate a classmate or may appropriate the voice of a scolding teacher. Lastly, Tarone suggested that play with language form may facilitate SLA by destabilizing the IL rule system. In other words, play with second language forms can be highly creative and this creative force is necessary for SLA and must counterbalance accuracy.

For Cook (1997), the primary function of language play is ludic: to amuse oneself and have fun. He classified this fun language play into two types: (1) play with language form (e.g., rhyme, alliteration, puns) and (2) semantic play, "play with units of meaning,

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combining them in ways which create worlds which do not exist: fictions" (p. 228). One type of semantic language play that Cook referred to as double-voicing (drawing on Bakhtin, 1981) or those language forms which parody or use someone else's discourse for comedic purposes. Cook (2000) devoted an entire book to the discussion of language play in which he examined how play, such as nursery rhymes, children's lore, poetry, fiction, verbal duel, riddles, play languages, jokes, puns, and so forth, permeates language at the levels of linguistic form, semantic meaning, and pragmatic use. Among other things, Cook argued that language play is important for adult language learning as well as child language acquisition, and acknowledged that language play may be a means as well as an end and be an important marker of proficiency level. He noted that, "Knowing a language, and being able to function in communities which use that language, entails being able to understand and produce play with it, making this ability a necessary part of advanced proficiency" (p. 150). However, he also recognized that play can take place at all levels of proficiency, with varying degrees of complexity. Like Tarone (2000), Cook understood Larson-Freeman's (1997) complex adaptive system and elements of unpredictability as highly compatible with views on language play. Also like Tarone, Cook suggested that creative and playful uses of language might be more memorable since he wrote that it is "the bizarre and unusual uses of language which, outside the classroom, seem to capture attention, take on importance, and remain in the mind" (Cook, 2000, p. 169).

Broner and Tarone (2001) examined language play in a fifth-grade Spanish immersion classroom. They compared Cook's (2000) notion of ludic language play with Lantolf's (1997) notion of language play as rehearsal or private speech. They showed

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how the two types of play can be distinguished in classroom discourse through the presence or absence of five channel cues: "presence/absence of laughter; shifts in voice quality and pitch versus shifts in loudness/whispering; use of language forms that are well-known versus forms that are new; presence/absence of a fictional world of reference; and presence/absence of an audience other than the self" (p. 376). Broner and Tarone argued that it is important to maintain distinction between the two types of language play in order to examine their distinct roles in the process of SLA. Furthermore, they hypothesized how ludic language play may be helpful for SLA.

Expanding on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, (Lantolf, 1997, Vygotsky 1978) Sullivan's (2000) work (also see Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996) looked at L2 language play as mediation in communicative language teaching in a Vietnamese classroom. While Lantolf focused on play as an individual activity, Sullivan showed how the playful exchanges that she observed were a socially mediated activity, which took place within the social context of the classroom. In this class, the teacher and students jointly engaged in humorous, oral narratives. Sullivan suggested that these playful exchanges result in awareness of language meaning and form, suggesting yet another possible role for L2 language play.

Drawing on V. Cook's (1992) concept of multicompetence, Belz (2002) expanded beyond research focusing primarily on the role of L2 play in the acquisition of L2 forms and linked language play to adult learner identity. Her work, which looked at English students in an advanced German class, was important since it was one of the first to look at play by adult learners (as opposed to playful language by children) and their actual productions of L2 play (as opposed to just relying on survey data). Belz argued that

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language play may not only aid in the acquisition of L2 forms but may also affect learners' sense of self and their ways of interacting with the world. This type of language play may be evidence of learners' growing multicompetence. Cook (1991) defined multicompetence as "the compound state of mind with two grammars" (p. 112) and suggested that "people who know two languages might 'think' differently than those who know only one" (Cook, 1992, p. 563). Belz's data which represented excerpts from multilingual essays, oral interviews, videotaped classroom discourse, surveys, and written journal entries, produced by English-speaking advanced students of German, exhibited language play at all linguistic levels as well as code-switching. She noted that the learners in her study "do not relate their hybridized language behavior to self-conceptualizations of linguistic deficiency. Instead, they relate it to a growing sense of linguistic competence, creativity, and power" (pp. 22-23). Belz suggested that the language play acts as iconic representations of the dialogic mediation of identity in and through a second language.

Belz and Reinhardt (2004) presented a case study of one learner of German and his use of language play in computer-mediated communication. They showed how this learner used language play for his own pleasure, as well as a vehicle for linguistic creativity, as a means of personal relationship building, and for presentation of positive face. Additionally, they showed this learner's language play is evidence of advanced proficiency since the learner not only displayed an awareness and mastery of the rules of morphological derivation in German, but also demonstrated an awareness of the multifunctionality of the language, including its aesthetic, semantic, and semiotic functions.

Davis (2003) examined the collaborative construction of conversational joking between beginning non-native learners of English (NNS) and native English speakers (NSs) in the context of voluntary peer conversation groups at an intensive English program, rather than in classrooms. Davis noted that a key feature of these groups is that they were informal and in contrast to a classroom context, more egalitarian. However, the American NSs obviously had linguistic and cultural resources that the NNS did not. Davies' analysis revealed how the NS played an important role in the construction of humorous discourse by providing support in the form of initiations of humor, collaborating joking initiated by NNS by scaffolding their attempts at humor, and constructing discourse contexts that assisted the NNS in the creation of humor.

Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) looked specifically at language play in the form of repetition in conversations of young learners in an immersion classroom. They found that playful recyclings were recurrent features in the learners' second language repertoires that served the purposes of creating a time-out (cf. Goffman, 1959; Jefferson, 1996) as well as inverting the classroom hierarchies. Cekaite and Aronsson also deduced that the joking activities "sensitize children to both pragmatic and formal linguistic aspects of second language use (e.g., phonology or morphology)" (p. 388). Through the parodying and joking, Cekaite and Aronsson suggested that the children were advancing their language awareness.

Cekaite and Aronsson (2005), again looking at children in an immersion classroom, found that children who had limited L2 proficiency used form-focused language play during spontaneous peer conversations. This form-focused language play included alliteration, other forms of parallelism, code switching, and variations in pitch,

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volume, and voice quality. Importantly, they found that these episodes of form-focused language play generated repair sequences and informal language lessons on formal aspects of the language.

Bell (2005) also examined the playful interaction between NSs and NNS, by analyzing discourse of three adult L2 speakers of English interacting outside of the classroom with NSs of English. She specifically inquired whether and how this may have furthered their SLL. Her results also showed that language play could be a marker of proficiency, as more advanced participants used L2 linguistic resources in more creative ways. She also argued that language play may also result in deeper processing of lexical items, making them more memorable, and may be especially helpful in the acquisition of vocabulary and semantic fields.

Lastly, Ohta (2008) specifically examined laughter within the classroom social space of beginning Japanese foreign language classes. Although laughter did not always result from exposure to jokes or funny narratives, humorous language play was one context in which Ohta found laughter in her corpus of classroom data. She found that laughter occurred sometimes because of *how* something was said, from exaggerated or sarcastic responses to mundane classroom tasks, or through redundant answers (Foerster, 1984 as cited in Ohta, 2008, p. 224). These are what Ohta referred to as "one-size-fits-all responses" which are "general answers that suit various situations, allowing students to avoid more difficult expressions" (p. 224). She suggested that laughter can provide insight into the L2 developmental process and reveal L2 comprehension.

Theories of Humor and its Functions

Most of the studies on language play and SLL have focused more on the forms and types of humor, as opposed to the functions of humor. I will not give a thorough review of theories of humor and its functions here, but I will provide an overview of some of the perspectives which assisted me in thinking more deeply about the data in this study.

Bell (2002) described how "humor functions, first, to amuse or entertain, but that it can, and usually does, also serve additional functions at the same time" (p. 26). Cook (2000) noted that one view of humorous language play is that it is tied to aggression and resistance, and that this view has suggested that "laughing *with* somebody almost always entails laughing at somebody else" (p. 71). While he saw these views as important, he did not see them as complete in explaining humorous language play. He noted that humorous language play can also have social functions of reconciliation and solidarity. Cooks offered three possible explanations or theories of the social functions of humor.

The first is that humorous language play functions as a kind of "release" or an outlet for feelings like nervousness or tension. Bell (2002) offered an example of this kind of release as such:

During the telling of a joke or humorous story, for example, listeners may develop feelings about the characters, which, upon hearing the punch line, are shown to be false. In this case, the unexpected nature of the ending causes a build-up of nervous energy, which must then be released through laughter (p. 15).

Another theory is that the humor of the language play results from a perception of incongruity, in other words "when phenomena seem to be contradictory or when a new

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stimulus is inconsistent with past experience" (Cook, 2000, p. 74). This theory focuses on the humor stimulus rather than the participants. Likewise, Morreall (1983) wrote of the "Incongruity Theory" of laughter. He described how laughter is a result of the unexpected. He explained that, "We live in an orderly world where we have come to expect certain patterns among things, their properties, events, etc. We laugh when we experience something that doesn't fit into these patterns" (p. 15).

The last theory that Cook discussed is Raskin's (1985) theory of script incongruity. This theory analyzes the text itself and asks *how* rather than *why*. The idea is that each word in a speaker's lexicon is associated with a script, which is "a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it" (p. 81). A speaker's knowledge of the world is reflected through this script. So for example, while some scripts may be shared for learners in a classroom, some might be restricted to just a few peers in that classroom, or just reflect individual experience, resulting in incongruity. However, Cook criticized Raskin's theory for not explaining why script incongruity might be funny and why certain incongruities might be funnier than others.

There are numerous other theories of humor as well as its functions in social interaction. Humor can create and affirm affiliation (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Eder, 1993; Norrick, 1993, Straehle, 1993). Humor can serve to release pent-up aggressions or mask criticism (Jorgensen, 1996; Yedes, 1996). It can be a way to display or negotiate identity (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Wennerstrom, 2000, Yedes, 1996). Boxer and Cortés-Conde pointed out that the issue of humor as a marker of individual or relational identity is often implicit in studies, but rarely directly addressed. Humor can also serve to protect positive face needs (Holmes, 2000; Zajdman, 1995). Holmes suggested that

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humor acts as a type of self-defense for discussing weaknesses, errors, or embarrassing problems and that self-teasing is often used on such occasions. (p. 169).

The Current Study

The CoP framework has mainly been used in investigating ESL learning within the broader field of SLL as opposed to foreign language learning contexts. Additionally, research on humor and language play in the social interaction between adult L2 learners and HLLs, and how this interaction contributes to creating a community and contexts for various levels of participation, is limited. As discussed in this chapter, much of the recent work on humor, language play and SLL has focused on how playful uses of language may facilitate SLL, and less on how humor and language play may facilitate (or hinder) a learner's evolving membership in a CoP. This evolving membership includes, but is not limited to, increasing knowledge of the target language of study.

My study is also the very first to document humor practices within an Arabic language classroom, and one that was comprised of mostly HLLs. Due to the diglossic nature of the Arabic language and differences between HLL dialects, some of the forms of humor found in this classroom are unique and expand the discourse on the types of humorous language play that L2 students might engage in and the possible implications of humor for language learning.

Chapter 3

Method

Context: The Arabic Flagship Program

The context for my study was an undergraduate Arabic Flagship Program at a large Midwest university, which was funded in 2006, bringing in its first cohort of students during the fall of 2007. Initially, the Flagship Program at this university intended to focus solely on advanced Arabic language education. Students were expected to already be at an advanced level in order to enter the program, with the hope that this would enable them to reach superior/distinguished levels of proficiency (ACTFL Arabic Proficiency Guidelines, 1999) by the time they finished the four-year program. Therefore, the program initially targeted Arabic HLLs, especially in surrounding Midwest communities, that have substantial Arab populations, and which already offer Arabic language instruction in their K-12 school systems. The linguistic background of Arabic HLLs, who typically already know some colloquial Arabic, was seen as a resource and something that would expedite the learners' pathways to high levels of proficiency. Therefore, the first cohort of students admitted as Flagship scholars were mainly HLLs. Three of the participants, Mousa, Mohammed, and Zihad were actually already at superior level proficiency when they were admitted to the program and this was mainly because the program was brand new and struggling to recruit an initial cohort of HLLs. It was also allowed because Mousa, Mohammed, and Zihad wanted to continue to improve their MSA and since MSA is not any Arab's native language, even native speakers can claim they have more to learn about their own language.

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Participants

The participants were the nine members of the first cohort of Arabic Flagship

scholars and their native Arabic-speaking Saudi Arabian/Jordanian teacher in the Arabic

class during the spring of 2009 (see Table 1 for more background information about the

student participants), in addition to Zihad, who joined the first cohort of scholars a year

later and thus was only with them for the advanced reading and the ARB 500 class that is

the focus of this study. Thus, there were 10 student participants and one teacher

participant. Of the 10 students, seven were males and three were females. Ethnic/heritage

backgrounds of the 10 participants included Lebanese, Iraqi, Egyptian, Palestinian,

Syrian, Pakistani, and Anglo-American. All of the participants except the two Anglo-

American students identified themselves as Muslims. Largely because they were the very

first cohort and the Flagship Program was still in the infancy of its development, all of

these learners were placed together to follow the same track of Arabic courses, even

though their proficiency levels ranged from scores of intermediate mid to superior

(ACTFL Arabic Proficiency Guidelines, 1989) on their Oral Proficiency Interviews

(OPIs) in September of 2008.

Table 1

Participants in ARB 500

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Home Language(s)*	Ethnicity/Heritage	Lived in Arab country?	OPI 09/08	OPI 03/09	Major
Mousa	M	Arabic/English	Lebanese	yes, age 6-15	S	S	Chemistry
Mohammed	M	Arabic	Iraqi	yes, age 0-12	S	S	Business
Zihad	M	Arabic/English	Syrian	no	S	S	Interdisciplinary
Layla	F	English/Arabic	Egyptian	yes, age 0-3	AM	AM +	Pre-med
Rahman	M	English/Arabic	Egyptian	family visits only	AL	AM	Int. Business
Ihab	M	English/Arabic	Palestinian	family visits only	AL	AM	Psychology
Tareq	M	English/Arabic	Egyptian	family visits only	IM	AM	Biology
Noor	F	English/Urdu	Pakistani	no, never visited	AL	IM +	Journalism
Mary	F	English	Anglo-American	yes, 2 months SA	AM	AL	Interdisciplinary
Joe	M	English	Anglo-American	yes, 4 months SA	AM	IH	Interdisciplinary

OPI = Oral Proficiency Interview Score, SA = Study Abroad

*The language which was reported as used more often at home is listed first.

Teacher

The teacher of this class was half Jordanian and half Saudi Arabian. She was born and raised in Saudi Arabia and completed her BA and MA there. She moved to the USA in 1990 and completed her doctorate degree in Bilingual Education. She gained most of her experience teaching Arabic at the K-12 level before joining the Arabic Flagship Program and is well-known in the Arabic foreign language teaching field for her Arabic teacher training workshops.

Mousa and Mohamed

Mousa and Mohammed, though identified by the Flagship Program as HLLs, both rejected this label and saw themselves as native Arabic speakers. Teachers in the Flagship Program occasionally referred to them as native speakers, particularly when they were comparing them to other HLLs, but generally the Flagship staff and teachers grouped Mousa and Mohammed with the rest of the HLLs in the Flagship Program when it came to curricula discussions and reports. They differed in that Mohammed did not consider himself as a native speaker of English, while Mousa did. Mousa was born in the US, but lived in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon for 10 years, from the time he was six until he was 15 years of age. He did not see himself as a HLL like his classmates since he attended an Arabic-medium school in the Middle East for 10 years, and therefore studied all of his school subjects in Arabic alongside native Arabic speakers. He saw himself closer to a native speaker of Arabic than an HLL because he said when he goes back to the Middle East, "nobody ever notices anything, like an accent. They just assume that I'm just part of the country. They don't treat me like a foreigner" (interview, Mousa). Likewise, Mohammed rejected the label of an HLL since he was born and raised in Iraq until he

was 12 years old and spoke only Arabic at home with his family. Both Mousa and Mohammed received superior on their first official ACTFL OPIs given in September of 2008 and were clearly seen as the experts by their classmates and their teacher.

Ihab, Zihad, Tareq, Layla, Rahman

Ihab, Zihad, Tareq, Layla, and Rahman fit the more standard definitions of HLLs. All had previous exposure to Arabic through their family, all considered themselves native speakers of English, and all were to some degree bilingual in Arabic, although there was also a diverse range of proficiency levels and language skills between them. All self-identified as HLLs as opposed to native speakers of Arabic stating reasons like, "my native culture is American, not Egyptian" (Tareq) or "I've been speaking it [Arabic] for as long as I can remember, but never to a degree of fluency" (Rahman).

Ihab stood out the most in this group because he positioned himself as the class clown early on. He rarely seemed to take class tasks and activities very seriously and he engaged in conversational joking often, more so in English, but also in Arabic. Because Ihab grew up in a large villa in Michigan which was shared not only with his immediate family but also extended family, he was used to having to get attention and used to being around many Palestinian speakers. His comprehension of Arabic was much more advanced than some of the other HLLs like Tareq, but he still had trouble expressing himself in Arabic. As will be seen in the classroom interaction data, he often interrupted the teacher and inserted short funny expressions in Arabic in order to be able to participate. When I asked him if others saw him as someone who talks a lot in class, he said, "yeah, in a good way. Well, sometimes in a bad way though. Well, I can say in a good way because I make them laugh sometimes" (interview, Ihab).

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Although Zihad did engage in a lot of conversational joking, in many ways he was the exact opposite of Ihab. He was a very intense, serious student and had very strong motivation to improve both his MSA and dialect, as well as to be challenged intellectually during his undergraduate education. He was also a very religious, but liberal Muslim and had a lot of interest in classical Arabic and Arabic syntax and grammar. What differentiated Zihad the most from the other students is that he had never lived in or visited his heritage country of Syria or anywhere else in the Arabic-speaking world. Yet, he still possessed tremendous knowledge both about the Arabic language and the Arab world from his own voracious reading and study, and he had already reached a superior level of oral proficiency in Arabic when he joined the Flagship Program.

Rahman, a student of Egyptian heritage, sat beside Zihad in class and was the only student who could really appreciate a good intellectual debate with Zihad. Even though he was not able to express himself as well as Zihad in Arabic, he would try very hard to get his ideas across if the topic really interested him. He participated in class a medium amount but would often appear very bored or distracted (staring off into space). Every once in a while when a topic really interested or infuriated him in some way, he would get very animated and loud. The other students would often laugh at his excited antics.

Tareq tended to be extremely quiet in class unless called upon by the teacher. He had never had any formal schooling in Arabic before joining the Flagship Program and he had the lowest initial oral proficiency rating in Arabic, only scoring Intermediate Mid on his ACTFL OPI in September 2008. Therefore, he relied a lot on his good friend Mousa to help scaffold language for him in class, usually through quick whispered translations

from Arabic to English. Nearly every time that he did have to speak, he would physically turn toward Mousa for help in providing vocabulary words or English translations if he did not understand what was being asked of him. He mentioned that he "can't just blurt out anything in Arabic" and how the basic stuff that he knows how to say in class is usually already said before he has a chance to process what is being asked:

The basic stuff, the stuff that I know how to say or understand, somebody already said it and by the time I can understand what the teacher is saying, it is kind of too late. (Tareq)

He also admitted that at home, he received substantial help from his Arabic-speaking mother on all his assignments:

Mom helps me with reading and writing. I read with her and she explains some words and she explains the meaning of each paragraph, and then we go onto the next paragraph." (Tareq)

In this way, Tareq was able to survive in the class and at the surface, appear to have the same proficiency level as the other HLLs, even though his language skills were in many respects lower than the L2 learners.

Layla

Layla was born in Egypt and lived there for two years as well as Dubai for three years. She had also gone to the Saudi Islamic academy in the US where the teacher had taught, from 2nd grade to 8th grade. Therefore, she already knew the teacher before entering the Flagship Program. Layla was very much in the middle of the class in terms of her language proficiency and she participated in class a medium amount and put in just enough effort to get by in the class. She was not assigned a novice status by her peers or

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the teacher, but she was also not considered an expert like Mousa and Mohamed. She was studying premed and told me that she was much more interested in studying medicine than Arabic. She was good friends with Ihab and they often joked around together. She was also good friends with the other two females in the class, Noor and Mary. She had also known Noor before entering the Flagship Program since Noor also attended the same Saudi Islamic academy.

Noor

Noor represented that murky area of HL definitions. She was from a Muslim Pakistani background, grew up speaking English and Urdu but attended the Saudi Islamic academy, which taught Arabic, since she was in 1st grade. Therefore, she had prior exposure to formal Arabic through schooling, but she also was around Arab friends from school all the time and thus, had lots of exposure to colloquial varieties of Arabic and could understand it quite well, even though she never spoke it. When asked whether she considered herself a native speaker or a heritage speaker of Arabic, she said that she considered herself a native speaker of English and Urdu and referred to herself as "an artificial Arab":

A lot of people get me confused for Arab because of the way I look and I'm like, "no I'm Pakistani" and they are like, "but you speak Arabic and you are so immersed in the culture." I'm artificially Arab. I think that is the best way to describe it. (Noor)

Indeed, Noor could have easily been mistaken for Arab with her dark hair and eyes and Arab-like features. She felt that despite having very good pronunciation, being able to express herself verbally in Arabic was her weakest skill and like Tareq, she rarely spoke up in class unless called on. She had in fact received the lowest score after Tareq

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on her OPIs. Despite this, Noor tended to be viewed and talked about by the program, teachers, and classmates as a HLL, particularly in comparison to the L2 learners since she neither looked like them nor sounded like them. I have chosen to refer to her as an L2 learner as opposed to an HLL in this study since she did not have the Arabic cultural and dialect exposure at home that the other HLLs in the class had. In terms of her Arabic skills though, she displayed characteristics common of both HLLs and L2 learners. For example, she had native-like pronunciation of Arabic like many HLLs; however, she could not actually speak dialect that well.

Mary and Joe

Mary and Joe were not only L2 learners, having learned Arabic purely from university classroom instruction and short study abroad programs in Egypt, but they also stood apart from the rest of the group physically. Both were stereotypical Anglo-American with pale skin, light blonde-hair, and blue-eyes. Additionally, they were the only two non-Muslims in the class. They always sat together in class and they tended to be "lumped" together and talked about as one, being the two non-HLLs in the class.

Flagship Curriculum

During the initial year of Flagship coursework, the first cohort of nine scholars took two Arabic classes together each semester. One of these was an advanced Arabic language course, focusing on speaking, listening, reading, and writing of MSA. The other was a general education university content course taught entirely in Arabic. These general education courses focused on Middle Eastern history and Arabic literature and culture. Six native Arabic speakers, who were regular university students, joined with the Flagship scholars during each of these content courses. During their second year of

course work, students took one Arabic language course each semester, the first one focused on advanced reading skills and strategies and the second one focused on advanced writing skills. In addition to the time spent together in Flagship courses, this first cohort participated in a number of extra-curricular activities together, including fieldtrips to Dearborn and Detroit, potluck dinners, guest speakers, and movies. Additionally, three of the students, Mousa, Ihab, and Tareq got to know each other the summer before joining the Flagship Program on a pre-Flagship study abroad program in Damascus, Syria. These three students remained close friends throughout their studies and even lived together in the dormitories.

<center>Flagship Course: ARB 500 as a Community of Practice</center>

The focus for this study was the advanced writing skills course, offered during the spring of 2009, which will be referred to as ARB 500. The ARB 500 class met for 2 hours twice a week (a total of 4 credit hours). In terms of the practices of this classroom as a CoP, the students were mutually engaged just by the fact of their being together and being part of the larger Flagship Program. They were engaged in the joint enterprise or common goal of learning Arabic. However, some students, like Mohamed and Mousa, mainly had a goal of learning MSA and working on their Arabic reading and writing skills, while many of the other students also wanted to learn and improve their Arabic dialect. The students would be mutually engaged in spending approximately half an hour of the class in a whole class discussion. Then the rest of the class time was typically spent in some kind of small group work and then reconvening as a whole class to discuss the work completed in the small groups. The whole class discussion was usually centered on a homework reading or centered on a lecture, in which the teacher would stop and elicit

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the students' experiences and opinions. The teacher and the native Arabic-speaking students (Mousa and Mohamed) as well as Zihad who already had superior proficiency and was a very vocal student, tended to dominate the discussion time. These were the only students in the class who were really able to express their ideas and opinions in Arabic with any fluency, and so the rest of the students tended to just sit back and let them answer questions, unless the teacher called specifically on them or they were particularly interested in a topic. These students often just used English when they really wanted to say something and the teacher allowed this.

In fact, most of the time, it was part of the shared repertoire of the classroom that students spoke English to each other during breaks and during small-group work unless the teacher happened to be enforcing using only Arabic that day. She did push using only Arabic on occasion but was not always consistent with it. There was also not a strict policy about using only Arabic in the syllabus. Mousa, Mohammed, and Zihad were the only students who sometimes spoke Arabic to each other outside of structured class activities and were the only students who could comfortably mix MSA and dialect. In terms of the shared repertoire of MSA vs. dialect, both were often used in this class. The teacher spoke with a mix of MSA and Saudi Arabian/Jordanian dialects. She encouraged the HLLs in the class to use MSA, particularly during structured classroom activities and tasks, and would correct their dialect "kitchen" words at times. She was more lenient about the use of dialect during classroom discussions and off-task conversations. At times she specifically focused on dialect language, bringing in jokes or cartoons using dialect. She was also more lenient toward the L2 learners than the HLLs when they used dialect in class. In general though, both MSA and dialect were valued in the classroom and it

was understood that educated Arabic speakers should be able to mix the two registers in appropriate ways, according to the context.

Humor certainly stood out as one of the most salient practices of the shared repertoire of this classroom CoP. The students (mostly the males) as well as the teacher were constantly engaged in conversational joking, in both English and Arabic. The teacher also had a pedagogical practice of telling canned jokes frequently, often at the very beginning of class.

In Figure 1, I have included a drawing of the classroom seating arrangement. On two occasions, the teacher had the students move their desks into a circle, but outside of small group work, it was typically a traditional classroom physical arrangement. The students sat in desks in rows facing the teacher, who stood at the front of the room. Although students switched their seats around some, this picture represents the most frequent physical placement of students in the class.
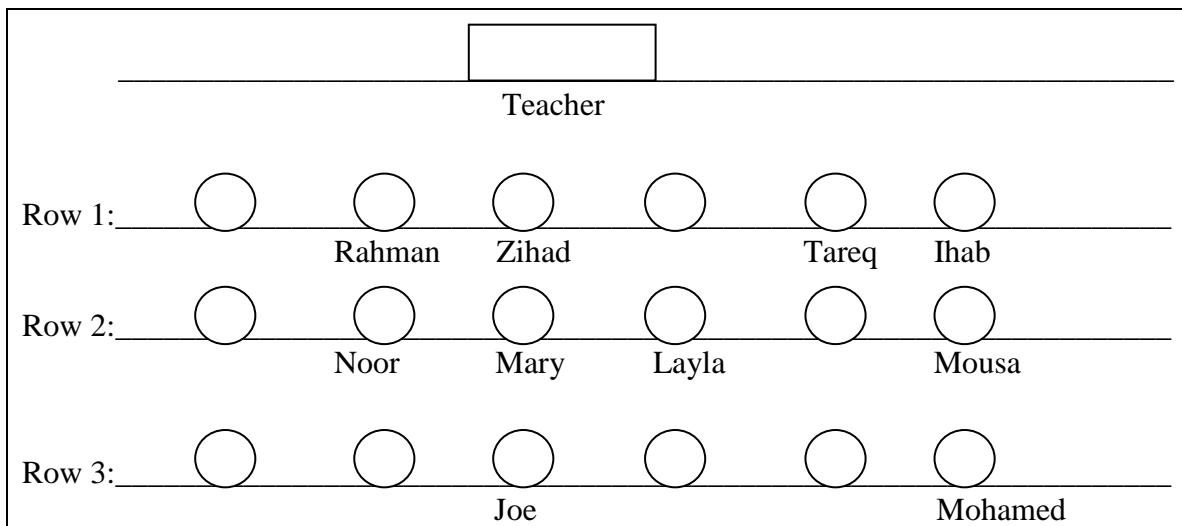
Figure 1: *Classroom seating arrangement*

Individual classes often take on a particular "personality" (Norrick and Klein, 2008). In interviews with the students, they described the atmosphere of the class as light-hearted, laid-back, friendly, intimate, funny, and goofy.

A unique and rather important aspect of this class in terms of how it shaped interactions and community and allowed for humor on the classroom, was that the students all felt very comfortable with each other. For most of the students, by the time they were in this Arabic class, this was their fourth semester together and their sixth class together. As noted earlier, they had developed close friendships over the course of participating in six classes together, as well as participating in the Flagship Program's extra-curricular activities together. The following interview quotes from students regarding the atmosphere of the class exemplifies this. In Example 1, Ihab expresses how he felt very welcome and liked in the class by both his classmates and the teacher. He also notes that he actually looked forward to going to this class:

Exp 1:

Atmosphere. I really look forward to going to this class. I learn…um…it's fun. You know, the people there. I guess they like to have me there. It feels like I'm welcome. Like not just the students, but the teacher also. (interview, Ihab)

In Example 2, Mousa describes the class as low-pressure. Students do not feel pressure to participate in class if they are not comfortable speaking:

Exp 2:

It's enjoyable and open, nobody is under pressure to say or do anything. Everybody is comfortable where they are at. We all know each other so it is a friendly atmosphere. (interview, Mousa).

In Example 3, Layla describes how everyone in the class is good friends and how this is specifically because of the model of the Flagship Program and sharing the same classes together for two years. She expresses doubt that this would happen in other foreign language learning contexts. Importantly, she stresses how much of an out of class relationship she has with her classmates and how they are really a "group" and there is no hate between members:

Exp 3:

I don't think this would happen, you know the way we are all good friends in class. I mean I think it is because we have been together for two years in the same exact classes, cause we are all part of the same program. It might not happen in different class settings, if you are studying like German. If I went into a German class, I wouldn't get to know everybody. 10 students and we all get to know each other. I don't think what happens in this class applies to every class because I don't think you have as much out of class relationship as much I do with everyone. I love this class. Not so much the work we have to do, I mean it is not that much work, but I just like the people in the class and I feel like we are a group and we don't hate each other or anything. (interview, Layla)

In Example 4, Noor also expresses how everyone gets long, and the friendly and intimate nature of the class because it is small:

Exp. 4:

The atmosphere of the class, it's really laid back, it's friendly. Like everyone gets

along and stuff. Very small, very intimate. (interview, Noor)

In Example 5, Joe, like Mousa, describes the low pressure of the class. However, this is

not necessarily a good thing to Joe, since there is not the pressure to improve his Arabic

skills:

Exp. 5:

In general, I think for this class, it's a very- it's pretty chill atmosphere. So there is

not a lot of pressure on my Arabic skills as a whole. When I was in Alexandria, I felt

like, it was just a totally different atmosphere. I felt at the same level on some stuff in

Alexandria and a little higher in Egyptian just because I had had it. But um, I also felt

that…our atmosphere here is nice because people can joke and take jokes.

(interview, Joe).

In these interview excerpts, none of the students expressed feelings of

marginalization within this particular classroom CoP. Everyone was friends; everyone

got along; no one hated each other. The anxiety level in this classroom appeared to be

very low, with both positive and negative consequences. Students felt comfortable, but on

the other hand they were not very pushed to improve their Arabic skills.

It is also interesting to note that although I did not ask the students or the teachers

specifically about humor in the classroom during my interviews with them, Joe mentions

that the atmosphere is nice because, "people can joke and take jokes" (Exp. 4).

The teacher's perspective of the atmosphere of the classroom was similar to the

students:

My students feel comfortable to laugh—to say anything they want. Sometimes even

in the middle of their work, we talk about something else. And that brings me closer

to them. I'm not a higher authority than them. It is a nice learning environment.

(interview, teacher).

The teacher's notes that her students feel comfortable laughing and saying what they

want, because she's "not a higher authority" over them. The teacher tended to be

extremely positive and optimistic and brought this energy to the classroom with her. She

created a classroom community of inclusion and egalitarianism. She allowed students to

voice dissent or complaints or challenge her perspectives and she enjoyed talking and

debating with the students.

In terms of humor, the teacher initiated a lot of the humor in the class, particularly

more structured types of humor, such as telling canned jokes or on several occasions,

humorous narratives about her life. She fostered a classroom environment which was

conducive to humor and to the presentation of individual personalities. She allowed and

encouraged conversational joking. In fact, she viewed these kind of "off-task" moments

as bringing her closer to her students, suggesting that affiliation with her students was

very important to her.

Participants' Perspectives on Themselves and on Each Other

In terms of the participants' perspectives on each other and their roles in the class,

Mousa and Mohamed were mentioned multiple times throughout the interviews as

examples of who students received language help from in the class or who was really

good in the class:

Exp.1:

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Well, the benefits are that we can like learn from each other, like we bounce ideas off

of each other, like we always ask Mousa and Mohammed, "hey can you help us with

this?" so that's really nice to have someone to ask, like, besides the teacher, cause

sometimes it can get overwhelming, like I think if Mousa and Mohammed weren't

there, it would be probably overwhelming for the teacher to answer all of our

questions. (Noor)

Exp.2:

Things are pretty far apart between me and Mousa but he's like really good, they are

really good at helping us out and like since the beginning they have been really cool

with trying to go through and have us think of things. Like, I guess I keep speaking for

Joe and I, but like helping us through with the language and not just doing it on their

own but including us too (Mary)

Exp.3:

For instance Mousa, whenever I have questions regarding writing, he always helps me

out. That is one way he helps. (Tareq)

Exp.4:

Mousa and Mohammed for instance, they have been speaking Arabic forever and they

lived in the Middle East for a long time. So, for them it is just second nature…or not

even…it's first nature. (Mary)

As Noor pointed out, Mousa and Mohammed took on co-teacher type roles in this

classroom community. Noor mentioned elsewhere in her interview that, "I don't think I

can be as helpful as, for example, Mohammed and Mousa. I mean, they are definitely the

most helpful." Mousa and Mohammed were somebody besides the teacher that the

students felt like they could go to for help and get feedback on their language. Like Tareq, Ihab also received help on his writing from Mousa and he talked more specifically about how Mousa not only offered corrective feedback on his writing but also made evaluations of his progress and praised him for good work:

We were doing a paper once in our dorm and Mousa was like, "you are getting so much better!" because he usually corrects it before I turn it in. He reads it for like grammar and how I write and he is like, "it is getting so much better," like he just told me that the other day. I felt good about it too. (Ihab)

Interestingly, here Ihab validated Mousa's right to take on the teacher's role of evaluating his work.

The teacher also co-constructed this view of Mousa and Mohammed as the experts by calling on them if no one else spoke up in class or asking them to define/explain certain vocabulary words or phrases to other students. She felt that they were beneficial for the other students and could benefit themselves from teaching the weaker students:

I have two students who are really advanced from the rest of the class and the way I deal with them, for example, I let them work with the weakest ones, so I let them use their skills somehow, but they don't know that, maybe they know, but it is always my intention to put them with somebody that can benefit from them. (Teacher)

Both Mousa and Mohammed seemed to accept co-teacher roles assigned them by the teacher and their classmates and they were willing to help:

I think they see me as a helpful person because I'm always able to help them and willing to help them, whatever questions they have in class or even after class and

when they have questions, they all come to me; they are comfortable asking me whatever they have." (Mousa)

Although Mousa did not feel that the class was challenging enough for him, he did mention that, "whenever I'm asked to help anybody, that helps my Arabic. I'm able to teach it and the best way to learn is to teach it." Thus, accepting this co-teacher role really became one of the ways that Mousa was able to keep himself engaged in a class that was much too easy for him.

Although Mousa and Mohammed were willing to accept co-teacher roles, they were less willing to accept Arabic expert identities. When asked how they thought their classmates viewed their language proficiency, Mohammed responded, "pretty advanced," and Mousa situated both himself and Mohammed at the top of the class based only on having lived in the Middle East for a longer period of time:

They know I've lived in the Middle East and not that I lived there that long, but I lived there a while and I took Arabic classes so they probably think that I know more Arabic than them based on that and I guess most of the people in the class, other than me and Mohammed, um lived here their whole lives and they don't have as much exposure to Arabic language which is why there is, which is why me and Mohammed are a little bit ahead of the rest of the class because we lived there for a lot longer. (Mousa)

Although their classmates as well as the teacher assigned them expert identities and co-teacher roles in the class, both Mohammed and Mousa seemed hesitant to claim this identity as an expert when referring to how their classmates see them. They used

hedging phrases such as "pretty advanced" and "not that I lived there that long" and "a little bit ahead" in order not to distance themselves too far from their classmates.

Part of this may be explained by the fact that claiming a native Arabic speaker identity did not necessarily equal an expert in Arabic identity to Mousa and Mohammed. Although both Mousa and Mohammed saw themselves as able to communicate with any native speaker of Arabic effectively, there was a sense that both of them felt they could never truly claim to be an experts in Arabic, particularly in terms of their knowledge of Arabic grammar and being able to read more difficult classical texts. Mousa commented that "you could study [Arabic] grammar for 30 years and you won't be finished."

Mousa also mentioned how his level of Arabic "is probably the same as the average guy in the Middle East but I want to go above that." Mousa sought an identity as an educated Arab, highly literate and knowledgeable of the formal Arabic language, and not just someone who could converse on the street about everyday topics.

In terms of the implications of these identities and roles for this classroom community, as mentioned previously, Mousa and Mohammed were certainly helpful and willing to help in class. However, they also heavily dominated speaking turns in the class during whole class discussions. When I asked Mary how much she talked in class, she mentioned, "not as much as Mousa and Mohammed are speaking…that is kind of the accepted way things go." Mary also felt like the presence of Mousa and Mohammed in the class allowed for the other students to depend on them, perhaps too much:

I have the challenge of these guys that are more advanced and keeping up with them, but at the same time it is hard because you can just kind of step back a little bit. I don't

mean not work as hard, but you can kind of depend on them, which is good. But at the same time, I don't know….(Mary)

Noor also mentioned the challenge of having students like Mousa and Mohammed in their class:

Sometimes, you are like, 'okay, I'm not that good at Arabic, so I'll just let them take over the conversation' and you feel like you don't need to try; you can kind of fly under the radar, so you don't get to practice as much. (Noor).

Despite the fact that the atmosphere of the class was friendly and as Noor mentioned, "we're not afraid to say what's on our mind," it became an accepted practice in this community that Mousa and Mohammed would control the floor during whole class discussions while other students like Tareq, Noor, and Joe would remain almost completely silent every class. Thus, while Mousa and Mohammed were helpful in many ways, their presence also seemed to limit opportunities for other students to participate orally in class, with the exception of humor practices. The teacher did sometimes call specifically on other students, but she also seemed to allow Mousa and Mohammed to control most of the discussion. Mousa seemed sensitive to the fact that students might feel shy to speak, mentioning that students might be hesitant to speak because they feel like "oh, he knows so much and I don't" but he said that he usually lets students talk unless they do not know how to answer it, in which case he will step in. Mohammed said that he did volunteer and speak more than others because of the different levels and because the "lower level doesn't feel confident, might not answer questions, or volunteer to answer."

Zihad did not have the same native speaker fluency as Mousa and Mohamed did in Arabic, but he was still able to express himself well, and did express his views and opinions in class often. While he told me that he did not have the level of Arabic that he desired in order to truly be able to express his ideas on an academic level, he did feel comfortable speaking in class:

I find it very easy to speak during class. I feel comfortable raising my hand. Sometimes when we get on political or historical issues, I feel like I can't adequately express myself. Because even in English language, if I wanted to speak, it would be in a level where the average American I don't think can really comprehend. I'm not saying this out of arrogance; it's just what I'm used to. But I can't do that in Arabic, so I feel at a disadvantage, but I feel comfortable speaking in class. yeah. That's why I speak a lot (interview, Zihad).

When I asked him to further discuss why he felt comfortable speaking, he talked about his personality and his willingness to communicate and ask questions:

My personality makes me comfortable because I always believe in speaking out in something if you don't believe in it, raising your voice, asking questions. There is no such thing as a stupid question and so even though the first few weeks were rough as I told you, I slowly got over it. And the second thing is my own knowledge of Arabic. Um, even in some situations where I am just learning some languages, like Chinese, German, stuff like that, I feel comfortable going up to the native speaker and using the few vocab words that I know. (interview, Zihad)

Rahman appeared on the surface to be much less engaged than Zihad in class overall. He would often sleep or seem to be spacing off unless the class was discussing a

political or economic issue which interested him. He wavered between being hyper and excitedly expressing his opinion and being mellow and seemingly disinterested in his classmates and the class. When I asked him how much he volunteered in Arabic, he responded:

Often, not all the time, but reasonably often. Just because it is in my nature if I know something or if I think I know something or if I have a different idea or if I regard the previous speaker's idea as ridiculous, um, which is often, I will volunteer to speak. But if I'm just not interested in the topic or if I'm interested but I have nothing to add, I just don't raise my hand. (interview, Rahman)

Rahman did not engage in a lot of the classroom humor but did not express any feelings of marginalization or negativity in his interview. He described how even though there was a lot of "goofiness" in the class, there was more than just that:

lighthearted but committed to actually doing things for all the goofiness that happens. I find that it's not actually all that goofy, you know, and I think xxx [the teacher] does a good job of keeping the madness under tight control. (interview, Rahman)

Layla expressed that she felt like she was not supposed to use Egyptian Arabic in the class and this created difficulties for her in participating fully in class:

I'm better at writing and reading than I am at speaking. Like if someone were talking to me in Egyptian Arabic, I could talk to them like fluent and they wouldn't even notice that I lived here all my life. But the minute somebody talks to me in *fuṣḥa* [MSA] Arabic, I'm just like, "ahh" like I don't want to sound like an idiot with some random Egyptian words so I feel like that is the barrier I have between this class

and…. I feel like I'm not supposed to use Egyptian Arabic in this class. I feel like it would sound weird. (interview, Layla)

Layla also expressed that she felt like it was not natural for her to speak with her classmates in Arabic in this classroom community, precisely because they were such good friends outside of class too:

I'm pretty sure it is hard for everyone because we, like some of us that do hang out outside of class, we have our stories to share but we're not going to share them in Arabic because it is not the first thing that comes to mind. Like I feel like half the time the teacher is like, "guys, Arabic, Arabic, Arabic," and even if some people are really good at Arabic, they are just not going to use Arabic. (interview, Layla)

This idea of it not feeling natural to use Arabic because everyone is such good friends is perhaps not all that surprising and is similar to what Tarone and Swain (1995) found in French immersion classes. The L2 represented the more formal language style whereas the first language (L1) represented the vernacular style. When students were good friends and there was a need to communicate, they would use their first language to do so. The L2 became the language of academic discourse and not the language of social interaction amongst peers.

Similar to Tareq, Noor felt it was difficult to talk "on the spot" and needed more wait time when participating in class discussions:

My problem is just being able to say something on the spot. With writing and reading, I have time to sit there and think about it and let it simmer but when I'm speaking, like you don't have that kind of time in a regular conversation and for me, I need that time to think about what I'm going to say. In class, like during discussion, I feel like a step

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behind, just because I'll have the idea in English and I'll be like, "well, how do I say

this in Arabic?" and then by the time I figure it out, it is too late to say it, so I'm just

like whatever.

Additionally, the teacher rarely called on Tareq and Noor even though they never

volunteered.

While Mousa and Mohammed were assigned identities as the two "experts" in the

class, Mary and Joe were assigned identities as the two "novices" in the class. This

identity seemed to be independent of their actual language proficiency, since they had

scored higher than Noor, Tareq, Ihab, and Rahman on their OPI scores and the same as

Layla. Throughout his interview, Zihad referred several times to "the two students who

don't know as much Arabic," in which he appeared to be referencing Mary and Joe, and

yet seemed hesitant to name them directly.

Although Mary and Joe actually did participate an average amount in class

discussions (more than Noor and Tareq), Mary and Joe contributed to the co-construction

of themselves as the novices by talking about their language proficiency as different from

their classmates' language proficiency. For example, when I asked Mary about any

negative aspects of being in a culturally diverse class, she answered that "maybe they

don't care to learn Arabic as much as Joe and I do, because they already know it." In this

one small statement, Mary not only aligned her identity together with Joe, but also

separated her and Joe from everyone else in the class who already "knows" Arabic. In

doing so, she contributed to constructing herself and Joe as the novices of the classroom.

She also mentioned as a benefit of being in a diverse class that "since they are heritage

speakers, they speak the language really well, so it is good to be able to hear that."

Joe also referred to himself as "definitely at the bottom end" of the class, and mentioned that he is "probably a hindrance to some people" in terms of being lower in proficiency than his classmates. However, he did not feel scared to talk in class:

"If everybody understands the topic, then it's not really the kind of atmosphere that you have to be scared to talk in front of everyone. It's such a personal, close experience so it is just a matter of like, if we don't talk, we either don't understand the question or they don't know the answer or understand the subject." (interview, Joe)

The teacher also helped co-construct this view of Mary and Joe as the novices by tending to pause and specifically ask just the two of them if they understood a particular word or phrase or if something was difficult for them. Examples of this will be seen in the classroom interaction data. She rarely ever sought clarification of understanding from other weaker students such as Noor and Tareq. The teacher also seemed to assign Mary and Joe "American" identities as well as "experts of the English language" identities, even though six of the rest of the students were born in the United States, all had U.S. citizenship, and all except for Mousa and Mohammed had been raised primarily in the U.S. The teacher would almost always refer to only Mary and Joe to expand on some aspect of discussion related to American culture or the English language, and sometimes she would also ask other students to explain Arab or Islamic cultural concepts to Mary and Joe. In this way, she further separated Mary and Joe as not only novices of Arabic and experts of English, but also as true "Americans" and non-Arabs and non-Muslims. This was consistent with the teacher's tendency to present culture in black and white,

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us/them dichotomies, as opposed to focusing on hybridity or multiplicity of identities. She said the following as to why she liked teaching a culturally diverse class:

It is so much fun because every time we bring up a cultural subject I can ask both sides to talk about it. And I purposely ask students from different backgrounds, 'what do you think? Is this the way here in America or this the way in the Arab world?' So they keep talking about it. Sometimes they explore together how it is different than the Arab world or the opposite or how similar it is. (Teacher)

Ihab also made reference to "two Americans" when talking about the benefits of being in a diverse class:

You have two Americans in our class that are pretty much more knowledgeable than most of us in the class when it comes down to American culture 'cause they studied that longer than we did and more in-depth than we did. (Ihab)

What is interesting about this statement is that Ihab himself was born in the US and never lived in the Arab world, and yet he clearly seems to identify himself and his other classmates, including Noor, as somehow less American than the two Anglo students.

Relationship of the Researcher

I considered myself a quasi-peer to this first cohort of flagship scholars. As an advanced L2 Arabic language learner myself, I enrolled in the first year of courses with the other flagship students. While I participated in all aspects of the courses, from homework assignments to class presentations, I was also distinct from my classmates in several ways. First, I was not a fellow Flagship scholar and second, I was significantly older than them and they knew I was a doctoral student. Additionally, I worked as a graduate assistant for the Flagship Program during the same time, and thus also took on

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somewhat of an advisory role with the Flagship scholars. While there was a certain power distance between us, the students were comfortable around me and considered me not only a quasi-peer/quasi-advisor, but also a friend. As a student participating in the first year of courses with the other Flagship scholars, I made casual observations regarding the interesting dynamics of such culturally diverse, multilevel classes.

During the second year of Flagship scholars' coursework, I took on a very different role with the Flagship scholars—only of an observer and researcher. However, since I already knew all the students, they appeared comfortable being themselves around me and in front of the video and audio equipment. I felt that my presence had minimal to no impact on their normal performance in class and the students felt comfortable being open and honest with me in their interviews regarding their perspectives on the class and the teacher.

When it came to interpreting the data, my personal and previous knowledge of all of the participants was beneficial. Additionally, since I myself was a kind of legitimate peripheral participant in this classroom CoP, I shared a schema with the students in terms of the shared repertoire of humor practices which developed. This gave me a certain in-group knowledge in locating occurrences of play frames in the classroom and in interpreting why something was funny.

<center>Data Collection</center>

In order to triangulate data, data were drawn from multiple sources. First, in order to establish what kinds of interactions were taking place in the classroom, and in the larger Flagship community, data collection included observations (56 hours) and field notes, video and audio recordings of the advanced writing class (36 hours of data), and

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casual observations made during the four courses in which I participated as a student, as well as other co-curricular and extra-curricular Flagship activities.

Second, in order to explore the perspectives of study participants, data collection also included audio-recorded interviews with all student participants. Each individual student was interviewed once at mid-semester. These were semi-structured in format and lasted 45-60 minutes. Since I did not begin the study with humor as my initial focus, the interview questions did not specifically address humor, although the questions were open enough that the students could and did address humor. The interview questions addressed issues such as the participant's perspectives on (a) activities and assignments in the class, (b) having classmates with different amounts of prior experience with Arabic language and culture, (c) their Arabic language competence and participation in class, (d) their classmates' Arabic language competence and participation in class, (e) their interactions with classmates and faculty outside of class and (f) how their background and life experiences facilitate or inhibit their participation in the class and flagship activities, and their language development. An audio-record interview was also done with the teacher once at mid-semester for 30 minutes. The interview addressed issues such as the teacher's perspectives on (a) her goals for the class and to what extent her students are meeting these goals (b) advantages or disadvantages of having a culturally diverse, multilevel class (c) her students' Arabic competence and participation in the classroom, and (d) her interactions with students outside of class. All interviews were conducted in English.

Third, in order to gain a fuller perspective of how students perceived themselves and their own identity, data collection also included an analysis of the Flagship scholars' online portfolios. All Flagship scholars are required to create online portfolios every year

which can be a collection of Arabic essays, oral presentations, other types of audio files and video files, and photos. I thought that what students chose to put in these portfolios might provide me with an interesting glimpse into how they perceived their identities (e.g.," Egyptian", "American", "Arab-American"). In the end, I did not find the portfolios informative in that way and I did not include them as a part of my analysis for the present study.

However, in order to get relevant background information about the student participants' language histories and proficiency levels, data collection also included a participant background questionnaire which asked questions about where students learned Arabic dialect(s), Modern Standard Arabic and English, their use of Arabic and English outside of the classroom, time spent in the US and the Arab world, and their motivation for learning Arabic. In addition, I had access to the participants' ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Scores. Each fall and spring, Flagship scholars were required to take an OPI. I also had access to their admission essays from their initial Flagship applications. The learners were asked to write an essay in Arabic describing why they were interested in joining the program and how they hoped to use their Arabic skills in the future. A list summarizing the time schedule and types of data collected can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Schedule and types of data collected

Time Frame	Data Collected
FS 07, SS 08, FS 08, SS 09	Observations and Field notes of Flagship courses and co-curricular Activities
SS 09	Video-recordings of ARB 500
SS 09	Audio-recordings of ARB 500
SS 09	Interviews with Ss in ARB 500
SS 09	Interviews with T of ARB 500
FS 08, SS 09	OPI scores of Ss in ARB 500
SS 09	Portfolios of Ss in ARB 500
SS 09	Initial Flagship applications of Ss in ARB 500
SS 09	Background questionnaire

FS = Fall semester, SS = Spring semester, Ss = Students, T = Teacher

Data Analysis

My data analysis was qualitative and employed both a macro-level ethnographic analysis that drew upon field notes, interviews, and additional materials like the background questionnaire and a micro-level analysis of videotaped classroom interaction using discourse and conversational analytic techniques.

Interviews

Interviews with the students and their teacher were first transcribed. As typical for qualitative, ethnographic research (see Davis, 1995; Merriam, 1998), data were analyzed inductively and recursively. I initially used content analysis (Berg, 2002) as a technique

to look for the existence and frequency of concepts, represented by words and phrases, in the participants' answers to questions during the interviews. From these concepts, larger categories were formed as well as further questions to be explored. Since my personal experience, knowledge and insights influenced the inclusion of particular interview questions and resulted in a certain amount of deductive reasoning in the analysis, I combined this with an inductive approach in order to best represent the message of the participants. I "immersed" myself (Abrahamson, 1983, p. 286) in the interview data in order to look for themes across questions that seemed meaningful and significant to the participants (Berg, 2002).

Classroom Interaction Data

I took a discourse analytic approach to my classroom interaction data, drawing on previous research done on humor and/or classroom interaction under the frameworks of ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics, and sociocultural theory.

I first watched the 36 hours of classroom data several times through before transcribing anything and took notes on anything which stood out to me (e.g., patterns, behaviors), while also referring back to my classroom field notes. I was immediately struck by the amount of laughter and joking which took place in the classroom, not only in cases when English was spoken, but also in Arabic. Once I decided to focus on humor practices, I watched the 36 hours of classroom data through again, recognizing that humor often evolves over many turns and therefore things get referred to again later on. This helped give me a sense for interactions within one class period and across class periods. It is also helped me to understand what was funny to the participants and why.

I then began to identify play frames in order to transcribe them. When I identified a play frame (see below) and transcribed it, I wrote notes about the context preceding and following the play frame in order to situate it within broader interactions.

Serious and unserious activity is often blurred and can be incredibly complex. I found Goffman's (1974) frame analysis helpful in unpacking this. Bateson (1972) proposed that interlocutors could rely on subtle cues to show something is a "play frame" or non-serious and Goffman (1974) extended this to discuss interlocutors own culturally-determined definitions of an interaction. Frame analysis is about how one makes sense of things and how one understands what is going on. This process involves *framing*, which is the application of certain cognitive procedures onto given situations. Participants might frame an interaction similarly or they might not. For example, one participant may intend to amuse and the other may feel that it is an insult.

Footing refers to, "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (Goffman, 1981, p. 128). Participants' footing is constantly changing within a frame. *Keying* is a means of understanding a framework in terms of another. Goffman used the term to reference utterances or actions that signal the meaning of interaction to participants. "Up-keying" are keys that create a layered structure. For instance, a laughter or tone of voice may express or cause someone to interpret an utterance as joking. "Down-keying" removes this structure, such as the raising or trembling of voice or sudden shifts from kidding to "being serious." Essentially it is a frame metaphor. It plays an important role in understanding what is going on. The main example Goffman uses is play. Play fighting

is not real fighting, but it can be accidentally mistaken as such. It borrows many devices from fighting in an almost metaphorical manner. (p.45)

Gumperz's (1982) work was also useful since he looked at the use of contextualization cues within frames and footing. These are defined as "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions" (p. 131). In order to interpret cues, one has to not only know cultural conventions, but also be able to assess the meaning within the immediate context. For example, laughter could indicate joking or it could indicate nervousness or embarrassment.

Notions of frames, footing and contextualization cues, have contributed a lot to the study of humor and the concrete linguistic means by which humor is signaled, recognized, negotiated, or interpreted within any given context (e.g., Norrick, 1993).

Identifying Play Frames

For this study I only focused on verbal humor in Arabic or with minimal English code-switching. My purpose was really to look at practices that were part of creating an Arabic language learning community, and therefore non-verbal humor or humor only in English was not included. I included unintended humor if it led to further, intentional joking. For identifying humor and what constituted a play frame, I took an emic perspective and relied on a wide range of contextual and linguistic cues including laughter, unusual prosody, marked vocabulary, the interlocutor response, registers normally apart of another domain (Bell, 2002, 2005) as well as various other markers of irony and markers of teases.

Laughter and Smiles

Studies which have investigated laughter indicate that laughter is one way to display and negotiate relationships between conversationalists (Glenn, 1995, 2003; Jefferson, 1979; 1984; Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff, 1987). Recipients show their alignment with a humorist by laughing voluntarily or by invitation (Jefferson, 1979). Voluntary laughter comes after the humorous utterance and recipients show their understanding of the utterance as humorous and an appreciation of the humorist who amused them. Additionally, humorists might invite affiliation by inviting recipients to laugh with them by initiating laughter at the end of a joke or by inserting laughter in the speech (Jefferson, 1979).

Laughter can also signal disaffiliation. When a tease is targeted at one of the participants, this can create a *laughing at* situation (Glenn, 1995). This would be marked by the conversational turns and the placement of laughter. A person who becomes the subject of a tease, can transform a *laughing at* into a *laughing with* if the recipient of the tease joins the laughter. This might happen if the recipient of the tease goes along with the tease and makes fun of themselves. This leads to the participants' realignment when they laugh together (Kozlova, 2008).

The first criterion for humor identification was laughter since usually an utterance can be considered humorous when its effect is laughter. However, I also kept in mind that laughter might indicate other things like embarrassment, surprise, or nervousness (Bell, 2002, p. 92). Holmes and Marra (2002a) also noted that facial expressions such as smiles can be important indicators for humor identification, therefore, I also included units where the response to the utterance was a smile. However, just like laughter, I kept in mind that smiles can serve other purposes besides humor.

Playful Response

Often, an interlocutor's playful response helped me identity play frames. Although, as noted by Jefferson (1979) laughter on the part of the speaker, too, can signal a play frame and invite laughter from the hearers. Therefore, if a speaker's utterance contained laughter, this was considered a clue that a play frame had been established even if the hearer(s) did not respond with laughter. Additionally, a comment might be humorous, even in the absence of laughter, if one of the participants refers to it by its folk name, or genre (Hymes 1974). For example, a speaker might quickly say, "I was just kidding." Sacks (1995) also discusses how the participants' own orientation to something as funny can help identity joking events.

Markers of Irony

Often overlapping with playful responses are markers of irony. Kreuz and his colleagues (Kreuz, 1996; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Kreuz & Roberts, 1995) as well as Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay, and Poggi (2003) provided several useful ways to detect irony in speech. One of these is the degree of deviation of the humorous utterance from reality (Kreuz, 1996). The greater opposition between what is said and what is meant, the easier it is for the interlocutors to interpret the utterance as ironic. Kreuz (1996) wrote that people often employ tag question cues, such as, "It's a good thing you remembered the umbrella, isn't it" (p. 27) (if the addressee did not remember the umbrella) when using irony as well as direct cues, such as "you are really something—*not*!" (p. 28). The direct cue is an explicit denial of a literal interpretation of the utterance. Sometimes it can be difficult for the hearer to interpret an utterance as ironic if it has a deadpan delivery (Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay, & Poggi, 2003). In this case the speaker may provide as kind

of verbal alert, such as "I'm kidding" or kinesic cues, such as eyebrow movements (e.g., raising, lowering), eye movements (e.g., wide opening, squinting, rolling), winking, nodding, smiling, and talking with a blank face. Lastly Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay, and Poggi add to this the use of strong, compressed, or pronounced pitch as a marker of irony.

Hyperbole is an evaluation of the degree of exaggeration between the statement and reality (Kreuz, 1996) and although it can be used to entertain, an exaggerated statement is not always humorous or ironic. Sometimes hyperbolic statements serve as indirect complaints or as criticism.

Teases

Teasing is defined as humor that targets someone present (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Eisenberg (1986) defined teasing as:

> any conversational sequence that opened with a mock challenge, insult, or threat. A key feature of the teasing sequence was that the teaser did not intend the recipient to continue to believe the utterance was true, although he or she might intend the recipient to believe it initially. This is an important distinction, because teasers do often hope to "trick" their listeners into believing them so as to enjoy the results when the latter realized that they have been duped (pp. 183-184).

This is similar to Eder's (1993) definition of a tease which also includes "imitating and exaggerating someone's behavior in a playful way" (p. 17).

Eisenberg (1986) described how teasing carries with it ambiguity and the hearer has to decide if the speaker is being serious or not. If the hearer interprets the message as humorous, the hearer may show it by responding with a tease on a tease, defending her/himself, or by providing a non-serious exaggerated response such as denial or

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insulting the offender (Straehle, 1993). If a hearer does not interpret the teasing correctly, then the hearer becomes the "butt" of the tease.

Markers of Teases

While teases might be ignored or followed by serious responses, Drew (1987) showed that they can often be recognized by their lexical content. This might be an exaggerated proposition, a formulaic character of the proposition, or contrastiveness of the initial proposition and the proposition of the tease. Teases are often recognized by their sequential environment. Utterances containing teases do not initiate new topics they are often responses to a prior utterance which was uttered by the target of the consequent tease. Drew stated that "a speaker in conversation may be VULNERABLE to being teased to the extent that materials in a current turn of talk may be exploited by next speaker to construct a tease" (p. 235, emphasis in the original). When the teased person "is overdoing something" (p. 242), such as complaining elaborately, praising somebody with exaggeration, or telling something unrealistic, this often provokes a tease. A tease shows doubt of the speaker's proposition and transforms "a kind of innocent activity or category membership…into deviant activity or category" (p. 244). If the recipients of the tease provide serious responses, then they attempt to claim that their propositions were truthful and not exaggerated.

Playful Frames as Co-Constructed

It is important to note that I understand frames to be co-constructed, emergent, and situated within particular ideological contexts. During interaction, individuals draw on many different contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982) to signal who they are and what they are doing on a moment-by-moment basis. Close analysis of the entire

interaction helped me to determine the functions of humor. In examining what preceded and followed the play frames, the interactional consequences of utterances could be followed, since a joking event may unfold across multiple speaker turns. Additionally, I considered how sometimes humor can be an "unsuccessful 'solitary' attempt marked by a laughter invitation (e.g., giggling or laughter)" (Norrick, 2004, p. 376)

Holmes (2000) pointed out, "the analyst's identification of instances of humor is a crucial component in the analytical process" (p. 163) and the role of the analyst often goes unaddressed. I think the fact that I had extensive first-hand knowledge of the participants and was not only a researcher but also their friend additionally assisted me in being able to interpret *when* they were being humorous and even more so, *why* it was humorous, although no doubt my own biases and preferences exist, and my interpretations may contain misunderstandings of the interaction at hand.

Transcription

For the transcription of laughter, I followed Bell (2002) and Norrick (1993, p. 2) in trying to represent the sound and quality of the laughter by transcribing it within English orthographic conventions. For example, a softer giggle might be a "hee hee," while a longer, louder laugh could be transcribed as "HA HA HA!" As Bell noted, laughter does not always consist of a full syllable, but sometimes comes out as aspiration. Like Bell's transcription, aspiration is transcribed as 'hh" with longer aspiration shown by more h's. Humorous intent was also indicated by noting if they were smiling while speaking. A full list of transcription conventions can be found in Appendix A.

Initially all the transcriptions were done in the Arabic script and then later transliterated. For ease of reading and since the humorous language play in this data

rarely involved phonology, I chose to transliterate Arabic using the IJMES (International

Journal of Middle East Studies) transliteration guides instead of the International

Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for Arabic (see Appendix B). Additionally, I chose not to use

IPA since much of the talk involved complicated mixes of colloquial language and MSA

and IPA mainly represents the MSA form of Arabic. It should also be noted that I tried to

capture exactly how the participant said a word or phrase, which was not always

pronounced correctly or grammatically correct.

Definitions of Types of Humor Practices

In deciding how to classify types of humor, I relied heavily on Bell's (2002) types

of humor table and definitions which she drew from a number of different studies and

altered or amended in light of the data in her own study. I have also adapted her table to

in light of my own data, and have added dialect play/language crossings and intertextual

recyclings which will be discussed more in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 3

Types of humor practices

Name of Type	Description of Type	(Potential) Target(s)	Other Identifying Characteristics
Tease/Mock	playful remark aimed at another person	person must be present	frequently contains an element of aggression
Alternate Reality/Parody	comment that playfully creates or refers to an unreal condition or situation	any	often use double-voicing

Table 3 cont'd

Self-Tease	playful remark that makes the speaker the center of the humor	speaker	often self-denigrating
Third party insult	playful, but disparaging comment aimed at a party who is known to at least some of the interlocutors	person not present	
Narrative	humorous account of past events	self or others	
Observation	playful commentary on real objects or situations	objects or situations (not people)	
Irony	utterance in which speaker's meaning is the opposite of what is literally said	any	often coupled with another type of humor, resulting in a hybrid
Hyperbole	any type of exaggeration	any	
Dialect Play/Language Crossing	humor involving code-switching between language registers/dialect	any	
Intertexual recyclings	a distant repetition of someone else's words		
Hybrid	utterance combining two or more of the above types	depends on combination	
Canned joke	scripted humorous forms	Any	

(adapted from Bell, 2002, p. 111)

Chapter 4

Humor Practice: Conversational Joking in Dialect

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a picture of the ways in which students participated at various levels in the humor practice of conversational joking and how this was valued as part of the classroom community. Importantly, this conversational joking tended to occur mostly in Arabic dialect as opposed to MSA. Students used Arabic colloquialisms to perform various types of play such as teasing, irony, hyperbole, and "intertextual recyclings" (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004) or what Johnstone (1994) has called "distant repetitions." As discussed in my data analysis section, humor is incredibly complex and often multi-functional and therefore many of the examples represent hybrid types of humor such as "ironic-hyperbolic-teasing." Some different goals of teasing that have been found in previous research include to display individual and relational identity (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997); to construct friendship and solidarity or create and affirm affiliation (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Eder, 1993; Hay, 2000, Kotthoff, 2003; Straehle, 1993); to protect positive face needs (Holmes, 2000; Zajdman, 1995); or to mask criticism or mitigate tensions (Jorgenson, 1996; Yedes, 1996). As Norrick (1993) noted, "conversational humor generally allows us to present a personality, share experiences and attitudes, and promote rapport" (p. 80).

Students also achieved humor through "language crossing" (Rampton, 1995). Rampton, who examined multiracial friendship groups in Britain, was one of the first to explore the process of how individuals can "adopt someone else's identity or get together

with them and create a new one" (p. 485). He called this "language crossing" which he defined as follows:

Language crossing involves code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they are using (code switching into varieties that are not generally thought to belong to them (p. 485).

Importantly, language crossing raises issue of legitimacy, as participants negotiate whether or not they are allowed to cross social or ethnic lines. Although early socialization plays a role in understanding identities such as ethnic, class, or gender, these identities are not fixed but rather situated identities which are negotiated. Identities gain their relevance and significance according to the particularities of the interaction, and the situational needs and pressures. Rampton referred to ethnicity as a "contrastive, positional construct through which participants create, express, and interpret a variety of social and political differences" (p. 486). He criticized concepts of ethnicity which are polarized into either embracing one's own identity in an interaction or deemphasizing it or dropping it as a category and recognized that participants can also "produce" identity and they can choose to "take on someone else's identity" or merge in creating new ethnicities (p. 487).

In this chapter I use "language crossing" to refer to code-switching into other dialects of Arabic which differed from a student's own heritage dialect. I provide examples such as the teacher and students contesting when Mohamed spoke with an Egyptian accent or laughing when Mousa used a Sudanese expression.

The native speakers Mohamed and Mousa, as well as Zihad, tended to engage in these types of humor practices more, allowing them to claim identities as competent

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Arabic dialect speakers and more core members within this classroom community which valued both MSA and dialect. Other identities, such as Ihab being the class clown, were also claimed and established through these humorous interactions. Norrick described a class clown as someone who "baldly disrupts the ongoing activity with an orientation toward humor either in direct response to the teacher or interrupting in a voice loud enough to be heard by the whole class" (Norrick & Klein, 2008, p. 85).

Additionally, conversational joking helped to establish social relationships within this classroom community. I show how students transformed the usual meanings of colloquialisms in sophisticated ways for humorous purposes as well as sometimes subversive purposes related to the teacher or the activity. That is, the humor sometimes served as a way to soften the face-threatening nature of speech acts such as complaining or disagreeing or to downgrade excessive praise or just to show affiliation with peers.

Lastly, it should be noted that the type of conversational joking found in this chapter required more than just grammatical or discourse competence. It also required sociolinguistic competence, which Bachman (1990) described as, "the sensitivity to, or control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language context; it enables us to perform language functions in ways that are appropriate to that context." (p. 94). Some of the abilities that he includes in his conception of sociolinguistic competence are "sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety," sensitivity to differences in register," and the "ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech" (pp. 95-97).

Findings

Conversational Joking with God-phrases

In this first set of data, I present examples of how Ihab, Zihad, Mousa, and Layla employed Arabic "God-phrases" in teasing, ironic, and hyperbolic ways for enjoyment, affiliation, subversion, positioning of identity, and other multifunctional purposes. Arabic has a great number of everyday phrases which contain the word *Allah* or "God." While some of these are more marked as particularly religious Islamic expressions, many are used by Arabic-speakers of all faiths and have little religious connotation. They can be understood in a similar way to how English speakers might say "God bless you" after someone sneezes. Below is a list of the ones used in the examples with their approximate meanings in English, as well as when and how they are most commonly used by native speakers of Arabic:

1. *mā shā' Allāh* ('as God has willed it')

This phrase is often said upon hearing good news and to express general appreciation, joy, praise or thankfulness. For example, a person might say it upon seeing someone's newborn baby or a man might say it to a beautiful woman passing by him on the street. This phrase is also used to prevent the evil eye or any harm that may come from envy or jealousy.

2. *al-ḥamdu lillah* ('praise be to God')

This is one of the most widely used phrases in Arabic. It is the first set response to *How are you?* (whether or not one feels good) and it is also commonly used when hearing about a positive outcome or upon successfully completing a task.

3. *in shā'Allah* ('God willing')

This phrase is also one of the most widely used phrases in Arabic. Speakers use it when indicating hope for plans and events to occur in the future. Although it is used by Arabic speakers of all faiths, the *Qurʾan* (18:23-24) specifically commands Muslims not to talk about what they will do tomorrow without invoking this saying.

4. *ya Allah* ('oh God')

This phrase is used like many of the diverse ways that "God" is used in English. It can be used in a negative way to express frustration, weariness, or grief. It can also be used in a positive way to express admiration, praise, or surprise.

5. *Allahu akbar* ('God is greater [than…]')

Although *Allahu akbar* is commonly associated in the Western world as a phrase that "radical" (fundamentalist) Muslims use while engaging in acts of war or terrorism, it is also recited by "moderate" Muslims in a variety of situations. It is also important to note that it does not mean "God is great" as commonly translated, but rather "God is greater" or "God is greatest" since *akbar* is the elative form of *kibīr* meaning "big" or "great." The unspoken but implied thing that God is greater than could be any type of vice such as wickedness, foolishness, or envy depending on the context in which it is used. Religious Muslims say it as part of their obligatory prayers five times a day and when they slaughter an animal for food. A crowd of people might respond *Allahu akbar* in chorus to express approval or applause. It is also said during times of great distress or as a way to show disagreement or to protest something that someone else has said.

6. *ḥasbanā Allah wa-niʾma al-wakīl* ('God (alone) is sufficient for us and he is the best disposer of affairs')

This phrase is found in the *Qur'an* (3:173-174) and was said by Ibrahim when he was thrown in the fire and was also said by the prophet Muhammed. Muslims usually invoke this phrase during times of distress to indicate that one must have trust in God no matter what happens. It is more overt in its religious connotation when used in everyday speech (H. Kassem, personal communication, November 12, 2010).

It is important to note that these God-phrases are formulaic language chunks that can be memorized and do not require the sophisticated linguistic knowledge that is needed, for example, to tell a joke in Arabic. However, they do require pragmatic knowledge about the contexts in which they can be used in culturally appropriate ways. Therefore, their usage does function as an index of one's status as being an insider in an Arabic-speaking or Muslim CoP.

In Example 5.1, the teacher is holding up an essay that Joe has written and praising his essay, and then she begins to lavish praise on both Mary and Joe for their writing skills in Arabic. After several turns of praise, Ihab, the class clown, interjects with the Arabic God-phrase *mā shā' Allāh*:

Example 5.1: Praising Joe and Mary's Writing

01	T:	*urīd an aqūl lakum shay jayid*
		('I would like to tell you all something good')
02		*yaʿanī bi-ṣarāḥa anā fakhūrah jidān bī kitābat jū*
		('like, honestly, I am very proud of Joe's writing')
03		*wa-ka-dhalak mārī*
		('and likewise Mary's')
04		*maʿa inhum yaʿanī*
		('they don't have, like')
05		*lughathum al-ʿArabīa*
		('their Arabic language')
06		*hīya yaʿanī al-lugha ath-thānīa*

		('it is like their second language')
07		*wa laysa hum yaʿatabirū taʿarḍū li-l-lugha al-ʿArabīa min qabil*
		('and they haven't been exposed to Arabic language before')
08		*kay bʿaḍ aṭ-ṭulāb al-ākharīn bi-l-faṣil*
		('like some of the other students in the class')
09		*wa-lakin kitābithum RĀ'Ī'A*
		('but their writing is great')
10		*yastakhadūn al-jumil bi-ṭarīqa [ṣaḥīḥa*
		[correct
		('they use sentences in a correct way')
11	Ihab:	**[mā shā'Allāh**
		('what God has willed')
12		((smiles))
13	Mary:	ha ha ha
14	Joe:	HA HA HA
15	T:	*wa al-ghalṭat āqal bi-kithīr*
		('and the mistakes are a lot less')
16		*yaʿnī anā bi-ṣarāḥa muʿajiba jidān yitaṭawr al-lugha ladaykum*
		('like, I'm honestly very pleased with the development of their language')
17		*mumtāz*
		('excellent')
18	Zihad:	*mumtāz*
		('excellent')
19	T:	*yaʿnī jidān* ((hands Joe his paper for him to read it out loud))
		('like very ')
20	Ihab:	**mā shā'Allāh**
		('what God has willed')
21	T:	*iqra'ha*
		('read it')

In this example, the teacher assigns Mary and Joe with the status of non-HLLs in the classroom community in lines 05-07, by describing how Arabic is their second language and they were not exposed to it before. She also compares them in line 08 with "some of the other students in the class," implying other students in the class were exposed to Arabic before and that they are HLLs. In lines 09, she uses *wa-lakin* "but" as an adversative conjunction to indicate that even though Arabic is Mary and Joe's second language and they have not been exposed to it before, their writing is great. It was not uncommon for the teacher to be more complimentary of Mary and Joe's Arabic skills

than the Arabic skills of the HLLs in the class. On several occasions in my field notes, I

noted that she told Ihab that he used too much dialect in his writing. In line 11 when Ihab

interjects with *mā shā' Allāh,* his first time doing this in the class, he demonstrates that he

knows how to use this expression in an appropriate context, that of expressing praise, but

it is received as non-serious by Mary and Joe who acknowledge it with laughter in lines

13-14, up-keying the interaction. However, no one else validates this, including the

teacher, since she continues her praise. Ihab's expression is somewhat hyperbolic for the

context, since generally students do not evaluate and offer lavish praise on another

student for not making mistakes in their writing (particularly someone like Ihab who, as

mentioned earlier, rarely seemed to take the task of learning Arabic in the classroom very

seriously). Thus, Ihab's identity, both as a class clown and as a student contribute to the

identification of this as playful, as well as the incongruity of this phrase in this context.

The fact that Mary and Joe laugh shows that they understood what this phrase means and

how it is usually used. They may laugh because they sense the subversive purpose that

the phrase seems to serve in mocking the teacher for her excessive praising of them. The

fact that Mary and Joe both laugh, and *only* Mary and Joe laugh, seems indicative of this

and perhaps also a way for them to protect positive face from the embarrassment of

always being the "teacher's pets." In other words, they go along with the tease and

transform a laughing at situation into a laughing with situation (Glenn, 1995). They join

in the humor to show that they also see this praise as excessive. In line 18, Zihad rebukes

Ihab and repeats the teacher's evaluation of "excellent" with a sincere expression and

voice, down-keying the interaction, and this seems to be accepted as serious since no

laughter follows. *Who* is speaking here is just as important to the humor as *what* is said.

Ihab had already established his identity as a class clown and therefore students often laughed at what he said, no matter what it was. While Zihad joked around sometimes too, as mentioned earlier, he was generally perceived as intense, religious, and very studious by the other students. When the teacher continues to praise by adding "very" in line 19 as an intensive to the adjective "excellent" used in line 17 to describe Mary and Joe's writing, Ihab recycles his phrase *mā shā' Allāh*. This time it is not acknowledged with laughter and Ihab is unsuccessful in re-keying the interaction. This is perhaps because the students have turned their attention toward Joe who is about to read his paper and therefore they are engaged in "serious" classroom work again.

During the next class period, Ihab once again recycles his phrase *mā shā' Allāh* while listening to a conversation taking place between Mousa and Zihad at the beginning of class before the teacher has officially started the lesson. Zihad is planning to study abroad the following year in Egypt and Mousa asks him where he will live while he is in Egypt. It is noteworthy that this conversation is in Arabic since as discussed earlier, the students rarely used Arabic during informal conversation with each another unless they were joking around.

Example 5.2: Bantering with Colloquialisms

01	Mousa:	*Ayna taskun fī maṣr?*
		('where do you live in Egypt?')
02	Zihad:	*in shā' Allah fī al-iskandiriyya*
		('God willing, in Alexandria')
03	Mousa:	*mā shā' Allāh*
		('what God has willed')
04	Ihab:	*al-sana…as-sana…as-sana kāmila?*
		('the year…the year…the whole year?')
05	Zihad:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
06	Ihab:	**mā shā'Allāh**
		('what God has willed')

07	Mousa	***Allāhu akbar***
		('God is greater')
08		(3.0)
09	Zihad:	***biz-zabṭ***
		('exactly')
10	Mousa	***Allāhu akbar***
		('God is greater')
11	Zihad:	ha ha ha
12	Ihab:	***Allāhu akbar***
		('God is greater')
13		***mā shā'Allāh***
		('what God has willed')
14	T:	*shabāb*
		('guys')
15	Ihab:	***in shā'Allah bikhar***
		('God willing, good')

The conversation starts out on serious footing with Mousa asking Zihad where he will

live in Egypt and Zihad uses the phrase *in shā' Allah* in line 02 while talking about his

future plans to live in Alexandria. Mousa responds with *mā shā' Allāh,* which could be

expressing that he is happy for Zihad or that he likes the city of Alexandria, which has a

reputation as a beautiful city in Egypt. Mousa had already studied in Alexandria for a

summer, so additionally he could be expressing joy that Zihad is going to live in the same

place where he lived. Of importance is that these are normative uses of both the God-

phrases. It does not become a play frame until Ihab recycles the expression *mā shā' Allāh*

in line 06, up-keying the conversation to playful. This is a kind of intertextual play since

Ihab already achieved laughter once before using *mā shā' Allāh.* Although it is not

acknowledged with laughter here, what happens next can be understood as a kind of

"verbal dueling" (cf. Cook 2000: 64-70; Pomerantz & Bell 2007: 566-567) or playful

banter between Zihad, Ihab, and Mousa using colloquial expressions. Mousa seems to

recognize that Ihab is once again attempting to be humorous with his *mā shā'Allāh*

precisely because it is Ihab who says it and as mentioned, Ihab spent the majority of his

time in class joking. Mousa proceeds to respond with the phrase *Allāhu akbar* which would not be a normative response here but might be a playful way of expressing to Ihab that, "God is greater than your foolishness." In other words, he is teasing Ihab's attempt at making a joke again with *mā shā' Allāh*. It is also a playful way for Mousa to one-up Ihab's expression, since *Allāhu akbar* carries a stronger social and religious meaning than *mā shā' Allāh.* The phrase may be additionally targeted as a tease toward Zihad, indexing his religiosity. Zihad appears to think that he is the one being teased since after a couple of seconds, he reacts to this by teasing Mousa back through the use of Mousa's token phrase *biz-zabṭ* in line 09, which is more intertextual play (refer to Examples 6.1 and 6.2 in Chapter 5). This phrase originally began as a parody of the teacher's frequent saying of *biz-zabṭ.* Mousa responds back with another *Allāhu akbar* in line 10. Zihad validates the humor of this interaction by laughing in line 11. Ihab continues to build on the humor by repeating Mousa's *Allāhu akbar* and then *mā shā' Allāh* again in lines 12 and 13. Although the students are actually using Arabic for once, albeit in a nonsensical way, the teacher interrupts their banter in line 14 with "guys" since she is ready to start class and wants their attention. Ihab manages to get in one last quick phrase, *in shā'Allah bikhar,* in line 15, which again carries no particular meaning in the context, but allows him to have the very last words in the banter.

Within this playful dueling banter, rapport building is going on between these three friends in this classroom. They are showing that they are members of an in-group within this classroom and a relational identity display (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) through their humor and knowledge of each other and each other's language use. Also of importance is that the banter allows for Ihab to participate in the Arabic conversation that

was originally taking place between Zihad and Mousa. Although Ihab did not have the

language proficiency to carry on a sustained conversation in Arabic like Zihad and

Mousa, inserting these playful colloquialisms allowed him an opportunity to participate

to a certain degree in Arabic conversations in the classroom.

In the next example the teacher is praising Tareq and how he always asks

excellent questions in class. This is only ten minutes after Ihab, Zihad, and Mousa were

bantering with colloquial expressions, and Ihab once again interjects during the praising,

this time with a loud *MĀ SHĀ' ĀLLĀH.*

Example 5.3: Praising Tareq's questions

01	T:	*kūayyis Ṭāreq*
		('good Tareq')
02		*mā 'am yis'il as-sū'al mumtāz*
		('he always ask excellent questions')
03	Ihab:	***MĀ SHĀ'ĀLLĀH***
		('what God has willed')
04	Layla:	***mā shā'Allāh***
		('what God has willed')
05	Ihab:	((whistles woo-hoo))
06		((Ss laugh))
07	Zihad:	((turns toward Ihab)) I don't like your *mā shā' Allāh*s HHH
08		they're not nice HHH
09	Ihab:	my bad
10	T:	*kāna bi-l-ʿāks*
		('was the opposite')
11	Zihad:	ha ha ha
12		((T and Ss laugh))
13	Ihab:	I'll find a different word

After the teacher praises Tareq's questions in lines 01-02, Ihab interjects with *MĀ SHĀ'*

ĀLLĀH in line 03. Once again, he does this in a context where the teacher is offering

excessive praise to another student. The loud tone of Ihab's *MĀ SHĀ' ĀLLĀH* is a

contextual clue which signals that he is not being serious and it becomes more clear that

this is a type of "ironic-hyperbolic-teasing," a downgrading of the excessive praise again,

since Layla immediately recycles his *mā shā' Allāh* in line 04. Then, Ihab follows her

repetition by whistling "woo-hoo" in line 05 and this causes the students to erupt in

laughter in line 06. Zihad comments while laughing in line 07 that Ihab's "*mā shā'*

*Allāh*s" are not nice and thus it is clear that they have been understood as being ironic.

Note that it was also Zihad who appeared to counter Ihab with his "excellent" in Example

5.1. Ihab does not contest this, and code switches into English saying, "my bad." In line

10, the teacher agrees with Zihad that Ihab actually means the opposite of the intended

meaning when he uses the phrase *mā shā' Allāh* but she goes along with the tease by

laughing with the students. In line 13, when Ihab says, "I'll find a different word," it

becomes clear that this is an expression which he has adopted for humorous purposes

only and he was never serious while using it. In fact, Ihab himself does stop using *mā*

shā' Allāh and begins to try out different colloquialisms as will be seen in examples 5.5

and 5.6, perhaps recognizing that he has exhausted the humor of *mā shā' Allāh* within

this classroom community.

However, other students and even the teacher continue to index Ihab and his

transformation of the *mā shā' Allāh* phrase to mean the opposite during future classes for

their own enjoyment and as a way to display relational identity with Ihab. Here, the

building of a shared history and repertoire over several class periods can be seen with just

this one phrase. Prior to Example 5.4, the teacher had been discussing how to write

formal letters in Arabic and formulaic expressions for beginning and ending letters. She

had told the students that it was common to begin formal letters with *as-salām ʿalaikum*

wa raḥmat Allah wa barakātu ('peace be upon you and the mercy of God and his

blessings') in Arabic countries. Zihad mumbles something inaudible after the teacher

says this and the teacher asks him what he said. Layla tells the teacher that he was talking to himself and it becomes clear that he was engaging in private speech and practicing saying *as-salām ʿalaikum wa raḥmat Allah wa barakātu.* He tells the teacher that he was imagining that he was giving a speech and had started the speech with this phrase.

Example 5.4: Wide Imagination!

01	Layla:	*yaʿanī yakalam nifsu*
		('like, he's talking to himself')
02	Zihad:	ha ha ha
03		*naʿam*
		('yes')
04	T:	*lakin urīd an asmaʿ*
		('but I want to listen')
05	T:	*mādha qult*
		('what you said')
06	Zihad:	*badā't ḥuṭba*
		('I started a speech')
07		*yʿanī ātakhiyīl*
		('like I was imagining)
08		*wa-āqūl as-salām ʿalaikum wa raḥmat Allah wa barakātu*
		('I was saying "peace be upon you and the mercy of God and his blessings"')
09	T:	ah
10	T:	*khīālak wa'si HHH*
		('your imagination is wide')
11	Zihad:	*naʿam naʿam*
		('yes, yes')
12	T:	ha ha ha
13	Layla:	**mā shā'Allāh ʿalayk**
		('what God has willed for you')
14	T:	**mā shā'Allāh**
		('what God has willed')
15	Mousa:	**mā shā'Allāh**
		('what God has willed')
16	Zihad:	you guys SUCK HHH
17		((T and Ss laugh))

In line 10, the teacher tells Zihad that his "imagination is wide." Her laughter in line 12 keys the event as non-serious (i.e., teasing). Layla builds on the teacher's teasing by saying *mā shā'Allāh.* This is humorous not only because she has engaged in intertextual

play, recycling Ihab's token phrase and using his transformed meaning of it (i.e., using it to mean the opposite of praise) to tease Zihad in an ironic way for having an imagination and talking to himself, but also because she is the one saying it and *not* Ihab. This double-voicing (Bakhtin 1981) of Layla trying out Ihab's phrase contributes to the comedic effect. Additionally, it is important to note that Layla shows a relational identity with Ihab here as her best friend in the class. Both the teacher and Mousa keep the key playful by repeating *mā shā'Allāh* after Layla in lines 14 and 15. It is clear that Zihad understands that he is being teased and that they are all being sarcastic (he was the one who had noted earlier that Ihab's "*mā shā'Allāh*s" were not really sincere) since he responds by code-switching into English and saying "you guys SUCK," which causes the other students to laugh because he has called them out for making fun of him. Additionally, his code-switch into English is incongruent with the Arabic conversation, and his use of a slight vulgarity ("SUCK") is incongruent with the relative formality of the classroom.

In this next example Layla once again indexes Ihab and his transformed *mā shā' Allāh* phrase while Ihab tries out another colloquialism with humorous results. Prior to this example, Mousa and Ihab had come into class five minutes late. When the teacher asked Mousa why he was late, he told her that his alarm had not gone off and he had woken up late. The teacher then proceeded to ask Ihab why he was late and Mousa told her that they lived together and this made her laugh. She had not known previously that they were roommates and she was pleased that they had become such good friends. In this example, she is describing to the students how she was the first to meet them at the university through the Arabic Flagship Program:

Example 5.5: Nice to meet you!

01	T:	*anā sʿaīda jidan li-ana anā ilī shafatikūm awl waḥda*
		('I'm very happy because I was the first one to see you guys')
02	Layla:	**mā shāʾAllāh** ((looks at Ihab))
		('what God will willed')
03	T:	*wa min al-badayya*
		('and from the beginning')
04		*wa-istaqbaltkūm fī hadhihi al-jāmʿaa min al-badayya*
		('and I met you guys in this university from the beginning')
05		*shuʿūrī itijāhum ki-anhum awladī* ((looks at the other students))
		('my feelings toward them, like they are my children')
06	Layla:	**awww**
07	Mousa:	*al-ḥamdu lillah* ((looking at the teacher))
		('thanks be to God')
08	Zihad:	**how cute** ((looking at Mousa))
09	Ihab:	*shukran*
		('thank you')
10	Mousa:	*shukran gazīlan*
		('thanks a lot')
11		(1.5)
12	T:	*ʿafwan*
		('you're welcome')
13	Ihab:	**furṣa sʿaīda**
		('happy chance')
14		((T and Ss laugh))
15	T:	*iḥna al-asʿad* ((laughing))
		('we are the happier')
16		((Ss laugh))
17	Zihad:	*furṣa sʿaīda?* HHH ((turning toward Ihab))
18	Mohamed:	hey, do you even- ((turning toward Ihab))
19	Ihab:	I was just joking!
20	Mohamed:	*maʿa salāma*
		('goodbye')
21		((Ss laugh))

In line 02, Layla is again using *mā shāʾAllāh* in a hyperbolic and teasing way for fun and affiliation since she looks at Ihab while saying it. However, this time it is a failed attempt to re-key the interaction to playful. When the teacher goes as far as to specifically direct her speech towards all of the students except Mousa and Ihab and let them know that she feels like Mousa and Ihab are her children on line 05, this creates a chorus of responses

from the students. Layla's use of "awww" in line 06 to tease Mousa and Ihab is again an unsuccessful attempt to up-key the interaction to playful. Mousa responds to the teacher's affection using the God-phrase *al-ḥamdu lillah* in line 07. He says it in a serious tone while looking at the teacher and no laughter or smiles follow, so it is not quite clear if he is being serious or being hyperbolic. However, Zihad builds on Layla's "awww" in line 08 with a tease in English, "how cute." Since he is looking at Mousa when he says this, he appears to be teasing him as opposed to the teacher. Perhaps wanting to assure the teacher that his friends are only being playful and they are appreciative of her kind words, Ihab refuses to align with his classmates and self-tease by joining in the laughter. Instead, he down-keys the interaction by offering the teacher what appears to be a sincere thank you in Arabic for her words in lines 09 followed by Mousa in line 10, to which the teacher responds back in Arabic "you're welcome" (line 12). To understand why the teacher and students acknowledge Ihab's next comment (line 13) with laughter, one needs to understand that the expression *furṣa sʿaīda* literally means "happy opportunity" but is used like "pleased to have met you" (i.e., "it was a wonderful opportunity to have met you'") when departing after having met someone for the first time. Since Ihab obviously already knows the teacher, it is not used appropriately in the context, and the students demonstrate an understanding of this misuse by laughing. They also display a basic level of pragmatic competence here. At this point, it is not clear whether Ihab intended to use the phrase inappropriately or whether he actually thought it was okay to use in the context. The teacher aligns with a playful intention of the phrase, problematizing the use of this phrase by taking it as a joke and laughing instead of taking it seriously. As Friedman (1999) noted, teasing is often used as a form of corrective

feedback. The teacher plays along by saying the appropriate formulaic response back to Ihab, *iḥna al-asʿad*, ('we are the happier') causing more laughter from the students. Zihad turns toward Ihab in line 17 laughing and asks, *furṣa sʿaīda?* In other words, he notes the incongruity of the phase in this context. Mohamed also starts to question Ihab in line 18 by saying, "hey, do you even-" but he is quickly cut off by Ihab exclaiming, "I was just joking!" Ihab seems to interpret Zihad's and Mohamed's comments as questioning whether or not he knows what this phrase means. Perhaps he was expecting Mohamed to say, "hey, do you even know what that means?" Importantly, this is a threat to Ihab's identity as a competent speaker of Arabic, which may explain why he quickly tries to claim, "I was just joking!" (line 19). Here is an example of Ihab identifying that he was being humorous by referring to "joking" or its "folk name" (Hymes, 1974).

Lastly, Mohamed then further builds on Ihab's *furṣa sʿaīda* by saying *maʿa salāma* "good bye". As mentioned, the expression *furṣa sʿaīda* is more frequently used when one is departing after having met someone for the first time, so *maʿa salāma* would naturally follow this. Thus, Mohamed aligns with the play frame that has been established by the others by joining in the silliness of the mini dialogue that Ihab had started.

In Example 5.6, Ihab demonstrates knowledge of how to use another Arabic God-phrase, this time in an appropriate context.

Example 5.6: I will bring you a joke (God willing)

```
01      T:          man ʿindahu
                    ('who has')
02                  man qarā' ṭurfa bi-l-lugha al-ʿArabiyya?
                    ('who read a joke in the Arabic language?')
03                  au bi-ayya lahja min lahajat al-lugha al-ʿArabiyya
                    ('or in any dialect from the Arabic dialects')
```

04		*yureed an yaḥkeehā l-anā?*
		('wants to tell it to us?')
05		(2.0)
06		*mā fee?*
		('no one?')
07		okay, *sa-aḥkee li-kum anā wāḥida*
		('okay, I will tell you one')
08		*kul marra sa-aḥḍar li-kum ṭurfa*
		('every time I will bring you a joke')
09	Ihab:	***in shā'Allah***
		('God willing')
10	T:	hee hee

In line 08 the teacher tells the students that she will bring them a joke every day to class, but she does not say *in shā' Allah* even though she is talking about plans for the future in Arabic. It is unclear whether Ihab is correcting her and adding *in shā' Allah* for her (and thus subverting the usual order of things) or expressing his own hope that she will bring jokes. Either way, the teacher frames it as non-serious and up-keys the interaction by giggling, perhaps suspect that he is again being ironic and meaning the opposite (i.e., that he does not really hope that she brings a joke every time.)

In this next example, which also takes place during the lesson on formal letter writing, the teacher had been talking non-stop for about thirty minutes and she directs the students to look at number twenty-four on their handout detailing all the rules for writing formal letters.

Example 5.7: ya Allah!

01	T:	*laḥzū raqam arbˈaa wa-ˈashrīn*
		('look at number twenty-four')
02	Mousa:	*arbˈaa*
		('four')
03		*arbˈaa ˈashrīn?*
		('twenty-four?')
04	T:	*naˈam*
		('yes')

05	Mousa:	*ya ALLAH!*
		('oh God!')
06	Zihad:	*ya ALLAH!*
		('oh God!')
07	Mousa:	***ya ALLAH!***
		('oh God!')
08	T:	((smiles))

In line 05 Mousa exclaims *ya Allah,* which results in repetition with Zihad repeating *ya ALLAH* in line 06 and then Mousa repeating it back yet again in line 07. Mousa's first *ya ALLAH!* is a complaint, a protest of the activity. The students had already been showing signs of boredom and weariness like yawning prior to this outburst. The teacher had been talking about the rules of writing for a long time. This outburst can be seen as a kind of subverting the "school game" and the assigned directions. (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007). Zihad aligns with Mousa in complaining by repeating *ya ALLAH!* in line 06. When Mousa repeats it once again in line 07, this is when he upkeys the interaction to playful. The repetition here escalates the complaint but also makes it funny since this is now the third time the phrase has been said. The teacher chooses to frame it as humorous by smiling in line 08. This allows her to mitigate a possible threat to classroom harmony by treating the student's comments as playful rather than serious. Additionally, after this outburst the teacher continued on with her lesson, confirming that she did not take these complaints seriously.

In Example 5.8, the teacher is telling a story of how her son almost got in trouble for joining a fight at school. Fortunately, the security guard really liked her son and warned him that if he got involved, he might get suspended and not graduate. After the teacher expresses her thankfulness that her son did not hit the other boy and therefore did

finish high school because of this guard, Mousa interjects with the religious phrase

ḥasbanā Allah wa-niʿama al-wakīl.

Example 5.8: God is the best disposer of affairs

01	T:	*al-ḥamdu lillah, ya rab-*
		('praise to be to God, oh Lord-')
02	Mousa	**ḥasbanā Allah wa-niʿama al-wakīl**
		('God (alone) is sufficient for us and he is the best disposer of affairs')
03	T:	ha ha ha
04	Mohamed:	((smiles))

Here Mousa demonstrates that he understood the teacher's story and that he is able to use

a more difficult (because it is less common and longer) formulaic God-phrase, indexing

his "insider" status in an Arabic-speaking and Muslim community of practice. The fact

that it is acknowledged as humorous by the teacher and Mohamed is probably partly

because it is an overtly religious register. This is not completely incongruent with the

teacher's speech, given what she says in line 01, but it is definitely stronger and thus

probably also perceived as hyperbolic for the context. It is also interesting that only the

teacher and Mohamed laugh here, which may indicate that the other students did not

understand the teacher's story or Mousa's expression (Zihad might have laughed too, but

he was absent that day) and were not able to fully participate in appreciating the humor.

In the last example in this first set of data, the teacher is asking the students if they

can come to a recruitment event that she is doing for the Arabic program and Zihad and

Layla are giving her excuses of why they cannot attend:

Example 5.9:

| 01 | Zihad: | *ʿandī ṣuf* |
| | | ('I have class') |

02	Layla:	ʿandī imtiḥān
		('I have a test')
03	T:	akh minkum antum
		('tired from you guys')
04		[ha ha ha
05	Layla:	[((smiles))
06	Zihad:	akh minnā?
		('tired of us?')
07	T:	[hee hee
08	Zihad:	**an-nijāḥ bi-l-tawfīq in shā' Allah** ((higher pitched voice))
		('success, with luck, God willing')
09		((laughs))
10	T:	[((laughs))
11	Layla:	[((smiles))

The teacher acknowledges Zihad's and Layla's excuses with a tease, changing the footing to playful by saying that she is tired from them (i.e., tired of their excuses) in line 03 and then she laughs, up-keying the interaction. Zihad builds on her humor by using the expression, *an-nijāḥ bi-l-tawfīq in shā' Allah,* "success, with luck, God willing." It is not clear here whether is he wishing the teacher success in the recruitment event (without them) or whether he is expressing that he hopes he and Layla will still succeed, despite the fact that the teacher is tired of them. Either way, the laughter that ensues seems more based on *how* he says it, with a higher pitched voice, as opposed to *what* he says. Zihad's humor is able to mitigate potential conflict and help them save face since they are refusing to help out with the recruitment.

In this first set of data, I have shown how the subversive use of colloquialisms became a valued practice in this classroom community and how it served multiple purposes from fun with language, to building rapport and affiliation, to teasing the teacher, to putting another student in his or her place after excessive praise.

Conversational Joking with Language Crossing

In this second set of data, I show examples of how students code-switched into other dialects of Arabic in playful, teasing ways for purposes of fun, affiliation with their Arabic classmates and teachers, and display and assignment of identity.

In Example 5.10, the teacher is inquiring why Zihad is absent from class.

Example 5.10: Speaking Syrian

01	T:	*ayna Zihad al-yaum?*	
		('where is Zihad today?')	
02		(1.0)	
03	Mousa:	**wa-allah ishtaqnāluhu**	
		('by God we miss him')	
04	Ihab:	[I'm gonna call him during break time	
05	T:	[ha ha ha	
06		*bi-l-lahaja as-sūriyya*	
		('in Syrian dialect')	
07		*ʾajibnī*	
		('it pleases me')	
08		ha ha ha	

Mousa responds first to the teacher's question in Arabic using an expression (line 03) that is humorous on many levels. In contrast to Mousa, Ihab is being serious here for once and says that he will call Zihad during break time. However, his comment is overlapped by the teacher's laughter in line 05 and thus his serious response is overridden by Mousa's humorous one. It is humorous not only because it is another hyperbolic God-phrase but it is one particular to Syrian Arabic dialect (noted by the teacher in line 06), which is the heritage dialect of Zihad and not Mousa, who is Lebanese. By using an expression in Syrian Arabic, Mousa highlights Zihad's Syrian identity in a "joking about the absent other" (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) or third party insult (Bell, 2002) way that shows relational identity with him even though he is not present. Not only is this expression

humorous, but it also reveals Mousa's ability and proficiency to be able to joke with

colloquialisms in different varieties of Arabic.

A similar example is seen below. Layla has just finished reading a formal letter

which she and Mohamed wrote in Arabic and the teacher has given them wonderful

praise for it. Playful bantering takes place between the teacher, Zihad, and Layla about

the quality of the writing, and Zihad, who is of Syrian heritage, uses a very Egyptian

expression, *māshī-l-ḥāl*.

Example 5.11: Speaking Egyptian

01	T:	*mumtāz!*
		('excellent!')
02	Zihad:	***māshī-l-ḥāl***
		('it's just okay')
03	Layla:	((Layla smiles))
04	T:	*mumtāz!*
		('excellent!')
05	Zihad:	*yaʿanī*
		('like it's just okay')
06	T:	ḥilwa jidan
		('very good')
07	Layla:	*MUMTĀZ!* ((looking at Zihad))
		('excellent!')
08		((Ss clap and laugh))

In line 01, the teacher tells Layla and Mohamed that the letter is excellent and in line 02,

Zihad subverts the teacher's authority by downgrading her praise and saying, "it's just

okay." Importantly, Zihad also highlights Layla's Egyptian identity here by using an

Egyptian expression to do the downgrading and teasing. Layla smiles, acknowledging

that she regards this as playful. She also displays recognition that this phrase is Egyptian,

therefore highlighting her own ethnic identity. The teacher reaffirms again in line 04 that

the letter is excellent, but Zihad subverts her authority and downgrades her praise once

again with another colloquial expression, *yaʿanī,* in line 05, which is common across

dialects and also has a meaning of "it's just okay" in this context. What is interesting in line 06 is that the teacher actually does slightly downgrade her previous assessment by reducing her praise from "excellent" to "very good" in line 06 and Layla contests this by shouting out *MUMTĀZ!* (line 07) while looking at Zihad. Layla's up-keying by shouting and her challenge to Zihad who was subverting the classroom authority and getting away with it, prompts the students to start clapping and laughing.

In Example 5.12, Ihab has received a text message from Zihad at the beginning of class and he interrupts the teacher who is talking to Mary and Layla to tell her that Zihad and another student are going to be late to class.

Example 5.12: Speaking Sudanese

01	Ihab:	*ustādha* um::
		('teacher')
02		Zihad and (xx) are going to be late
03		I don't know the reason why
04		I just got a text message
05	T:	okay ((shakes head up and down))
06	Mohamed:	***aay***
		('okay')
07	Mousa:	***aay***
		('okay')
08	T:	***aay***
		('okay')
09		*Sūdānī* ((smiling))
		('Sudanese')
10		*al-muhim baʿadayn* ((turns back to talking to Mary and Layla))
		('anyway, after that')
11	Ihab:	what did she say? *Sūdānī?* ((asking Mousa))
12	Mousa:	*Sūdānī-*
		('Sudanese')
13	T:	*fee as-Sūdān*
		('in the Sudan')
14		*as-Sūdānīn bi-ūlu* ***aay***
		('the Sudanese say *ʾaay*')

In line 06 Mohamed echoes the teacher's 'okay' in line 07, but uses the Sudanese expression *aay* ('okay') instead of English. He had learned this expression from a Sudanese Arabic professor at the university and this can be seen as another "joking about the absent other" (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) of this professor's dialect. On other occasions outside of the class, the students had referred to this teacher, making fun of his particular way of pronouncing words. This is also a display that Mohamed, an Iraqi, has the cultural knowledge and proficiency to be able to joke with colloquialisms in different varieties of Arabic. Mousa demonstrates that he understands the word and the joke by repeating *aay* after Mohamed in line 07, possibly indexing some private joke that already existed between Mohamed and him regarding this expression or the Sudanese professor. The teacher repeats what they have said in line 08 and offers an explanation in line 09 that this is a Sudanese expression. She also smiles, acknowledging that the footing of the interaction is playful. However, Ihab has been left out this time and it becomes clear that Ihab did not understand the expression or the humor of it since he asks Mousa for clarification (line 11) of what the teacher said. Mousa starts to tell him, but the teacher overhearing their conversation, jumps into their conversation (line 13) and extends her explanation of the expression by saying that "in the Sudan, the Sudanese say *aay."* Here *aay* served affiliation purposes between Mohamed and Mousa, but it was threatening to Ihab, since he did not understand it and could not be a part of the play frame here.

In the next example, the students were engaged in a debate activity. One group had to argue in favor of smoking in public places and the other group had to argue opposing smoking in public places. The discussion took a tangent talking about drug use in the United States and Mohamed is starting to explain why he does not agree with

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putting high school students who are caught with marijuana in jail. conversational humor generally allows us to present a personality, share experiences and attitudes, and promote rapport"

Example 5.13: Practicing Egyptian

01	Mohamed:	*lakin sabab al-mashākil yadkhulu as-sigin aw-*
		('but the reason for the problems is they put him in jail or-')
02	Ihab:	*as-sigin* ((smiling))
		('jail')
03	Mohamed:	*as-sijin* ((shakes his head left and right and frowns))
		('jail')
04	T:	*as-sijin*
		('jail')
05	Ihab:	I like that. That's Egyptian right there.
06	Mohamed:	yeah. I'm practicing…
07		for the summer
08	T:	[hee hee
09	Ihab:	[*naʿam*
		('yes')
10		[((Ss laughs))
11	Mohamed:	((continues talking))
12	Ihab:	/xxx/ *masrī*
		('/xxx/ Egyptian')
13		((Ss laughs))

To understand what is going on in this interaction, it is necessary to know that Egyptian Arabic is distinguishable from many other Arabic dialects since Egyptians pronounce the Arabic letter *jīm* as a hard "g" /g/ and not as "j" /dʒ/, so an Arabic word like *jamīl* ('beautiful') would be pronounced as *gamīl* in Egypt. In line 01, Mohamed's sentence is marked since he is speaking in *al-fuṣḥa* and he is not of Egyptian heritage, and yet he pronounces the word *as-sijin* ('jail') using an Egyptian accent *as-sigin.* Ihab demonstrates knowledge of Egyptian Arabic pronunciation and immediately teases Mohamed for this in line 02, repeating *as-sigin* and smiling. He also takes on the teacher's role here of providing corrective feedback. However, it is clear that Mohamed had not meant this to

be humorous. He self-corrects and says *as-sijin* in line 03 but shakes his head and frowns, attempting to down-key the interaction again. However, the teacher and Ihab do not let it go. The teacher offers feedback in the form of a repetition in line 04, which is a positive evaluation, implying that *as-sijin* is more "correct" than *as-sigin.* This appears to be a correction rather than a tease since she does not smile or give any other indication that she is teasing him. Ihab extends the commentary on Mohamed's choice of pronunciation in line 05 by teasing Mohamed in English, "I like that. That's Egyptian right there." Mohamed then offers an explanation for his marked pronunciation in lines 06-07, saying that he is practicing in preparation for the summer (he was planning to do a study abroad program in Egypt during the summer). It is unknown whether Mohamed consciously chose to say *as-sigin* as opposed to *as-sijin,* but his self-correction is a face-saving move in response to Ihab's face-threatening act of questioning his pronunciation. However, the teacher and the students do not take his explanation for why he said it that way very seriously and respond by laughing. Ihab then proceeds to make a joke about him either being Egyptian or speaking Egyptian (unclear transcription) in line 12. The playful teasing that occurs around Mohamed's marked Egyptian phonology is an interesting display of individual and relational identity since Mohamed chooses to take on an Egyptian accent and therefore, temporarily display an Egyptian identity, but Ihab as well as the teacher refuse to allow him to do so since they know he is Iraqi. This is also another case of a student taking on the evaluator role and the teacher validating this.

This next example is another humorous interaction revolving around the Egyptian pronunciation of /g/ vs. /dʒ/. The teacher is discussing with the students the literary figure Juha, who appears as a type of wise fool in classic Arab folk humor.

Example 5.14: Juha vs. Guha

01	T:	*tabʿan min Juha?*
		('of course, who is Juha?')
02		(1.0)
03		*hiyya shakhṣiyya mish tārīkhiyya*
		('he is a character, not historical')
04	Mohamed:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
05	Layla:	*ahbal*
		('a fool')
06	T:	*ahbal*
		('a fool')
07		*mashhūr bi-l-(/xxx/)*
		('famous in /xxx/')
08		*ṭabʿan hiyya shakhṣiyya ghair waqiʿiyya*
		('of course, he is not a real character
09		*khayaliyya*
		('imaginary')
10		[*yʿanī*
		('like')
11	Zihad:	[*Juha* ((quietly to himself))
12		*Juha?* ((to teacher))
13	T:	*Juha*
14		*Juha*
15	Mary:	**G**uha
16	Mousa:	**G**uha
17	Mary:	**G**uha
18	T:	*Juha* yeah ((looking at Zihad))
19		**G**uha ((smiling))
20		*naʿam*
		('yes')
21	Zihad:	*ya maṣrīyya* ((turns toward Mary))
		('hey Egyptian!')
22	Mary:	[ha ha ha
23	T:	[ha ha ha

In lines 04-05, Mohamed and Layla display that they have cultural knowledge of the

literary figure Juha. In line 11, Zihad engages in private speech, practicing saying the

name Juha and checks with the teacher for confirmation in line 12. This may imply that

Zihad is not familiar with this character or he simply is unsure of how to pronounce his

name. The teacher affirms that Zihad is pronouncing it correctly but then in line 15, Mary

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speaks up and offers the Egyptian pronunciation of the name, Guha. Here, Mary positions herself as a speaker of Egyptian dialect, having studied abroad in Egypt, and offers an alternative way to pronounce the name. In line 16, Mousa shows affiliation with Mary by repeating her pronunciation of Guha, and thus joining her against the teacher's pronunciation in a playful way. At first the teacher appears not to pay attention to the difference and repeats Juha in line 18, but then offers positive feedback in the form of a repetition of Guha and says "yes" while smiling (lines 19-20). Zihad then turns to Mary and calls her *maṣrīyya,* "Egyptian," which Mary and the teacher acknowledge with laughter. It is interesting that Mary as an L2 learner, takes the opportunity to position herself as having knowledge of Egyptian dialect and culture, based on her study abroad experience there, and this seems to be validated by the other students. Within this community of mostly HLLs, demonstrating cultural knowledge about the Arabic-speaking world was valued and I observed that while Mary and Joe could not often participate in an Arabic conversation, they did bring up their knowledge and experience with Egyptian culture (in English) a lot. These "intellectual resources" (Norton & Toohey, 2001) allowed them to participate less peripherally.

Lastly, I show one example where the teacher also engaged in conversational joking through language crossing in order to tease a student. Prior to Example 5.16, the teacher overhears Ihab talking to Tareq in English about how a visiting Arabic professor from Egypt always spoke in Egyptian dialect and he did not understand her. This Egyptian teacher had taught the class the prior week while the teacher was away at a conference.

Example 5.16: Problems with Egyptian Arabic

01	T:	um:: ḥajiblakū kamān marra al-ustādha Siham kamān ḥuṣa
		('I'll get you another time Professor Siham for another class')
02		ʾashān tatakalamū bi-l-maṣrī akthar
		('so you can talk to her in Egyptian more')
03	Ihab:	((smiles))
04	Tareq:	awesome
05	T:	samaʿat Ihab inak inta yaʿanī waajaht ṣuʿūba shwayya bi-l-ḥakī
		bi-l-maṣrī
		('I heard Ihab that you faced some difficulties with Egyptian talk')
06	Ihab:	[((smiles))
07	T:	[ha ha ha
08		ṣaḥ?
		('correct'?)
09	Zihad:	matta? ((asks teacher))
		('when?')
10	T:	ha ha ha ha
11		lamma kānit Siham gayya
		('when Siham came')
12	Zihad:	ha ha
13	T:	ha ha ha
14	T:	hal turīd an taqul yʿanī uh:: akthar ʾan hadha al-mawḍūʿi?
		('do you want to say more about this subject?')
15		yaʿanī hal turīd an tuḥadithanā ʾan limadha wājaht suʿūba?
		('do you want to tell us why you faced difficulty?')
16		ʾala mā tuḥib fil-barnāmij?
		('on what you love about the program?')
17	Ihab:	I think
18		anā kunt taʿbān
		('I was tired')
19		(Ss laugh))
20	T:	**wa dilwāʾtī ʾāmil ay?** ((code-switches into Egyptian))
		('and now, how are you doing?')
21		(0.1)
22	Ihab:	ṭayyib
		('okay')
23		((Ss laugh))

In lines 01-02, the teacher tells Ihab that she will bring the professor again so that Ihab

can talk to her more in Egyptian Arabic. Ihab acknowledges this with a smile, while

Tareq, who is of Egyptian heritage, tells the teacher in a sincere tone that this would be

"awesome." The teacher begins to tease Ihab in line 05 about how he faced some

difficulties with Egyptian Arabic. The teacher's laughter (line 07) indicates that she is

teasing Ihab and this is validated by Zihad's laughter in line 12. In lines 14-16, the

teacher is trying to get Ihab to talk more about why he faced difficulty and why he did not

like it when the Egyptian teacher came to teach the class. Ihab responds in lines 17-18 by

saying that he thinks he was tired, which is a face-saving response as opposed to

acknowledging that he has problems with Egyptian Arabic. The students acknowledge

this face-saving response with laughter and join in the teasing here by laughing at Ihab. In

line 20, the teacher code-switches into Egyptian Arabic, to ask him how is doing now.

This is a playful teasing since she already knows that he has trouble understanding

Egyptian Arabic. Ihab answers with *ṭayyib*, "okay" which is used for acknowledgement

in Arabic, not to express personal feelings. Therefore, he is acknowledging here that she

has spoken to him in Egyptian Arabic, as opposed to answering the question of how he's

doing. Again, he saves face by not really answering her question, thus not acknowledging

whether he has understood it or not, and this again makes the students laugh at him.

Summary

In summary, I have shown that one valued practice in this classroom was

conversational humor through the use of formulaic colloquial phrases and through

language crossing into other dialects. The humor included a wide variety of types, such as

teasing, irony, hyperbole, intertextuality, repetitions, and served a wide variety of

purposes including fun, affiliation, subverting authority, softening face-threatening

speech acts, and to display or assign various individual and relational identities. These

included identities such as being an HLL, being a competent member of an Arabic-

speaking community, being a certain ethnicity, or just displaying friendship and

affiliation as part of an in-group. Interestingly, the humorous force of the God-phrases

drew from their traditional uses while at the same time subverting and/or transforming their usual meaning.

It is also important to note that the use of God-phrases as humor was mostly restricted to certain students or the teacher. The lower proficiency students, in particular, including Mary, Joe, Tareq, and Noor, never used these expressions. This may indicate that they did not yet have the sociolinguistic competence to know the various contexts in which to use these phrases, in addition to functioning as an index of who had "insider" status as a member of an Arabic and/or Muslim cultural community. It would have been odd for a non-Muslim like Mary to use an expression like *ḥasbanā Allah wa-nʿam al-wakīl,* ('God (alone) is sufficient for us and he is the best disposer of affairs')
even if she could.

Gender may have also played a role in the type of verbal play that occurred. Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990) noted that women and men often use different strategies when injecting humor into a conversation. Males tend to use more verbal challenges, put-downs and storytelling, while females use humor to establish symmetry and employ more verbal self-denigration then men. In this classroom community, it was the men who participated in the majority of the humor practices.

This humor practice was also a valuable tool in identity construction. Members of this classroom constructed their own individual identities within the whole class (e.g., Ihab as the class clown) and within its sub-groups (e.g., Syrian, Egyptian). How the teacher responded to the students also helped construct the atmosphere as light-hearted and not very hierarchical. As she noted in her interview, she did not often display "a higher authority" over them. However, the teacher did often express strong opinions

which were sometimes indirectly challenged by the students through humor. More specific examples of this are found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Humor Practice: Teasing and Parodying the Teacher

Introduction

In this chapter I present a picture of the ways in which the students participated in the humor practice of impersonating the teacher (or *a* teacher in general) and teasing the teacher in ways which subverted the classroom authority or indirectly challenged the teacher's perspectives. Like the colloquialisms, this was also done through recycling *distant repetitions*, (Johnstone, 1994) in this case prior discourse of the teacher, as well as parody of general *teacher talk* (Cazden, 1988; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004; Heath, 1978), which can be understood as a register or expressions usually associated with the teacher or an authority role.

Of relevance here is Bakhtin's (1986, p. 87) belief that individuals do not choose their words "from the system of language in their neutral, dictionary form" but rather from the speech they hear around them. Therefore, "each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances" (p. 91) and "becoming competent' is really a matter of developing a range of voices. Bakhtin (1981) talked about *double-voiced* discourse, which "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions; (…) in such discourse there are two voices, two meanings, and two expressions" (p. 324). Tarone (2000) suggested that this kind of double-voiced discourse is commonly found in humorous language play.

In many of the examples, the humorous change of footing is a result of the incongruency between the *animator*, who performs the teacher parody, and the *principal*, "whose position is established by words spoken" (Goffman, 1981, p. 144), in other

words, impersonating the teacher. In this kind of play, it is not always funny just because of *what* is said, but also *who* says it and *how* they say it, and thus it can be understood as a kind of metapragmatic play (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004). While sometimes this type of play could simply be seen as a fun break "which temporarily frees participants from the tedious business of language learning," (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004, pp. 387-388) it also often carried more serious undertones. That is, once again humor served as a way to soften the face-threatening nature of speech acts such as complaining or disagreeing with the teacher's perspective about something within this classroom community.

It can be seen even more clearly that a less hierarchical relationship between student and teacher was co-constructed in this classroom community, as evidenced by the fact that the students were free to mock their teacher and to change the key of classroom discourse from serious to playful.

Additionally, this type of humor practice was once again mainly restricted to the native speakers, although other students did participate peripherally through laughter.

Findings

Teasing the Teacher with Distant Repetitions

In this first set of examples, I show how Mousa engaged in teasing by recycling an expression frequently used by the teacher. The teacher would often use the expression, *biz-zabṭ*, "exactly," in class to either let students know that they were correct or to show agreement with their ideas and opinions. The teacher would also heavily stress the second syllable of the expression (i.e., biz-ZABṬ) whenever she used it. Thus, this became an expression that the students liked to parody.

Prior to the first example below, the teacher had been discussing in Arabic about different kinds of comprehension reading questions, such as higher order level of questions which involve analysis, synthesis, or evaluation, vs. lower order questions which might involve recalling basic information such as who, what, where, when, or how. She told the students that she really wanted them to engage in higher order level of questions. However, she followed this discussion by having the students answer lower order questions about a reading which had been homework. Zihad challenges her by asking her why she is having them do these simple recall questions if she is encouraging higher order thinking. In Example 6.1, the teacher is responding to Zihad's question.

Example 6.1: "Exactly!"

```
01          T:          urīdkum an
                        ('I want from you to')
02                      an taˁīshū al-mawqif nafsu
                        ('I want from you to live the subject itself')
03          Mousa:      biz-ZABṬ
                        ('exactly')
04                      (1.0)
05          T:          ha ha ha
06          Zihad:      ha ha ha
```

In lines 01-02, the teacher is trying to explain that she wants the students to actually answer the different types of questions so they can understand how the higher order level questions are different than the lower order level questions. Mousa initiates the play frame by interjecting with *biz-zabṭ,* "exactly," in line 03, which is humorous because he is engaging in double-voicing and echoing the teacher's utterance. It should also be noted that Mousa stresses the final syllable in the same manner that the teacher usually said it. The teacher appears a little uncertain of whether Mousa is being serious or is mocking her, evidenced by her pause in line 04, followed by her laughter in line 05. Nevertheless,

she does decide to play along with Mousa's parody by laughing. Following her initial

lead to re-key this interaction as playful, Zihad also laughs in line 06. Here, it is not only

what is said that is humorous, but aslo *who* is saying it. This example illustrates role

appropriations and double-voicing in that Mousa jokes by recycling an expression that

the teacher uses frequently and temporarily takes on her role as teacher. Additionally, it

can be understood as slightly subversive here. It may be a way to get a laugh or tease the

teacher, but it may also be Mousa's way of subversively expressing that he does not like

the activity or to defuse the tension between the teacher and Zihad.

About twenty minutes later during this same class period, Mousa upkeys the

interaction from serious to not serious by recycling the expression, *biz-zabṭ,* "exactly"

once again while the teacher is holding up a magazine picture and discussing the meaning

of a picture of a religious man with a long beard on the front. She had been asking the

students why the magazine chose this cover but instead of actually eliciting their answers,

she proceeds to answer her own question.

Example 6.2: Exactly!

```
01    T:          huwwa muʿabbir
                  ('he expressed')
02                huwwa istaʿrāḍ
                  ('he displayed')
03                fīhu kathīr min al-istaʿrāḍ ʿan al-fikra nafsiha
                  ('that there are a lot of meanings about the same idea')
04    Mousa:      biz-ZABṬ
                  ('exactly')
05                hadha huwwa al-kalām
                  ('this is the way to say it')
06                ((T and Ss laugh))
07    T:          biyaʿjabnī Mousa ((smiling))
                  ('I like Mousa')
08                biz-zabṭ
                  ('exactly')
09    Zihad:      [HA HA HA
```

10   [((Ss laugh))

Because the teacher actually proceeds to answer her own question, she appropriates a

student role here and then Mousa evaluates her performance using her own words. Once

again there is double-voicing and role appropriation here. There are two voices within

this expression, the teacher's and Mousa's. There are also two intentions, including the

use of this phrase to evaluate (in a role-reversal situation) and the use of this phrase to

tease. Mousa is recycling the teacher's utterance but additionally he is recycling his own

new subversion of the expression (i.e., to tease the teacher), resulting in more intertextual

play as well. While in Example 6.1, using the teacher's phrase was humorous mostly

because of the double-voicing, now Mousa is evaluating the teacher using her own words

and indexing his own previous subversion of the expression and the laughter that

resulted. This time there is a greater chorus of laughter from both the teacher and the

students and of course the teacher's response is important in determining the nature of the

play frame here. Even though she is the one being parodied, she maintains the play frame

by laughing and smiling and expressing in lines 07-08 that she likes Mousa's subversion

of her expression, *biz-zabṭ*. This ensues in even more laughter from the students (lines 09-

10).

Teasing the Teacher with Recycling Prior Utterances

In this next set of examples, I show how Mousa engaged in teasing the teacher by

recycling prior utterances by the teacher within the same activity frame.

Prior to Example 6.3, Zihad and the teacher were in a debate about an article they

had read in class about the United State's position on Israeli settlements and an

independent Palestinian state. The teacher claimed that for the first time the United States

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asked Israel to stop building settlements; however, Zihad challenged this by asking her where exactly it said this in the article. The teacher tried to find it and then read a sentence from the article which said, "the United States will continue to strongly support the goal of building an independent Palestinian State." Zihad told her that it did not say that the United States asked Israel to stop building settlements and then the teacher told Zihad that he had to read between the lines. Zihad expressed his annoyance with this and the fact that the teacher had made a statement which, in his opinion, was not supported by the article. Zihad and the teacher debated back and forth about this for several minutes and meanwhile, the other students were getting a little bored, as evidenced when Ihab exclaimed loudly in English, "let's finish this after the break!" and then a few minutes later, "go finish this in your office!"

To put this into greater context, Zihad was known for taking challenging stances against the teacher. Sometimes debates between just the teacher and Zihad would take up large chunks of classroom time. In fact, Joe mentioned this in his interview:

Sometimes we just get off topic and we argue and xxx [the teacher] and xxx [Zihad] are firing questions and rest of us are kind of like, "what am I going to have for lunch today?" (interview, Joe).

Zihad also addressed this when I asked him in his interview if he thought his classmates viewed him as someone who talks a lot in class:

Yeah, I think they do because I DO talk a lot. I mean, sometimes class prolongs because of me and that's cause I'm not aware of the time otherwise I would just end it at 12. Then again, after class some of them have come up to me and told me, "hey

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man, you are actually making this exciting, something is actually going on." It is all

about intellectual stimulation. (interview, Zihad).

The teacher is still trying to convince Zihad that she is right in the following

example.

Example 6.3: Strongly!

01	T:	*qālit inaha turīd* **BI-QUWWA** ((points hand vertically toward Zihad))
		('she [Secretary of State Clinton] said she wants STRONGLY')
02		**BI-QUWWA** ((points hand vertically toward Zihad))
		('STRONGLY')
03		*inshā' dawla filisṭīnīyya*
		('to develop a Palestinian state')
04		*mādha* **BI-QUWWA**! ((raises arms with palms up))
		(what, 'STRONGLY!')
05		*mādha yaʿanī* **BI-QUWWA** ?
		('what does this mean, "STRONGLY"')
06	Zihad:	*yaʿanī* uhh
		('like, uhh')
07	Mousa:	**BI-QUWWA** ((waves hand up and then slaps it on the desk))
08	Zihad:	[HA HA HA HA
09		[((T and Ss laugh))

In lines 01-04, the teacher emphasizes *BI-QUWWA,* "strongly" with a loud intonation

four times, and uses hand gestures to add even additional emphasis. Johnstone (1983) has

documented that repetition is common in persuasive Arabic discourse. In line 06, Zihad's

struggle to answer is not because he does not understand the meaning of *BI-QUWWA* but

rather this still does not answer his question of where in the article it says that the United

States asked Israel to stop building settlements.

In line 07, Mousa breaks up the serious tone and tension between Zihad and the

teacher by up-keying and recycling the teacher's utterance of *BI-QUWWA* with the same

loud intonation and slapping his hand on the desk. He also emphasizes what the word

means through his gesture. This causes Zihad to break out into very loud gregarious

laughter as well as softer laughter by the teacher and the rest of the students. Again, this

recycling serves subversive purposes. The students want to take their break, and they

cannot do so until Zihad and the teacher finish debating back and forth. Mousa's

repetition and double-voicing parody of the teacher's utterance transforms the key of the

activity from serious to non-serious and both Zihad and the teacher validate this and

maintain the play frame by laughing. Importantly, Mousa achieves his purpose since the

teacher finally then excuses the students to go on break following this.

In this next example the teacher is again talking about higher order level questions

and thinking skills and she's encouraging the students not to underestimate their mental

abilities.

Example 6.4: Anything but an underestimation!

```
01      T:              an fī shay' minu yˈanī
                        ('there is, like')
02                      (1.0)
03                      inu
                        ('that')
04                      yˈanī
                        ('like')
05                      bin-nisba lī yaˈanī
                        ('in my opinion, like')
06                      nawˈ min al-uhh istakhfāf
                        ('a kind of, uhh underestimation') )
07                       wa-la urīd…ilā istakhfāf bi-qadarātikum al-ˈaqalīa
                        ('and I don't want…anything but underestimation of your mental
                        abilities')
08      Mousa:          ilā al-istakhfāf
                        ('anything but an underestimation')
09      T:              naˈam?
                        ('yes?')
10      Mousa:          ilā al-istakhfāf
                        ('anything but an underestimation')
11      Zihad:          HA ha ha
12      T:              naˈAM ((claps hands once and smiles))
                        ('yES')
```

In lines 06-07, the teacher use the word *istakhfāf,* "underestimation" twice and Mousa recycles her utterance in line 07 of *ilā al-istakhfāf* in line 08. The teacher's use of the phrase, "anything but underestimation of your mental abilities" is slightly hyperbolic here which may be Mousa's reason for making fun of it. The teacher does not hear him and he repeats it again in line 10, which causes Zihad to laugh in line 11 and the teacher to smile and exclaim, "yES" while clapping in line 12. While Mousa's recycling might appear as purely imitative, the teacher and Zihad's response to it (laughing and smiling) help create it as a play frame and teasing instead of just simply a clarification question. Again, the humor is in the double-voicing and the two voices and two meanings that come out with Mousa repeating the teacher's phrase. Additionally, it is important to note here that Mousa displays his identity as a competent Arabic speaker with his understanding and ability to repeat a more advanced vocabulary word, *istakhfāf*, as well as the more advanced grammatical structure *ilā* in Arabic.

Teasing with Teacher Talk

In this next set of examples, I show how Mousa, Zihad, Mary, and Joe exploited their knowledge of teacher talk in Arabic in ways that included role reversals, in other words taking on the role of a teacher as opposed to a student. Unlike the previous examples, these examples do not include direct recycling of the teacher's utterances, but rather using general teacher talk to do things like evaluate, provide feedback, or question other students. In all four of the examples below, the humor in the role appropriations is based on *what* is said (a teacher-like expression) as well as *who* says it (a student rather than a teacher) and *how* they say it (like a teacher).

In Example 6.5, Mohamed is writing a sentence from his homework on the blackboard to be evaluated by the teacher. He has written the word *ana*, "I" in Arabic and left off the diacritic glottal stop on top of the Arabic letter *alif*, which is the first letter of the word *ana.* Without the diacritic, the *alif* can be mistaken for a long vowel and not a glottal stop. Mousa tells Mohamed to correct this mistake.

Example 6.5: Don't forget the *hamza'!*

```
01     Mousa:       lāzim al-hamza 'ala al-alif
                    ('you must put the hamza on the alif')
02     Zihad  :     ha ha
03     Mousa:       ya Mohamed!
                    ('hey Mohamed!')
04                  nasayt al-hamza
                    ('you forgot the hamza')
05                  law samaḥt
                    ('please')
06                   ilā al-hamza!
                    ('anything but the hamza'!)
07     Zihad:       [ha ha ha
08     T:           [((smiles))
09     Mohamed:     ((writes the hamza))
10     Mousa:       shukrān
                    ((thank you))
```

In line 01 Mousa appropriates the role of a teacher and also claims expertise in Arabic writing by giving Mohamed explicit corrective feedback on his writing and telling him to write the diacritic glottal stop *hamza* on top of the Arabic letter *alif.* The humor is two-fold here. First, although the students can and do offer peer feedback to each other, there is an incongruence with Mousa commanding (*lāzim,* "you must") Mohamed do something. Therefore, this can be understood as teacher talk. Within the classroom context, teachers hold the position to issue orders, not students. Thus, when a student is issuing an order, it is often humorous. Additionally, Mohamed is a native speaker of

Arabic and this is challenging his competency in Arabic since he would certainly know that a *hamza* should be put on top of the *alif*. So there is another incongruence here.

In reality, the *hamza* is left off a lot in handwriting, as are most Arabic diacritics, without usually causing any difficultly in meaning or pronunciation for native speakers. It is precisely the fact that this is very minute detail, and not extremely important, that creates the other reason why this is humorous, at least to Zihad in line 02. Mousa continues to parody teacher talk in lines 03-05 and line 06 is humorous because of the incongruence between the fact that writing the *hamza* is hardly the most important concern when writing an Arabic sentence, and Mousa using a hyperbolic expression in line 06 to say that it is okay to forget anything BUT the *hamza'*. Mousa also uses the same hyperbolic structure, *ilā*, which he parodied the teacher using in Example 6.4. The joking nature of his teacher talk parody and the incongruency is acknowledged by Zihad as well as the teacher in lines 07-08. The fact that no one else laughs may signal that this is more of an inside joke among the more competent speakers in the class and the other students do not understand the *ilā* grammatical structure. Mousa's "thank you" in line 10 can also be seen as a final comedic confirmation that there was role-reversal and Mousa was playing the role of teacher/evaluator and Mohamed succeeded in following his instructions.

In Examples 6.6 and 6.7, the context is that Ihab and Mohamed both came into class ten minutes late.

Example 6.6: Why are you late today?

| 01 | Zihad: | ***limādha ta'ākhart al-yawm?*** ((said in deadpan voice while Looking at Ihab))
('why are you late today?') |
| 02 | Ihab: | *anā* um:: |

		('I, um::')
03	Zihad:	*limādha? qūlī qūlī ṣadīqī!*
		('why? tell me, tell me, my friend!')
04	Ihab:	((smiles))

Using a serious "teacher tone" Zihad asks Ihab why he is late today in line 01. This could be intertextual and double-voicing as well since Zihad is animating the teacher's usual words spoken to late students (see Example 6.9). Zihad uses this knowledge of the teacher's routine of questioning late students to tease Ihab. It is also keyed as funny and playful because of the serious teacher tone that Zihad, who is only a student, uses on his classmate and friend. When Ihab does not produce an answer in line 02, Zihad takes on an even stricter tone in line 03 and says, "why? tell me, tell me" but then softens it by adding, "my friend" to the end. Ihab chooses to acknowledge that Zihad is being humorous by smiling in line 04.

Zihad then turns to Mohamed a minute later in Example 6.7 and asks him in the same serious "teacher tone" why he was late today.

Example 6.7: Why are you late today?

01	Zihad:	*wa Mohamed!*
		('and Mohamed!')
02	Mohamed:	*naʿam?*
		('yes?')
03	Zihad:	**limādha ta'ākhart al-yawm?**
		('why were you late today?')
04		((Mousa, Mohamed, and Ihab laugh))
05	Mohamed:	I don't know xxx

The laughter that follows in line 04 by Mousa, Mohamed, and Ihab is probably partly due to Zihad's role appropriation of the teacher again and *how* he says it, but it may also be funny because Zihad is repeats what he just asked Ihab.

In the last example in this set, Mary and Joe use the Arabic colloquial expression *ʿaib* which carries a meaning like "shameful" and is often used as a reprimand towards

children (as well as adults) who are engaging in any sort of inappropriate activity. While this is not an expression that the teacher ever used with the students, it can still be understood as authoritarian type of discourse. Most likely, Mary and Joe learned this expression during the time they spent studying in Egypt, since it is a common expression used in Egypt. It is an expression that I have observed that other L2 Arabic learners love to appropriate and use in joking ways, perhaps because the equivalent does not quite exist in English. Zihad also uses the Arabic colloquial expression, *iḥtarim nafsak,* "respect yourself," which is also a type of reprimand and is used in similar contexts as *ʿaib.*

Just prior to Example 6.8., the teacher was scolding Mousa for not working with his small group.

Example 6.8: Respect Yourself!

01	T:	*Mousa ʿamal mʿa-*
		('Mousa, work with-')
02	Mary:	***ʿAIB***
		('shameful')
03	T:	ha ha ha
04	Joe:	***ʿaib***
		('shameful')
03	Zihad:	***iḥtarim nafsak***
		('respect yourself')
04		HA HA [HA
06	Mary:	[***iḥtarim nafsak?*** ha ha ha
		('respect yourself? ha ha ha')
07	Zihad:	I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding ((pats Mousa's shoulder))
08	Mary:	hee hee
09	T:	*hadhihi qiṣa min maṣr* ((laughing))
		('this is a story from Egypt')
10		(4.0)
11	Zihad:	I've never said that to anybody…ever.

The teacher starts to order Mousa again to work with his group in line 01 but is cut off by Mary exclaiming, *ʿAIB*, "shameful" in a loud voice. The teacher acknowledges the humor of Mary appropriating the teacher's role of scolding Mousa and aligns with the change in

key from serious to non-serious by laughing in line 03. It is possible that the teacher also found it funny because this is one of the few instances in which Mary did participate more fully in a humor practice and she is displaying her knowledge of a very colloquial word. After the teacher has validated the teasing as acceptable, it escalates. Joe immediate recycles Mary's last turn with another *'aib* in line 04 and then Zihad builds on this by telling Mousa to "respect himself" in line 03. It is evident by Zihad's own orientation to his expression, his loud laughter, that he is not being serious and up-keying the interaction, as well as by Mary's laughing response to it in line 06. Additionally, Zihad tells Mousa that he is just kidding in line 07, another example of use of a "folk name" (Hymes 1974) to label a speech act. In line 09 the teacher points out their use of Arabic colloquial expressions common in Egypt, which may suggest she found the exchange humorous more because of their use of these colloquial expressions as opposed to them appropriating her authoritative role with teacher talk. It is important to note that these expressions can also be seen as slightly subversive in that they may be mocking the teacher's tendency to sometimes reprimand them like her own children (particularly the HLLs).

Conversational Joking with the Teacher

In this last set of data, I show how the learners engaged in conversational joking with the teacher in a variety of other ways which subverted her classroom authority.

In Example 5.16, Joe has come into class late and the teacher inquires why he was late (the teacher routine that Zihad was parodying in examples 6.6 and 6.7).

Example 6.9: I'm lazy

01   T: *ahlan wa-sahlan Jū*
                    ('welcome Joe')

02		[*hehehe*
03	Joe:	[*ahlan bīk*
		('hello')
04	T:	*limādha taākhart?*
		('why are you late?')
05		*'asa an yakūn khairran*
		('I hope that everything is good')
06	Joe:	***anā kaslān***
		('I'm lazy')
07		((Ss laugh))
08	T:	*kaslān?* ((smiling))
		('lazy?')
09		*hadthā AKHIR faṣil darāsī fī darāsatik al-jāmi'iyya*
		('this is the last semester in your university semester')
10		*aṣbaḥat kaslān?*
		('and you became lazy'?)
11		*hadthā ghair jayyid*
		('that's not good')
12		((T and Ss laugh))

In line 02 the teacher laughs while welcoming Joe, indicating that she is not angry that he has come into class late. She also softens her question of why he is late in line 04 with, "I hope that everything is good" in line 05. When Joe says, *anā kaslān,* "I'm lazy" this causes the other students to laugh, perhaps because his honesty is incongruent with the typical expected script/schema (Raskin, 1985) for this type of question (i.e., an excuse which saves face, whether real or made-up). It is also subverting the teacher authority since usually a student wants to please a teacher but Joe does not seem to care. However, the fact that he says this in Arabic and not English, is also a little ironic, since the lazy thing to do would be to just say it in English. In this way, he actually is saving face by making an effort to talk in Arabic and doing it humorously. Thus, the teacher takes the opportunity to tease Joe that it is his last semester and it is not good to be lazy and this is acknowledged with laughter.

In Example 6.10, the students were engaged in a lesson on formal letter writing, and Layla is about to read a formal letter than she and Zihad have written and is explaining what it is about. They have used the teacher and her graduation from university as the formal context for the letter.

Example 6.10: The Respected One

01	Layla:	*hadhihi al-rasāla min as-safāra al-mamluka al-ʿarabiyya as-saʿūdiyya*
		('this letter is from the Saudi Arabian Embassy')
02	T:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
03	Layla:	*wa hiyya tubārak* um: *takhrujukee*
		('and it is congratulating your graduation')
04		*al-doctūra "''*
		('Doctor "" ')
05	Zihad:	**al-muḥtarama**
		('the respected one')
06	Layla:	((smiles))
07	T:	hee hee
08		*wa-najāḥkee bi-darajat al-doctūrā min* X University
		('and your success with doctorate degree from X University')

In line 05, Zihad inserts the address or title *al-muḥtarama* ('the respected one') in reference to the teacher, causing the teacher to giggle. Although this title is common in formal Arabic letters like this, the teacher may have found it humorous that he made the extra initiative to add this respectful title to her name while Layla was reading the letter. Here Zihad demonstrates his knowledge of a formal title that one might use in this type of letter but it also seems to be ironic and serve hyperbolic purposes since Layla smiles in line 06. Zihad's use of this title is not only incongruent with the non-hierarchical teacher-student relationship that existed in the classroom but Zihad also did not usually show such deference to the teacher.

In Example 6.11, the teacher is telling the students that the new plan is to return to talking most of the time in Arabic in class.

Example 6.11: The "new" plan

01	T:	*al-khiṭa al-jadīda*
		('the new plan')
02		*rajˈ rajˈ takalam muˈaẓam al-waqt bi-al-ˈArabī*
		('return, return to talking most of the time in Arabic')
03	Ihab:	*ˈaẓīm*
		('great')
04	T:	*muˈaẓam al-waqt ḥatā bi-al-majmūˈāt*
		('most of the time, even in groups')
05	Ihab:	*naˈam*
		('yes')
06	T:	*idha mumkin*
		('if it's possible')
07		**Okay?**
08		((Ss laugh))
09		Okay?
10	Ihab:	*in shā' Allah*
		('God willing')
11	T:	*naˈam*
		('yes')

The teacher's initial comment in line 01 is already humorous since this was not a "new" plan at all. The teacher had told them many times before that they were only going to speak in Arabic, but she never enforced this rule and would often code-switch into English herself. Therefore, the students never took her very seriously. Since Ihab rarely spoke in Arabic, except to say one-word expressions, it is likely that his *ˈaẓīm*, "great" was sarcastic here. What causes the students to laugh is that the teacher says "okay" in English in line 07, already breaking her own rule. The laughter here can be seen as teasing her for this. She even repeats "okay" again in line 09, not aligning with the play frame. In line 10, Ihab once again uses a God-phrase, *in shā' Allah*, most likely expressing doubt that they will actually follow this plan of only speaking in Arabic. It

fails in receiving laughter from the students here, but given Ihab's background with using these expressions, it is not likely that he is being serious, even though the teacher answers him in a straightforward way.

In Example 6.12, the teacher has been lecturing for thirty-five minutes straight in a very teacher-fronted lesson and then she tells the students that she wants them to talk and she does not want to talk anymore.

Example 6.12: What do you want us to say?

01	T:	*urīdkum an tatakalamū*
		('I want you all to talk')
02		*la urīd anā an atakalam*
		('I don't want to talk')
03		*li-an hadhā say-yaqūdnā ilī dars al-yawm*
		('because this will lead us to the lesson today')
04		(2.0)
05	Zihad:	**mādha turīdīnnā an naqūl?**
		('what do you want us to say?')
06	T:	**um::**
07		((Ss laugh))
08		((T laugh))
09	T:	*urīdukum an taqūlū lī mā-arā'akum*
		('I want you to tell me what your opinions are')

Similar to Example 6.11, part of the humor here is that the teacher is saying the opposite of what she is doing. She has been dominating the floor but is now expressing that she wants the students to talk more. Zihad calls her out on this in line 05 by asking her what she wants them to say. The fact that the teacher is not quite sure how to respond to this challenge is also what makes this humorous, as evidenced by the students mocking her with laughter in line 07. As a way to save-face, the teacher joins them in laughing and then explains that she wants them to give their opinions.

In this last example below, Zihad is asking the students about things he should

bring with him when he goes to Egypt the following year. The students have mentioned

several things and then he wants to know if there's anything else.

Example 6.13: Soap Crisis!

01	Zihad:	anything?
02	T:	*ṣābūn*
		('soap')
03	Zihad:	wait *ṣābūn?*
		(wait, soap?)
04		*lay ṣābūn?*
		('why soap?')
05	T:	*lamā kunā fī maṣr kānit azmat ṣābūn*
		('when I was in Egypt, there was a soap crisis')
06		*mā baʿarif hak*
		('I don't know why')
07	Rahman:	***AZMAT ṢĀBŪN?*** Hhhh
		('SOAP CRISIS?')
08	Mary:	HA HA HA HA
09	Ihab:	ha ha ha ha
10	Zihad:	wa::it really?
11	Rahman:	*azmat zayt aʿrif*
		('oil crisis, I know')
12		*azmat akil*
		('food crisis')
13		*azmat ṢĀBŪN??hhh*
		('SOAP crisis?')
14		ha ha ha ha ha
15	Zihad:	wait, so *laazim aḥṣal ṣābūn?*
		('wait, so I must get soap?')
16	T:	*hata al-maḥalat mā kān fīha ṣābūn*
		('there wasn't soap in the stores')
17	Rahman:	HA HA ha ha
18		a soap crisis? hhhh ((extends both arms out with palms up))

The teacher's response that he should bring *ṣābūn*, "soap" is met immediately with

confusion. Soap is a pretty basic item which one assumes all countries have. When Zihad

questions why, the teacher refers to there being a *azmat ṣābūn,* "a soap crisis" in Egypt

when she was there. Rahman, who is of Egyptian heritage and has been to Egypt several

times finds this incredulous and he loudly repeats her odd phrase of "soap crisis" with question intonation, while laughing, re-keying the interaction to humorous. He directly challenges the teacher's use of the word "crisis" to describe a lack of soap and the situation of not having soap in Egypt itself, but softens the challenge with laughter. The rest of the students find his response hilarious resulting in "byplay" (Goffman, 1981) that is non-serious. In fact, the entire play frame is byplay, since it goes on between the unaddressed recipients (i.e., Rahman and the other students), who comment on the conversation between the addressed recipients (the teacher and Zihad, who remain serious). Mary and Ihab's laughter in lines 08 and 09 is probably a response to the loud tone with which Rahman has questioned the teacher and subverted her authority here. Zihad continues to question the teacher in line 10 and then Rahman challenges the teacher's use of this expression, saying that he has heard of an oil crisis or a food crisis, but a soap crisis? Zihad, who has never been to Egypt, is not quite sure whether to believe her story or not. He maintains the serious key and asks the teacher if he really has to get soap (line 15). The teacher explains that there was not any soap in the stores in line 16, but Rahman is still not convinced that no soap could be found in Egypt, as evidenced by his laughter in line 17 and then putting out his hands and questioning, "soap crisis?" while laughing. Rahman, as a student with Egyptian heritage, asserts himself as the authority here over the teacher who is not Egyptian and questions her knowledge of Egypt and a lack of soap there through his laughter and comments. He also questions her use of the word "crisis" to describe the situation.

Summary

In summary, I have shown how students engaged in teasing and other conversational joking which impersonated the teacher and subverted her authority in certain ways. Once again, this was mainly restricted to the students with superior language proficiency, like Mousa and Zihad. This may have partly been because they felt bored in class and not challenged. However, they were helping to sensitize other students to pragmatic and formal aspects of language use through their play.

Chapter 6

Humor Practice: Responses to Joke-Telling

Introduction

In this last findings chapter, I continue to show how these students of different backgrounds and proficiency levels participated in this Arabic classroom CoP to varying degrees, in this case through their responses to canned Arabic jokes told by the teacher. Additionally, I show how students positioned their identities and roles within this classroom community through their responses (or lack thereof).

Ihab mentioned in his interview how the teacher always made the class entertaining by starting off the class with a joke everyday and how this helped them to focus:

> Like she is a pretty good teacher and she always makes the class entertaining. For example, we start off the class with a joke everyday. Everybody is sleeping when they first walk in and its just opens everybody's minds just to start out what we are doing. (interview, Ihab)

Indeed, canned joke telling became an established practice in the classroom and although the teacher was the only one who ever told canned jokes (with the exception of Mohammed one time, as seen in Example 7.10), both the teacher's and students' attempts to get everyone in the class to understand the jokes, invited all kinds of participation from the students.

Identity Negotiation through Canned Jokes

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, a canned joke is different from a situational joke, in that it is a recognizable genre and has a highly scripted form for both

the telling and the response. Canned jokes can be repeated because they are not dependent on the situation (although sometimes they are still creatively exploited in conversation) (Bell, 2002). Norrick (1993) noted that jokes "help us get to know each other" (p. 106). Although jokes often make fun of a group of people or deal with sensitive topics such as politics or ethnic identity, Norrick claimed that the primary goal of jokes is not to test or intimidate hearers, "but rather to give them an opportunity to affirm shared knowledge and beliefs" (p. 107). In terms of CoP theory, shared knowledge and beliefs in this Arabic classroom community were co-constructed through the negotiation of the humor practices in the form of canned jokes. Students of different proficiency levels displayed their membership through their talk-in-interaction in Arabic as well as other non-verbal responses.

Particularly important for L2 learners is that hearers need to be able to understand a canned joke in order to be able to then interpret the joke and decide if it is funny or not. Sacks (1995) discussed how jokes are a special test for hearers with the need "to solve the punch line as fast as possible" (p. 481). If they do not, their intelligence, or in the case of L2 learners or HLLs, their status as a competent member of the classroom CoP could be compromised. Therefore, hearers often want to demonstrate their understanding of jokes by "laughing, and laughing as soon as possible" (p. 481). In addition to testing the hearer's intelligence, jokes also test the speaker's ability to entertain the audience. Hearers demonstrate they understand the joke but also demonstrate they appreciate the joke with laughter. As will be seen in some of the examples in this chapter, reasons for not laughing were not always because learners did not understand the joke. Sometimes they just did not think the joke was funny and they verbalized this.

Additionally, Glen (1995) noted that participants often laugh together after a joke to exhibit affiliation. Glenn (1989) also discussed how speakers usually do not laugh first after they deliver a joke because of the "bias against self-praise" (p. 137). The first laugh by someone else usually eliminates this bias. However, if the original authorship of the joke does not belong to the speaker, then the speaker may "claim credit for successful delivery of the joke" (p.137) by laughing first. Interestingly, in my data, the teacher almost always laughed first. This may be because the jokes were told within the context of a language classroom and that extra scaffolding of showing that the joke was finished was needed.

Jokes and Scaffolding

In this chapter we see (relative) experts or more core members scaffolding the participation of the (relative) novices during the re-telling of jokes, so that everyone is able to comprehend the jokes. Sociocultural theory posits that communicative competence requires social interaction in order to develop. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the idea of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), which he defined as, "the distance between the actual developmental level [of an individual] as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development" (p. 86). Development takes place within the ZPD, as individuals interact with more capable individuals. For example, this could be a student and a teacher, or two peers, where one peer is more capable than the other peer in a certain aspect.

The ZPD concept has been used in conjunction with the notion of scaffolding. Scaffolding may refer to "those supportive behaviors by which an expert can help a novice learner achieve higher levels of regulation" (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p.

51). In the examples in this chapter, scaffolding took place through gestures, simplified Arabic, and code-switching into English.

Arabic Canned Jokes

While this may be true of other cultures and languages as well, Reynolds (2007) offered the view that one cannot say he or she is really familiar with Arab culture if they know nothing about Arabic jokes and humorous tales, which are such a prominent characteristic of Arabic culture and have been for centuries. In fact, medieval Arabic literature includes volume upon volume of jokes (*nukat*) or amusing anecdotes (*nawādir*). Sometimes they are focused on a particular character such as the wise fool Juha, which was discussed in Example 5.14 in my data. Much of the modern humor, as Reynolds points out, surrounds telling jokes about the political situation in one's own country. Egyptians, in particular, are famous among their fellow Arabs as lovers of jokes and humorous tales.

Findings

In Example 7.1, Zihad was asking the teacher how you say *pun* in Arabic. The teacher followed this by saying that she would tell the class a pun. In order to understand this joke, one needs to know that the shape of the Arabic letters *ayn* عand *ghayn* غ are identical except that the consonant *ghayn* غ has a dot on top as part of its grapheme. There are a number of jokes in Arabic revolving around what Muhawi (2002) calls "dot humour." This is a kind of visual pun, based on the similarity of the shape of the two letters. The humor of this particular joke is based on the fact that the letter *ayn* ع looks sort of like a person's nose and chin in profile and so the letter *ghayn* غ looks like a person's face with a pimple on the temple area of the face.

1	T:	*hunāk nukta ṭarīfa dāiman tataʿalaq āīḍan bi-hādha al-mawḍūʿ*
		('there is a funny joke always connected to this subject')
2		*fī waḥida*
		('there was a girl')
3		*fī ṭālīʿalha ḥaba hinā* ((points above her temple))
		('who had a pimple')
4		uh:: *yaʿani* uh:
		('uh:: like uh:')
5	Zihad:	Pimple?
6	T:	*yaʿanī ḥiba shabāb aw ishi*
		('like a youth pimple or something')
7		*fa-ājalha waḥid yaqūluhā hadhihi ṣārat ghayn mish ʿayn*
		('someone came and told her it became *ghayn* and not *ʿayn*')
8		ha ha ha
9	Zihad:	*hadhihi ṣārat* what?
		('it became what?')
10		*mādha*?
		('what?')
11	T:	*ghayn*
12		*ghayn* ((draws the letter *ghayn* in the air with finger))
13		*mish ʿayn*
		('not *ʿayn*')
14		((Mohamed, Mousa, and Ihab laugh))
15	T:	ha ha ha
16		*mā fihamtuha?* ((looking at Zihad, Rahman, Noor, Layla and Joe))
		('you didn't understand it?')
17	Zihad:	oh, OH
18		*naʿam naʿam*
		('yes, yes')
19	T:	((teacher writes the letters *ghayn* غ and *ayn* ع on the blackboard))
20	Joe:	((shakes head up and down))

In line 05, Zihad participates by indicating that he understands the joke so far and

although he asks for confirmation of his translation of the word *ḥaba* "pimple," with a

rising intonation, he is correct. In line 08, the teacher is the first to laugh, inviting the

others to laugh with her. However, no one does, and failure to laugh here has

consequences in terms of evaluations of one's competence. In line 09, Zihad asks her to

repeat the final line of the joke, indicating that either he did not understand the joke or

simply did not hear the ending. The teacher does so with extra non-verbal cues by drawing the letter in the air. In line 14, the more core participants, Mohamed, Mousa, and Ihab, show evidence that they have understood the joke by laughing or at least the teacher interprets their laughter as such, since she questions whether the rest of the students have understood it in line 16. Zihad indicates that he has finally understood the pun in lines 17-18 by saying, "oh, OH" and then "yes, yes." Since it is still not clear whether the other students have understood since they do not laugh, the teacher writes the two letters on the blackboard. In line 20, Joe shakes his head up and down to indicate that he has understood.

In this example, the more proficient students, more core members of this classroom community, claim through commentary, questions, and laughter that they have understood the joke, while none of the less proficient students except for Joe do. In this case, the teacher's extra scaffolding through gestures and writing on the blackboard allowed for all of the students to participate more. No one laughed until she did the gestures. After the repetition and gestures, the core students, like Mohamed, Mousa, Ihab, and Zihad understood, and then finally one of the more peripheral students like Joe understood after she illustrated the joke on the blackboard.

During the same class period and directly following Example 7.1, Zihad then asks the teacher if she will tell a political joke to the class.

Example 7.2: All the Thieves Will be Here

01	Zihad:	*min al-mumkin an taʿṭīnā ṭūrfa siyāsiyya ḥaḍritik batḥibīha*
		('is it possible for you to tell us a political joke that you like?')
02	T:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
03		*kān fī kul al-wizirāʾ mʿazūmīn ʿand al-malak ḥussayn bi-l-Urdan*
		('all the high ministers were invited to the King of Jordan')

04	Zihad:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
05	T:	*fa fāṣāl wizīr al-māliyya lianhum mā ījī*
		('and the King fired the minister of finance because he did not come')
06		*fasaʾalu al-malak Ḥussayn limādha lā tātī?*
		('King Hussein asked him, "why are you not coming?"')
07		*yaʿanī kul al- wizirāʾ ha-yakūnū huna*
		('all the ministers will be here"')
08		*fa-qālu la urīd āḥris khazānat ad-dawla*
		('so he said, "I want to protect the safe of the country"')
09		*yaʿanī mīzāniyyat ad-dawla wa-khazānat ad-dawla*
		('like the budget, the safe of the country')
10		*fa-qal lahu al-malak la* um::
		('so the King said to him, "don't um::"')
11		*la tihtim bi-dhalak*
		('"don't worry about that"')
12		*li-ana kul al-ḥarāmīa hayakūnū hina*
		('"because all the thieves will be here"')
13	Zihad:	WOOW, oh my Go-
14	T:	hee hee hee
15		*faḥimtuha?* ((looking at the other students))
		('did you all understand it?')
16	Mohamed:	that's true
17	T:	that's true, *bas*
		('that's true, but')
18		*faḥimtīha Mary?*
		('did you understand it Mary?')
19	Mary:	((shakes head left and right))
20	T:	*yaʿanī*
		('like')
21		okay, *al-malak ʿāzim* all the ministry ((looking at Mary))
		('okay, the king invited all the ministry')
22		all the *wizirāʾ*
		('all the ministers')
23		*ʿāzimhum ʿandu*
		('he invites them to him')
24		for anything
25		*fa wizīr al-mālīa*
		('so the minister of finance')
26		the budget or finance minister
27		said I'm not gonna come "cause I have to um:
28		protect and the budget and you know, the money"
29		and he said, "don't worry, all the thieves are here"
30	Mary:	ha ha ha
31	Tareq:	((smiles))

Here, Zihad initiates by asking the teacher to tell a joke in line 01. He acts as the "addressed recipient" (Goffman, 1981) of the joke by indicating that he is listening and that he understands in line 04 with *na'am,* "yes." In line 13, Zihad is also the first to demonstrate appreciation and understanding of the joke. The teacher then laughs in line 14, inviting the other students to laugh, but again, the failure to laugh has consequences. Since the students do not laugh, the teacher asks them if they understood it. Mohamed indicates that he did by saying, "that's true." Mohamed also displays with this statement that he agrees with the sentiment of the joke and the corruption in government, indicating some prior knowledge or experience with this topic. This establishes him as more of an insider. Then the teacher specifically targets Mary and asks her if she understood it, assigning her an identity as less competent in Arabic and as a more peripheral member. This could be threatening to Mary, but instead she accepts this assigned identity by acknowledging that she did not understand it (line 19). The teacher begins to re-tell the joke in a more simplified manner and then code-switches into English in 26 to tell the punch line. The code-switch may indicate that the teacher did not think Mary would understand it in Arabic. Mary displays understanding and/or appreciation by laughing in line 30 and it is interesting to note that Tareq, sitting on the other side of the room, smiles, now displaying comprehension.

Although Tareq almost never spoke in class and had the very lowest OPI scores, the teacher tended to focus more of her attention on the two L2 learners, Mary and Joe, in terms of asking them if they understood and providing scaffolding. This repeated practice assigned them novice identities within the classroom community. In his Interview, Zihad referred to Mary and Joe as "two students in particular" who "don't know as much."

Although this peripheral identity was co-constructed by Mary and Joe as well, other LPPs

like Tareq and Noor tended to receive less direct help and therefore had fewer

opportunities to more actively participate in classroom practices.

This focus on Mary occurs again in the next example when the teacher tells an

Egyptian joke. There are many ethnic jokes in Egypt making fun of the *ṣaʿīdīn,* the

Egyptians who live in Upper Egypt, and their dialect. They are popularly portrayed as

rural simpletons and the following joke is an example of this.

Example 7.3: Aladdin's Lamp

01	T:	*aḥkilikum nukta bi-l-lahija al-maṣriyya*
		('I will tell you a joke in Egyptian dialect')
02	Layla:	*ṣaʿīdī?*
		('upper Egyptian?')
03	T:	*ṣaʿīdiyya maṣriyya* ha ha
		('upper Egyptian ha ha')
04		*fī marra waḥid* uh::
		('once upon a time someone uh::')
05		uh *kān rākib aṭ-ṭaīra*
		('uh was a passenger on a plane')
06		*fāja' aṭ-ṭaīra 'amalat habūṭ mufāja'*
		('suddenly the airplane did a sudden drop')
07		*laghalal mā fī ṣaḥrā*
		('into the desert')
08		*yʿanī kānit aṣ-ṣaḥrā fāḍīa mā fīhā āḥid*
		('like the desert was empty, there was no one there')
09		*wa-baʿadayn kul waḥid fī aṣ-ṣaḥrā talaʿlhum maṣbāḥ ʿalā' ad-dīn*
		('and after that, Aladdin's lamp appeared to everyone in the desert')
10		*ṭabʿan maṣbaḥ ʿalā' ad-dīn mʿarūf fī ath-thāqāfa al-ʿarabiyya*
		('of course Aladdin's lamp is well known in Arab culture')
11		*mumkin taṭalb minu tataminu shay' wa-yaḥṣal*
		('you can ask or wish for something and it will happen')
12		uh *fāhima Mary?*
		('do you understand Mary?')
13	Mary	no ((shakes head left to right))
14		*mā huwa maṣbāḥ ʿalā' ad-dīn?*
	T:	('what is Aladdin's lamp?')
15	Ihab:	genie, three wishes

16	T:	((makes a rubbing motion on an imaginary lamp))
17		the magic lamp
18	Mary:	genie
19	T:	uh okay, so you ask for a wish
20	Zihad:	*jīnī*
		('genie')
21	T:	*jīnī*, yeah hee hee
22		*fa-waḥid ijāʾ saʾal awil waḥid*
		('so one genie came and asked the first one')
23		*alū rajaʿnī ʿala baladī*
		('he said, "return me to my country"')
24		*sūrī*
		('he was Syrian')
25		*fa-ijāʾ saʾal waḥid tānī*
		('so came and asked a second one')
26		*alū rajaʿnī ʿala baladī*
		('he said, "return me to my country"')
27		*wa-baʿadayn ijāʾ saʾal ṣaʿīdī maṣrī*
		('and then came and asked an upper Egyptian')
28		*fa ʾallū wa-anā mawgūd hina li-waḥidī?*
		('and he said, "and then I'll be here by myself?"')
29		*ragʿahumlī tānī!*
		('return them to me again!')
30		ha ha ha
31		[((Mohamed and Ihab smile))
32		[((Mary giggles))
33		*faḥimtuha wa-la mafaḥimtuha?* ((looking at Zihad and Mary))
		('did you understand it or not understand it?')
33	Zihad:	*faḥimtha,* but not everybody
		('I understood it, but not everybody')
34	T:	*yʿanī,* he's not thinking!
		('like, he's not thinking!')
35		*fa-alū wa-anā mawgūd hina li-waḥidī?*
		('so he said, "and then I'll be here by myself?"')
36		*ragʿahumlī tānī!*
		('return them to me again!')
37		ha ha ha
38	Ihab:	word
39		((Ss giggle))

In line 02, Layla, an Egyptian heritage speaker, immediately positions herself as someone

who has knowledge of Egyptian humor and thus she asks if the joke is *ṣaʿīdī,* "upper

Egyptian." Layla's cultural knowledge about Egypt in this example enables her to have

an expert role here. The teacher confirms that she is right and laughs. As the teacher is talking about Aladdin's lamp and how it is well known in Arab culture, she once again assigns Mary a novice identity by specifically asking her, and only her, if she understands in line 12. Once again, Mary accepts and co-constructs this identity by shaking her head no in line 13. In line 15, Ihab displays his comprehension by answering the teacher's question about what is Aladdin's lamp and saying "genie, three wishes." Here Ihab takes on the identity of a relative expert and scaffolds for Mary by code-switching into English. This does seem to possibly assist Mary in understanding the context of the joke since she repeats "genie" in line 18. Ihab's scaffolding in English and Mary's repetition of "genie" allows her now to participate in the joke, at least thus far. In line 20, Zihad plays with the word "genie" by saying it with Arabic pronunciation instead of English displaying his knowledge of the correct Arabic pronunciation for this word, and the teacher acknowledges this with laughter. The teacher is once again the first to laugh in line 30, inviting the others to laugh. Mohamed and Ihab acknowledge it with smiles but not laughter and Mary giggles. Since Zihad does not laugh, the teacher directs her gaze at him, as well as Mary, even though she giggles, and asks if they have understood it in line 33. Zihad says that he understood, but not everybody. In other words, Zihad seems pretty confident that not all his peers understood it. Here he positions himself as an Arabic expert relative to unnamed peers in the class. By saying this, Zihad actually allows for more participation since the teacher then tries to explain the ending again and initiates another laughter in line 37. The only one who uptakes her laughter though is Ihab, who code-switches in English and says "word." This is an English slang expression used mainly amongst youth meaning, "well said." The students most likely giggle at the

incongruence of his comment in English within the context of the Arabic joke as well as his use of this slang expression.

In Example 7.4, the teacher has just finished telling a story about her daughter which she thinks is very funny and she laughs and laughs at the end but the other students do not take up her invitation for laughter. She then starts immediately telling the following joke.

Example 7.4: This is the life of the dogs!

01	T:	*fī kamān nukta ijtamāʿiyya ʿala al-waḍaʿ fī al-urdun...kathīrān*
		('there's another social joke about the situation in Jordan...there's a lot')
02		uh: *kān fī kalb,*
		('uh: there was a dog')
03		*kalb ḥaqīqa yaʿanī kalb*
		('a real dog, like a dog')
04	Ihab:	wOW
05	T:	ha ha ha
06		((Ss laugh))
07		*wa-kān hādha-l-kalb, subḥan Allah*
		('and this dog, glory be to God')
08		*tamana min rabinā an yʿaīshu fī makān dāfī wa ((xx))*
		('he hoped from God to have him live in a warm area')
09		*wa-baʿadayn qāl arūḥ ashūf as-Saʿūdiyya*
		('and then he said, "I will go see Saudi Arabia"')
10		*fa-baʿd isbūʿayn lam yasatrayḥ al-kalb fa-qāl lil-malāk*
		('so after staying two weeks the dog didn't feel comfortable and so he told the angel')
11		*anā ḥarān katīr mish mumkin aʿaish fī as-Saʿūdiyya*
		('"I'm very hot; I'm not able to live in Saudi Arabia"')
12		*fa-naqalhu ila Alaska ʿashān bard*
		('so he moved to Alaska because of the cold')
13		*fa-rāḥ ila Alaska al-kalb wa-aʿad isbūʿayn*
		('so the dog went to Alaska and stayed two weeks')
14		*wa-qāl ya rabī anā bardān katīr walā istaṭīʿa al-ʿaīsh fī Alaska*
		('and he said, "my Lord, I'm very cold and I cannot live in Alaska"')
15		*fa-rabinā qāl iḥtār mʿahu yʿanī*
		('so the Lord said he was confused with him')
16		*fa-rāḥ wadāa ʿala al-Urdun ʿashān yʿaīsh fī al-Urdun*
		('so he went to Jordan so he can live in Jordan')

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17		*fa-baʿd isbūʿayn al-kalb kān mabsūṭ wa-martāḥ fī al-Urdun*
		('and after two weeks, the dog was happy and comfortable in Jordan')
18		*fa-rabinā iḥtār mʿahu yʿanī bi-mā mʿana*
		('so the Lord was confused with him')
19		*bi-yas'alhu wa-dunāk ʿala as-Saʿūdiyya fīha ḥarāra wa-ghanā wa-mā ʿajabatak*
		('he asked him, "and we sent you to Saudi Arabia where it was hot and there's wealth and you didn't like it')
20		*wa-dunāk ʿala Alaska yʿanī bardu balad ḥalwa wa Amrīkā ma ʿajabatak*
		('and we sent you to Alaska, a cold and nice country and in America, and you didn't like it')
21		*kayf inta mabsūṭ fī al-Urdun?*
		('how are you happy in Jordan?')
22		*fa qāla lahu, hadhahi ʿīshat al-kalab!*
		('so he said to him, "this is the life of dogs!"')
23		[ha ha ha
24		[((Ss laugh))
25	Zihad:	wOW
26		((Ss and T continue to laugh))
27	T:	*huwwa mabsūṭ!*
		('he's happy!')

In line 04, Ihab interjects with a sarcastic "wOW," displaying mock astonishment at the comment that the dog was "a real dog, like a dog." This shows he understands what the teacher has said but his comment is once again incongruent with the context, since it is in English. This causes the teacher to laugh, followed by the students. The teacher is once again the first one to laugh in line 23, inviting the other students to laugh. This time they all do, showing comprehension of at least the punch line and/or appreciation for the humor of the joke. Zihad recycles Ihab's earlier "wOW" in line 25, possibly indicating appreciation for the power or frankness of the joke. The students and the teacher continue to laugh at the joke.

Examples 7.5a-7.8d, are all part of one long joking episode. In these examples,

there is an interesting pattern of peer scaffolding which allows for increased participation

from more peripherally students.

Example 7.5a: Three Drunk Men

01	T:	*kān fī marra thalātha*
		('one time three men')
02		*kharajū* uh *min makān fī-l-layl*
		('went out uh from a place at night')
03		*wa-kānū ṭabaʾn muṣṭalīn sakrānīn*
		('and they were, of course, stone drunk')
04		*fa-kānū yimshū yimshū*
		('and they were walking, walking')
05		*fa-qarar waḥid min* uh *yʿanī min al-ashkhāṣ*
		('and one of them decided, like one of the people')
06		*wa-yimshī yimshī*
		('and he walked and walked')
07		*wa ayya shay' amāmhu*
		('and any thing in front of him')
08		*yʿanī yabʿadū min amāmhu wa-yimshī*
		('like, he pushed out of the way and walked')
09		*fa-yimshī yimshī wa-wajid ʿamāra ṭawīla*
		('so he walked and walked and found a tall building')
10		*fa-qarar anū yazīha min amāmhu* ((does a pushing gesture))
		('so he decided to push it away from in front of him')
11		*ṭabʿan huwwa la yʿanī ghair ṣāḥī*
		('of course, he's not like, sober')
12	Ihab:	*sakrān*
		('drunk')
13	T:	*sakrān*
		('drunk')
14		*fa-shalaḥ al-jākitāt*
		('so, he took off the jackets')
15		*fa-shalaḥū kulhum at-talāta al-jākitāt*
		('so all three took off the jackets')
16		*ḥaṭṭuha ʿala janib*
		('they put them on the side')
17		*wa-badāū yadizū yadizū fī-al-ʿamāra*
		('and they started pushing, pushing the building')
18		*fa-ājā ḥaramī wa-akhad al-jākitāt wa-rāḥ*
		('so a thief came and took the jackets and left')
19		*wa-bʿad shwayya waḥid minhum bi-yaṭṭalāʿ warāa bi-yaqulhum*
		('and after a little while, one of them looked behind and said to

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		them')
20		*"BĀS b'adnā kathīr!*
		('STOP, we have gone very far!')
21		*al-jākitāt biṭṭālū yabdīū!"*
		('the jackets don't appear anymore!')
22		ha ha ha
23		((a few students softly giggle))

Of importance is line 12, in which Ihab displays that he has understood the joke so far, or

at least the fact that the men are drunk. He also repeats the simpler word in Arabic for

"drunk", *sakrān,* which the teacher used in line 03, instead of the lesser known (for L2

Arabic learners) phrase which the teacher uses in line 11, "not right/sober," *ghair ṣāḥī.*

The teacher accepts and repeats this in line 13. Once again, in line 22, the teacher is the

first to laugh, but only a few students softly giggle. The teacher is not satisfied by this

and expresses this by asking which students did not understand it in the beginning of

Example 7.6b. The teacher very much wants for all the students to understand, in other

words she wants all of the students to at least participate peripherally in showing some

understanding of humor of the joke.

Example 7.6b: Three Drunk Men

01	T:	*mīn mā fahimiha?*
		('who didn't understand it?')
02		ha ha ha
03	Mary:	I don't understand
04	T:	*mā faḥimtiha?*
		('you didn't understand it?')
05	Mary:	((shakes head left and right))
06	T:	*min yafasirha* ((looks at rest of class))
		('who can explain it to her?')
07		*nifsu tafiḥimū al-nukta 'alaṭūl*
		('I want you all to understand the joke right away')
08	Zihad:	*bi-l-lugha al-inglīzīyya aw…?*
		('in English or…?')
09	T:	*la' ḥawil bi-l-'Arabī*
		('no, try in Arabic')
10		okay*, y'anī mumkin tastakhdam shwayya*

		('okay, like you can use a little [English]')
11		*baˈḍ al-kalamāt*
		('some of the words')
12		(1.0)
13		okay, three…
14		((Ss laugh loudly))
15	T:	*min bi-yafasir?*
		('who can explain?')
16	Ihab:	((raises his hand))
17	T:	*faḥimtiha?* ((looking at Tareq))
		('did you understand it?')
18	Tareq:	not all of it
19	Zihad:	*anā faḥimtiha lakin*
		('I understood it but'))
20	T:	*la'?* ((talking to Tareq))
		('no?')
21	Zihad:	*la istaṭīˈa an tarjimuha*
		('I'm not able to translate it')
22	Ihab:	I can do it! I can do it! ((waving his hand))
23	T:	*bi-l-ˈArabī?*
24	Ihab:	no, I can't do it in Arabic
25	Mary:	HA HA HA
26	T:	*min yastaṭīˈa?*
		('who is able?')
27	Zihad:	*ṭayyib* ((raising hand))
		('okay')
28	T:	*min yastaṭīˈa?*
		('who is able?')
29	Zihad:	*ha-ḥawil*
		('I will try')
30	T:	*ḥawil bi-l-ˈArabī*
		('try in Arabic')

This time when the teacher asks who did not understand the joke in line 01, Mary

volunteers that she did not understand it in line 03. In this case, Mary positions herself as

a novice rather than being assigned this identity by the teacher, and therefore contributes

to co-constructing this identity. At the same time, her direct admission of lack of

understanding allows her to get the help that she needs in order to move from

participating at the periphery of the classroom community toward a more full

participatory status. It also helps the other students since they also receive the benefits of

scaffolding as long as someone in the class is willing to admit that they do not understand. In lines 08-11, the teacher and Zihad go back and forth about whether the re-telling of the joke has to be in English or Arabic. Zihad has understood the joke, but he is not sure if he can re-tell it in Arabic. At first the teacher says it has to be in Arabic, but then concedes in line 10 that he can use a little English. In line 13, the teacher once again breaks her own rule and does the opposite of what she has instructed Zihad to do, by starting to tell the joke in English. This inconsistency makes the students laugh. The teacher continues to ask who can explain the joke in line 15. Ihab tries to get her attention by raising his hand, but the teacher is paying attention to Tareq and asking him if he understood the joke. Tareq tells her, "not all of it" in line 18 which seems to indicate that he is okay with displaying an identity of less competency in Arabic. On the other hand, he may not have actually understood any of it, and is saving some face by saying "not all." Zihad continues to try and save face in lines 19 and 21 and position himself as a competent member of the classroom community by saying that he understood it; he is just not sure if he can translate it. In other words, he is not sure if he can re-tell it in Arabic. Meanwhile, Ihab is still trying to get the teacher's attention and is waving his hands and telling her that he can do it. When the teacher asks if he can do it in Arabic, and he says no in line 24, this causes Mary to laugh. Once again, there is an inconsistency. Either Ihab was not paying attention to the whole conversation prior to this about re-telling the joke in Arabic, or he is simply challenging the teacher and whether she will stick to this Arabic-only idea. Finally, in line 29, Zihad says he will try, and the teacher tells him to do it in Arabic.

01	Zihad:	uh *kana fī* ((turns toward Mary))
		('uh there was-')
02	T:	*faḥimtiha Rahman?*
		('did you understand it Rahman?')
03	Rahman:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
04	T:	*kwayyis*
		('good')
05	Zihad:	*thalath nās rajāl* ((holds up three fingers))
		('three people, men')
06		*sakrānīn*
		('drunk')
07	T:	*yaʿanī* uh ((points to head))
		('like uh')
08	Zihad:	gurgle gurgle ((cups hand in front of mouth like drinking from bottle))
09		okay? Ha ha ha
10	Mary:	uh-huh ((shakes head up and down))
11	T	((giggles))
12	Zihad:	*wa mishū wa-qararū an kul shā' amāmahum*
		('and they were walking and they decided that everything in front of them')
13		*yurīdū an yadfashū?* ((makes pushing gesture with hands))
		('they want to push?')
14	T:	*yatkhalṣū*
		('get rid of')
15	Zihad:	*yatkhalṣū*
		('get rid of')
16		uh *ʿandimā wajidū banāyya* ((raises hands up in outline of tall building))
		('uh when they found a building')
17		*ʿamāra kabīra*
		('a large building')
18		*qararū an yadfashūha ayḍan* ((makes pushing gesture with hands))
		('they decided to push it also')
19	Mary:	hee
20	Zihad:	okay?
21		*fa-akhadū al-jākitāt* ((makes gesture of taking off jacket))
		('so they took the jackets')
22		*wa waḍʿūha ʿala al-arḍ* ((lowers hands toward floor))
		('and put them on the ground')
23		*thuma badū yadfashū yadfashū yadfashū* ((makes pushing gesture with hands))
		('then they started to push, push, push')

24		*at-talāta kulhum*
		('the three, all of them')
25		*fa-jā' ḥaramī*
		('so, a thief came')
26		*wa-saraqa al-jākatāt* ((makes a grabbing motion))
		('and stole the jackets')
27		*wa-baʿd qalīlan min al-waqt*
		('and after a little while')
28		*waqafū wa-qālū, "ayna al-jākatāt?"*
		('they stopped and said, "where are the jackets?"')
29		*"laqad dhahabnā, masāfa ṭawīla"*
		('"we must have gone, traveled a long ways"')
30		*"la nastaṭīʿa an narāhum alān"*
		('"we are not able to see them now"')
31		(1.0)
32		*fahamtī ʿalay?*
33	Layla:	((smiles at Mary))
34	Mary:	*mish an-nahāyya*
		('not the end')
35	Zihad:	[ohh Ha ha
36	T:	[ha ha
37		((Mary and Layla laugh))
38	T:	*an-nukta, at-ṭurfa, fī an-nahāyya*
		(('the joke, the witticism, is in the end')
39		*fahimt ya Rahman?*
		('did you understand Rahman?')
40	Rahman:	*ah*
		('uh-huh')

Before Zihad begins re-telling the story, the teacher targets Rahman and asks him if he understood in line 02. Although Rahman is being identified as less proficient here he does not accept this identity and unlike Mary and Tareq, he replies with "yes" even though he has not laughed at the joke.

In Zihad's re-telling of the story, he uses a lot more gestures (e.g., mimicking a drunk man drinking from a bottle in line 08 and using pushing gestures in line 13) than the teacher did in her original telling, thus providing Mary and the other students with more scaffolding and a greater chance of being able to participate in understanding the joke. Zihad also stops at various points (lines 09 and 20) for comprehension checks and

to make sure she is still following along. Mary also occasionally indicates comprehension (e.g., in line 10). This also shows her participation status as the ratified addressee (Goffman, 1981) for this re-telling. After the re-telling, there is an absence of laughter (line 31) which prompts Zihad to again ask Mary if she understood. Mary says that she did not understand the end (line 34) which causes Zihad and the teacher to laugh. Mary chooses to join in and laugh at her own inability to understand the end, even after a second telling of the joke. Again, her admission (as opposed to, for example, just laughing and pretending to understand) allows for more scaffolding and thus more opportunity for her to participate in the humor practice. The teacher then asks Rahman again if he understood it and when he says he did, he begins to re-tell just the ending to Mary. In doing so, he now provides evidence that he did, indeed, understand.

Example 7.8d: Three Drunk Men

01	Rahman:	okay *yaʿanī*
		('okay like')
02	Mohamed:	the second time hhh
03	Mousa:	ha
04	T:	hee hee
05		((gives a thumbs up sign to Mousa and Mohamed))
06	Rahman:	*al-ḥarāmī jāʾ wa-akhadu al-jākitāt*
		('the thief came and took the jackets')
07	Mary:	uh-huh
08	Rahman:	*fa-shāfū ah mafīsh jākitāt*
		('so they saw, ah, there's no jackets')
09		*yʿanī ihnā mashaynā katīr*
		('like we have walked a lot')
10	T:	*baṭlū yabaynū*
		('they don't appear')
11	Mary:	ohh
12	T:	*yaʿanī lamā tamshī masāfa baʿīda* ((holds arms out far apart))
		('like, when you walk a long ways')
13		*al-ishiyaʾ takhtafī aw taṣghar*
		('the things disappear or become small')
14		*ṣaḥ?*
		('correct?')

15	Noor:	why did they think they were walking?
16	Zihad:	well, when you travel a long distance
17		you can no longer see what was behind you, it's stationary
18	T:	yeah
19	Noor:	so they couldn't see behind them?
20	Zihad:	yeah, but they thought they had gone such a long distance
21	Mary:	OHH hee hee
22	T:	hee hee
23	Joe:	shakes head up and down
24	Zihad:	It's funny when you get it
25	Mary:	HA HA
26	T:	ha ha
27		*ʿajibnī Mary, lama tifham tibda tiḍḥak*
		('I like how Mary, when she understands, she begins to laugh')
28		Joe, *faḥimtiha?*
		('Joe, did you understand it?')
29	Joe:	*naʿam*
		('yes')
30	T:	*naʿam?* okay
		('yes? okay')
31		*kwayyis*
		('good')
32	Zihad:	just doesn't think it's funny
33	Joe:	I just didn't like it

In lines 02-03, Mohamed and Mousa are joking that Mary still has not understood it and that the joke has to be re-told a second time. Mohamed's comment "the second time" (line 02) is said in a playful, laughing tone, perhaps mitigating a complaint. Evidence of this is also seen in the way the teacher responds by giggling and giving a thumbs up sign to Mousa and Mohamed, indicating something like, "third time's a charm." Rahman re-tells the end of the joke again, and again Mary supplies occasional indications of comprehension such as in line 07 and line 11. However, it is evident in line 15, that still not everyone has understood the joke. Noor, who always sat near Mary, displays that she has been participating peripherally through observation and listening, but is now more active in seeking clarification in line 19. Both her question and Zihad's reply to her are in English though, indicating her lower Arabic competency. In line 21, Mary finally gets it

and acknowledges this with an "OH." Meanwhile, Joe shakes his head up and down in line 22, also displaying that he now understands it. However, Joe does not laugh, which causes the teacher to question whether he understood the joke in line 28. Zihad helps him save face in line 32, by saying that Joe just "doesn't think it's funny." Joe affirms this in line 33 by saying that he "just didn't like it." This verbalization is necessary to clarify the reason why he did not laugh, lest the teacher (or peers) think he is less competent.

In Example 7.9, the teacher tells a joke in Syrian dialect.

Example 7.9: If you could see our pants

01	T:	*fī nukta ukhra ayḍan samʿatiha*
		('there's also another joke I heard')
02		*bi-l-lahaja as-sūriyya*
		('in Syrian dialect')
03	Zihad:	hum
04	T:	*wa-hādha muḍḥika kathīran*
		('and this is very funny')
05		*fī kān ṭayār sūrī*
		('there was a Syrian pilot')
06	Zihad:	*nʿam*
		('yes')
07	T:	*yaqūd biṭ-ṭayāra*
		('flying an airplane')
08		*baʿadayn fajāa*
		('and then suddenly')
09		*wa-kān ʿala as-sbīkir huwwa*
		('and he was on the speaker')
10		*bi-yaraḥib bi-l-nās illī fī aṭ-tayāra*
		('greeting the people that were on the plane')
11		*baʿadayn fajāa*
		('then suddenly')
12		*qāl ruḥnā fīha!*
		('he said, "we are gone!"')
13		((claps hands once))
14		*wa-ṭabʿan kul aṭ-ṭayāra*
		('and of course all the plane')
15		*kānit fī ṣamt tām khāfū*
		('was quiet. They were scared.')
16		*fakarū an fī ḥaṣal shay'*
		('they thought something happened')

17		accident or something
18		*wa-aṭ-ṭayāra tʿarfit lil-ʿāṣifa wa-ayya shayʾ*
		('and the airplane got into a storm or something')
19		*baʿadayn fajāa aʿalan, "anā asif*
		('then suddenly he announced, "I'm sorry"')
20		*liana muḍīfa kabẓit al-qahwa ʿala banṭalūnī al-abīaḍ*
		('"because a flight attendant dropped coffee on my white pants"')
21		*wa-law tashūfū manara min adām*
		('"and if you saw the view [my pants] from the front"')
22		*kayf inahu wa-hadhā"*
		('"how they are and this"')
23		*qālū lahu bi-mā mʿanāa, "laʾ tahtam bi-dhalak"*
		('they said to him, "we don't care about your-"')
24		*istaʿmal kalma bis-sūrī sayʾa nawʿan mā*
		('they used a kind of dirty word in Syrian')
25		*ma-intaẓar ilī bantalūnā alan*
		('if you saw all our pants right now')
26		*kulnā kayfa ṣārit*
		('all of us, how they become')
27	Ihab:	[ha ha ha
28	Mohamed:	[ha ha
29	T:	ha ha HA
30		*yaʿanī kulhum* ((waves hands downward))
		('like, all of them'))
31		*min al-khūf*
		('from the fear')
32	Layla:	I don't get it
33	T:	you don't?
34		*kulhum-*
		('all of them-')
35	Zihad:	oh darn, they thought the plane was going to go down
36		and they said, what happened?
37		and he was like, oh I just spilled coffee, no the-
38	T:	flight attendant
39	Zihad:	flight attendant
40		and they were like, oh, if only you could look at our pants
41		and see what we have on them
42	Layla:	hee hee
43	T:	cause they all got scared
44	Mary:	oh, ha ha
45		HA HA!
46		((Ss and T laugh))
47	Mohamed:	ha ha
48		she gets it now!
49		((Ss and T laugh))

In line 03, Zihad's "hum" indicates that he is paying attention. As someone of Syrian heritage, he acknowledges his interest in a Syrian joke. After the joke is told, Ihab and Mohamed actually laugh first, followed by the teacher in line 29. Layla acknowledges she does not understand it in line 32. The teacher seems surprised by this in line 33. She starts to explain the joke to Layla in Arabic, but this time, Zihad quickly cuts her off to tell the end of the joke in English (perhaps before the teacher can demand that someone explain it in Arabic!) In doing so, Zihad demonstrates that he understood the joke even if he did not laugh or appreciate the humor of it. In lines 44-45, Mary finally gets it as evidenced by her loud laughter. Her delayed understanding makes the others students and the teacher laugh, as does Mohamed's comment that, "she gets it now!" (line 48). In this example, students like Ihab, Mohamed, and Zihad once again show that they understand the joke and are therefore able to participate fully. Zihad once again acts as a peer mentor or expert and assists those who did not understand the joke with some type of scaffolding, this time through translation.

In this last example, I present a humorous narrative as opposed to a canned joke that Mohamed told the class. I have included it in this chapter because it is still a highly scripted story which could be re-told like a canned joke. Although several students participated in the re-telling of a joke in Examples 7.7c and 7.8d, which required a fair amount of linguistic proficiency, this is the only example found in my data of a student telling his own humorous narrative in Arabic. It may be that the practice of actually telling a joke was beyond the Arabic linguistic capabilities (as well as perhaps cultural knowledge) of most of the students or it may be telling jokes was not something these students were accustomed to doing that much even in English.

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<u>Example 7.10: A true anecdote</u>
01   Mohamed: *mudarris al-xxx*
                            ('the teacher of [a class]')
02   *wa-asmahu Faisal min bākistān*
                            ('and his name is Faisal, from Pakistan')
03   *marra kān yudarris aṣ-ṣuf*
                            ('one time he was teaching the class')
04   *fa-dhahab ila al-ḥamām*
                            ('and he went to the bathroom')
05   *ʿandimā rajʿa aṣ-ṣuf kulu kān yaḍaḥik*
                            ('when he returned to the class, everyone was laughing')
06   *wa-qāl yʿanī li-mādha tiḍḥakūn?*
                            ('and he said, "why are you laughing"')
07   *humā ʿarafū an al-mīkrūfūn kān maftūḥ*
                            ('they knew that the microphone was on')
08   Ihab: no wa::y
09   T: [ahh ha ha HA
10   Tareq: [ha ha
11   Layla: [hee hee
08   Mohamed: *huwwa kān ʿandu dijalāt*
                            ('he had diarrhea')
09   *samʿaū kul shay'*
                            ('they heard every thing')
10   T: ha ha
11   *hādhihi nukta waqaīa yaʿanī ḥaqīqīa*
                            ('this is a real joke, like true')
12   ((Ss and T laugh))
13   T: oh *mushkila*
                            ('oh problem')
14   Zihad: *lā ilāha illallāh*
                            ('there is no god except God')
15   T: *hādhihi ṭurfa ḥaqīqīa*
                            ('this is a true anecdote')

        In line 08, Ihab displays that he has understood Mohamed's humorous anecdote. This is followed by laughter from the teacher, Tareq, and Layla. Mohamed gives further explanation in lines 08-09 about why the story was humorous, allowing for greater participation from his peers. Everyone does participate in laughing in line 12. There is also another example of Zihad using a God-phrase to comment on the joke in line 14, similar to how one might use "Oh God" in English.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented a picture of the way the teacher and students interacted during the humor practice of telling canned jokes. Students displayed their own levels of participation and proficiency through their responses, which included re-telling a joke in Arabic, re-telling a joke in English, making an appropriate comment about a joke that displays comprehension, making a general comment or laughing (which does not necessarily require comprehension) or not responding and therefore not participating in the practice. Although students were not expected to be able to use the same repertoire of practices for language that the teacher uses, (i.e., telling a canned joke) they were expected to understand the jokes. In fact, the teacher expressed that she wanted all of them to "understand the joke right away" (see Example 7.6b). Although her efforts at bringing in peripheral students to participate were not always successful, the peripheral students did often benefit from the assistance and scaffolding of their peers. At certain times, the expert peers were better at mediating language than the teacher was (e.g., Zihad's use of gestures in re-telling the joke in Example 7.8b).

I have also presented in this chapter how identities were displayed, assigned, and co-constructed. This was seen in the case of Mary, who was often assigned a novice identity by the teacher and who co-constructed this identity. This co-construction actually allowed her more full participation than other novices like Noor, Tareq, and Joe, who were able to "fly under the radar" and tended to participate peripherally through observation only.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Implications

Discussion of Findings

In this study, I have shown how sequences of turns at talk established local

practices for accomplishing particular actions and for participating in and establishing

this Arabic language classroom CoP. Although members participated to varying degrees

in this CoP, there was consistency in the routines and practices for talk-in interaction that

defined this CoP. By specifically investigating humor practices as they occurred in this

classroom, my analysis revealed humorous interactive processes and negotiations of

meaning which made up the shifting participation of learners in this classroom

community. These humor practices were not only sites for identity display and relational

identity display by my participants, but they also helped to mitigate tensions, soften face-

threatening acts, and protect members' positive face needs in the classroom, ultimately

contributing to the creation of a very inclusive, close-knit community with relatively low

language learning anxiety for all its members. These humor practices also created

beneficial contexts for scaffolding and learning of Arabic culture and dialect. Through

weaving together the three classroom interaction data chapters along with some of the

interview data, I discuss these main arguments in turn below.

Humor Practices as Sites for Identity Display and Relational Identity Display

Humor practices were a valuable tool for identity construction in the class.

Various kinds of identities developed and were displayed as a result of participation in

humor practices in this community, based on students' language proficiency, their status

as HLL or non-HLL, their heritage ethnic backgrounds, and their positions within the classroom as a whole.

The participants who already had superior proficiency (Mousa, Mohamed, Zihad) used humor more often and used L2 linguistic resources in more creative ways than less advanced participants. For example, Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad used more difficult Arabic colloquialisms for humorous purposes which required some insider knowledge of Arab or Muslim culture (e.g., Examples 5.8, 5.9). Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad were the primary students who engaged in language crossing, code-switching into another student's heritage dialect for humorous purposes (e.g., Examples 5.10, 5.11, 5.12). Additionally, Mousa and Zihad engaged most frequently in teacher parody and teacher talk (e.g., Examples 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6). Zihad also provided the most scaffolding through language and gestures for other students during joke-telling (e.g., Examples 7.7c).

Through these humor practices, students like Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad developed expert identities, co-teacher roles, and displayed "insider" status in Arabic-speaking and Muslim communities of practice as a result of their participation in this classroom through these humor practices, as well as other practices in the classroom. Being able to understand a canned joke, for example, requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural knowledge of the region. The learners in this classroom possessed various levels of knowledge of Arab culture and politics, and a certain amount of "insider" knowledge was needed to be able to comprehend the jokes, which Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad all had. The consequences of failure to laugh at a joke had an impact on students' identities as competent speakers of Arabic as well as insiders/outsiders in Arabic culture.

Interestingly, Mousa and Mohammed rejected the label of HLL and chose for themselves identities as "average" native speakers of Arabic, although not necessarily experts of the Arabic language. They simply saw themselves as more advanced, based on the opportunity they had to grow up and be schooled in the Middle East. Perhaps because they were such good friends with the other students in the class, they desired not to distance themselves too far from their peers. They willingly accepted co-teacher roles in the class though, and this was a way that they could benefit from a class that was not really challenging enough for them.

Mary and Joe were assigned novice identities by the teacher and by their classmates but also contributed to co-constructing these identities at times through face-to-face interaction. The humor practices also clearly solidified Mary's status (as well as Joe, but to a lesser extent) as an L2 learner and not HLL. Tareq was assigned an identity as an HLL by everyone in the community, but managed to somehow escape an identity as a novice (at least in comparison to Mary and Joe), even though he scored lowest on his OPIs and rarely ever spoke up in class. However, the teacher did sometimes target him to ask if he understood something (e.g., Example 7.6b) but much less frequent than Mary and Joe. This may have been partly because of the resources that were available to Tareq— his best friend Mousa was able to provide lots of language support for him in class and his mother for him at home.

Although Noor tended to only participate in humor practices peripherally through observation and her voice was not heard much in the humor practices, Noor represents an interesting case because according to Ibrahim and Allam's (2006) categorizations, she would be considered an HLL. However, she did not necessarily see herself as having the

same expertise that the HLLs had, particularly in terms of speaking a colloquial variety. While her own evaluations of her Arabic speaking abilities were consistently low, her expertise in Arabic was evaluated differently by various classmates. She was viewed as an expert by Mary, but did not consider herself one, nor did other HLLs in the class, such as her friend Layla. Lee (2005) discussed how some of the learners in her survey of heritage and non-heritage learners felt pressure from others that they were supposed to speak the heritage language because they looked like a native speaker of that language. This seemed to be somewhat the case with Noor, who since she was perceived as Arab, felt like she should speak better than she does, and this may have influenced how much she participated in class discussions. Perhaps because of her looks, her Arabic pronunciation, her Islamic background, and the fact that she was the only student in the class of a similar profile, the teacher grouped her in with the HLLs as opposed to with Mary and Joe. She herself did see her Islamic background as helping her learn Arabic. Noor definitely had affiliation through religion, but not the nativeness or language proficiency. The religious affiliation may have served as an identity marker that allowed "crossing" into Arabic HLL membership despite lacking in other areas (Rampton, 1995). Her case as a self-proclaimed "artificial Arab" and as someone who could be both an expert and a novice illuminates the multiple, hybrid and situated identities of HLLs that can exist within a CoP.

Noor and Tareq were not seen as novices by their peers, although Mary and Joe were. This seemed independent of language proficiency other than native-like pronunciation, since Mary and Joe were more proficient than Noor and Tareq when it came to speaking in Arabic. Instead, it seemed based on Noor and Tareq's assigned

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identities as HLLs by everyone in the community. This assigned identity as HLLs was not based solely on ethnicity or heritage background either, since Noor was not Arab. However, Mary and Joe's assigned novice identities did seem to be based on ethnicity and the fact that they were white Anglo-Americans. Norton and Toohey (2001) have suggested looking into race and body as it relates to good learning language or perceptions of good language learning. If Mary or Bob had dark hair and eyes and Noor had less similar features to Arabs, would their identities have been constructed differently by their peers and teacher? Would they have seen themselves differently? This highlights the need to stress the importance of making distinctions between types of participants (Haneda, 2006) and how different participants gain access in a CoP.

Within this classroom community, however, there was a dynamism in the peer collaboration in which each participant could alternate between the roles of 'legitimate peripheral participant' and expert, depending on the specific goals at each moment. For example, Mary was able to use her "intellectual resources" (Norton & Toohey, 2001) to position herself as someone who had knowledge (a relative expert) of Egyptian dialect and culture at times, based on her study abroad experience there. The students' individual areas of expertise were complementary, and it was this that made their collaboration mostly successful.

There were of course other local classroom identities established too during interaction such as Ihab being the class clown with his use of God-phrases for humor. Ethnic identities were also displayed and assigned, like through Layla knowing about Egyptian jokes making fun of the *ṣaʿīdīn* (Example 7.3), Rahman questioning a "soap crisis" in his heritage land of Egypt (Example 6.13), or Mousa highlighting Zihad's

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Syrian heritage identity by using a Syrian phrase to express that the class missed him (Example 5.10).

Humor practices were not only a site for individual identity display but also relational identity display. Students displayed intimacy with others and showed that they were friends or members of an in-group through teasing and joking. For example, Layla repeated her friend Ihab's funny expression *mā shā' Allāh* to display relational identity with him (Example 5.3). Mousa, Zihad, and Ihab displayed relational identity and that they were members of an in-group with their verbal dueling with colloquialisms (Example 5.2). The teacher displayed relational identity with the students by choosing to join in teases aimed at her by laughing with the students rather than getting upset at them.

Humor Practices as Mitigating Tensions, Softening Face-Threatening Acts, and

Protecting Positive Face Needs

Humor practices in this classroom community often seemed to serve the purpose of mitigating tensions, softening potential face-threatening acts or protecting positive face needs. For example, the teacher chose several times to smile or laugh with the students in order to mitigate tension when the students were using humor to voice a complaint (e.g., Examples 5.7). The students also softened the face-threatening nature of these complaints or challenges to the teacher through humor (e.g., Example 6.11). Repetition and parody of the teacher's utterances was often used to defuse what could have been potentially serious conflicts in a different classroom environment (e.g., Example 6.3). Many of the examples show students using humor to protect or save positive face. For example, Mary and Joe laugh to protect face from the embarrassment of being the "teacher's pets" (Example 5.1). Ihab tries to protect face from students thinking he is less competent in

Arabic by using humor (Example 5.5). Zihad uses humor to mitigate potential conflict

and help save face when he and Layla refuse to help out the teacher with a recruiting

event (Example 5.9).

Creation of an Inclusive, Close-Knit Community

Humor practices contributed to the creation of an inclusive and close-knit

community in this classroom. The classroom community developed a unique shared

repertoire of conversational joking based on its diversity of members, both in terms of

backgrounds and language proficiency levels, as well its shared history together as

members of the broader Arabic Flagship Program community. Situations of exclusion or

marginalization found in some of the previous research on CoP in L2 classrooms (e.g.,

Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004; Norton, 2001) were not as evident here. While some students

were more peripheral than others, all students were legitimate, and humor practices

provided opportunities for peripheral members to move toward more full participation.

The experts were willing to share their expertise and resources with the novices. For

example, Zihad scaffolded the "Three Drunk Men" (Example 7.7c) joke as well as the "If

you could see our pants" joke for Mary (Example 7.9). Zihad also let the teacher know

when he thought not all his classmates understood her joke (Example 7.3). In fact, the

experts were extremely sensitive to the language skills of their peers and their feelings of

inadequacy.

Humor practices also seemed to help dissipate affective factors such as anxiety

(Tarone, 2000) as evidenced in some of the students' interview data presented in Chapter

3. Students talked about how they felt welcome and how the atmosphere was intimate

and nice because "people can joke and take jokes" (interview, Joe). While the findings

suggest this university's Arabic Flagship Program model of having a separate track for its learners and therefore sharing small classes together might be beneficial in creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere and low anxiety for learners, the important role of the teacher must also be emphasized here. As Norrick and Klein (2008) pointed out:

> Teachers do more than construct an individual identity in the classroom: they also create a classroom atmosphere more or less conducive to humor and to the presentation of individual personalities. Teachers differ in the amount and kinds of humor they initiate, the kinds of humor they allow or encourage humor by pupils, and how they respond in humorous ways and non-humorous classroom situations. All of these factors enter in the sort of personality a teacher constructs and the sort of classroom interaction she fosters. (pp. 84-85).

The teacher in this classroom helped create this inclusive and close-knit community by allowing humorous exchanges and off-task discussions to take place. She not only allowed it but she actively joined in these interactions. She also allowed students to use dialect and to be creative with it in the classroom. She fostered an egalitarian environment in which students felt free to tease her and their classmates, in ways that tended to bond more than bite. She chose to "affiliate with the class clown by joining in the laughter or producing a cohesive (humorous) follow up" (Norrick & Klein, 2008) as opposed to reprimanding Ihab. This allowed the students and the teacher to build a shared history together and insider jokes and thus intimacy between its members. I suggest that all of this led to the creation of a positive language learning environment, discussed more below.

Humor practices created beneficial contexts for various levels of participation. For example, Ihab, who did not have the Arabic proficiency to participate in full conversations, was able to participate through his "one-size-fits-all" (Ohta, 2008) God-phrases which he inserted at various moments for comedic effect and other subversive purposes. Additionally, learners such as Ihab and Mary and Tareq made gains in understanding through collaboration with the teacher and with peers, which allowed them to participate more. This was particularly salient in Example 7.5 when Mary was trying to understand the canned joke about the "Three Drunk Men." The other students helped her move through the zone of proximal development to higher levels of comprehension through gestures and comprehension checks and simplified language.

In general, the canned jokes really revealed the various levels of participation and levels of proficiency in this classroom. Mohamed, a native speaker, was the only student who ever told a joke (Example 7.10). Zihad and Rahman, both higher level HLLs, were both able to participate in the re-telling of a joke in Arabic (Examples, 7.7c, 7.8d). Zihad was also able to participate in the re-telling of a joke in English (Example 7.9). Ihab, Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad often made appropriate comments about a joke which displayed their comprehension. The rest of the students tended to either laugh (which did not necessarily require comprehension) or they did not react and therefore did not participate at all.

In terms of beneficial contexts for learning Arabic culture and dialect, one way in which the linguistic and cultural diversity of this classroom affected the kind of humor practices which the students and teacher engaged in was that the humor practices tended

to take place in Arabic dialect as opposed to MSA. This is not surprising given that most of the students were native speakers or HLLs and colloquial language is the "language of family" and "intimacy" and "friendship" (Versteegh, 2004). Humor practices found in a typical Arabic foreign language classroom, consisting of mostly L2 learners, might be quite different. In fact, humor may or may not play a large role at all. As Ryding noted (1995) most L2 Arabic students lack confidence in spoken interaction.

Additionally, humor practices in this classroom took place not only in the native dialect of the speaker, but also through language crossing. Students code-switched into other dialects and registers for humorous purposes. Code-switching between English and another language has been found in the literature on humorous language play and SLL, but this kind of language crossing has never been considered as a type of humorous language play in SLL literature before. This is probably because naturalistic data on L2 language play has never been collected in a primarily HLL classroom. Due to the diglossic nature of Arabic and differences between heritage language dialects, students revealed a sophistication and a sensitivity to differences in dialect and register. Additionally, they were able to exploit these differences for humorous purposes.

Although the use of God-phrases and language crossing was mostly restricted to Ihab, Mousa, Mohamed, Zihad, and the teacher, possible contexts for learning within this classroom community were created. The L2 learners were exposed to more dialect than they would probably be in a classroom with fewer HLLs and the HLLs also got to appropriate each other's dialects. In discussing the diversity of cultural backgrounds and dialects, Joe said he enjoyed it very much:

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You know, I enjoy it….Like, there are just certain things that we don't understand and

certain things that we mispronounce and certain things, like certain expressions that

we would never know. Like, in this class you hear a lot of them. So, just like the

different backgrounds, there is a lot of funny slang going around. Like, what did I

learn today. Like *subi*, or *masubi*…anyway, it means like troublemaker or something,

but just stuff like that….like it is important to have the mixed pod. (interview, Joe).

Ihab also talked about the benefits of the mixed class being the various dialects students

got exposed to:

the language is one big part. You learn a lot. Mousa is from Lebanon. Tareq is

Egyptian. Mohamed is from Iraq. So that helps a lot. It opens your head to other ways,

how other Arabs say it and different cultures. (interview, Ihab)

Just as Davies (2003) found that the NSs had more linguistic and cultural

resources than the NNS did in the context of voluntary peer conversation groups and

were able to play an important role in the construction of humorous discourse, so did the

native speakers in this class. However, it was not just the native speakers. All the students

brought different kinds of linguistic and cultural resources which they were able to share

with each other in order to provide support in the form of initiations of humor and

collaborative joking.

Learners had access to *symbolic resources* (Bourdieu, 1997) in this class—a range

of different dialects that most L2 Arabic learners do not have, which could help increase

their linguistic and culture capital since using dialect appropriately was valued in this

classroom CoP. As Tarone (2000) noted, if L2 learners can hear a variety of different

voices, they are able to "try on different voices and language varieties for comic effect"

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(p. 46) and eventually they may appropriate those new varieties. This was seen in the case of Mohamed, an Iraqi heritage student, suddenly using an Egyptian accent and saying that he was preparing for study abroad in Egypt.

Rahman even noted that he adjusted his speech in terms of dialect and MSA in class just like native Arabic speakers would do depending on whom they are speaking with:

> classmates speak in so many different ways, because some have this heavy—they keep to their dialect or keep to heavy *fuṣḥa* [Modern Standard Arabic]. I have always tried to balance the two. It has been interesting listening to whom I'm talking to, and how that influences that. (interview, Rahman)

The diversity of this classroom community really created a small microcosm of the linguistic realities of the larger Arabic-speaking world and the "constant style shifting" (Holes, 2004) which takes place. The practices of this classroom overlapped with the larger community of fluent Arabic language users.

The playful recyclings of God-phrases may have sensitized the students to pragmatic aspects of Arabic language use. As Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) suggested, learners may have been able to advance their language awareness through this kind of conversational joking. Additionally, Bell (2005) has suggested that language play may be especially helping in the acquisition of vocabulary and semantic fields and Tareq commented on this in his interview:

> One way that it helps, the diversity of proficiency levels, is that sometimes there are words that they use, kind of in a joking matter, that helps you understand what the word is. (interview, Tareq).

As Tarone (2000) has suggested, language marked with laughter might make it more memorable, since positive feelings are associated with the linguistic elements.

Lastly, as Bell (2009) noted, humor in general is often restricted to L2 speakers interacting with native speakers outside of educational contexts. This was not the case in this classroom. Humor practices exploited the diversity of this CoP's members to create learning experiences. Learners were exposed to Arabic culture through jokes and cultural pragmatics within the classroom, which will hopefully prepare them better for interacting in the larger CoP of fluent Arabic language users.

Benefits and Limitations of the CoP Framework for L2 Classroom Research

The CoP framework is very beneficial for considering how individual and relational identities develop as a result of participation within a classroom CoP and how situated learning (or at least the potential of learning) takes place through participation in a community. It is particularly useful for exploring language practices, in this case humor practices that were used and developed as part of the shared repertoire of communication in this classroom CoP. Additionally it allowed me to think more deeply about what kind of structure/environment (teacher, curriculum, etc.) was in place to give participants' access to community resources and what opportunities they had to move from peripheral to more full participation.

The particular context of my study also illuminates some of the limitations in using CoP to study L2 classrooms. Lave and Wenger (1991) assumed that all novices were homogeneous in terms of their entry points and abilities and this is criticized by Haneda (2006). The particular context of my study highlights the "diverse entry points to classroom CoPs" and that "these points of entry challenge the notion of static,

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homogeneous newcomers striving to achieve one convergent end point of development"
(Haneda, 2006, pp. 811-812). In the case of this mixed group of native speakers, HLLs,
and L2 learners, learners entered the classroom community with diverse cultural and
linguistic backgrounds and the path from novice to expert, and who were the experts and
who were the novices was not always linear and static. Group membership identities
changed according to the conditions of interactions as seen in my data.

For example, Mousa, Mohamed, and Zihad entered the Flagship Program and this
classroom CoP already at the superior proficiency level. Therefore, they had nowhere to
go on the trajectory of learning and were not on the same path toward superior
proficiency like their peers in the class. This may explain why they sometimes felt
unchallenged and bored and made jokes. In other words, if they already had the skills
needed to participate fully in this CoP, how could they be challenged to advance further?
Although Mousa noted that one could study Arabic grammar forever and still not be an
expert, these students were not really provided with opportunities to go beyond their
levels in this classroom, except when it came to appropriating each other's dialects. The
instructor's pedagogical style, and perhaps difficulty in dealing with the challenge of a
multilevel class, also contributed to this. Although they were also supposed to be students
and learning and improving their Arabic, they really took on more mentor and co-teacher
roles within this classroom. Although they did receive some benefits from this role, as
noted in their interviews, overall they probably benefited the very least from being put in
this multilevel classroom community. In some ways, they could actually be considered
marginal members as opposed to more core members. As Hellermann noted,

the use of 'too much' language or 'overly advanced' language forms is oriented to by the teacher and classmates and marks the student who uses those forms as a marginal member of the community of practice. A marginal status means that member's participation is not part of a 'peripheral' to 'full' trajectory. Other students treat marginal member students in overly-deferential ways and because of that marginal status an observant teacher will attempt to move that student to a more appropriate class (p. 151).

Mary and Joe entered this community without the same set of linguistic resources and cultural background of the HLLs and native speakers. They did not have the language proficiency to allow them to participate fully. Mary and Joe were able to bring some linguistic and cultural resources with them based on having spent a summer abroad in Egypt which helped to facilitate their participation in humor practices (e.g., knowing the Egyptian expression *aib*) but they still did not have the cultural and religious insider status that the other members in this CoP had and the prior dialect knowledge. Noor, having attended an Islamic academy with Arabic HLLs since she was young came into the community with some of cultural and religious resources, but also did not have as much prior dialect knowledge. However, these students were still able to participate peripherally in the practices through observation and more heavily-scaffolded activities. Although they were peripheral, they were still considered legitimate by this community and assisted by the more advanced speakers.

The rest of the HLLs all came with very different amounts of linguistic and cultural knowledge which both facilitated and constrained their participation in humor practices. Ihab had very high comprehension skills which allowed him to understand and

participate in the humor of the teacher's canned jokes. He also had enough dialect knowledge that enabled him to be able to use Arabic colloquial expressions for humorous purposes. Tareq, on the other hand, came into the community with very little linguistic knowledge in both MSA and dialect, and this heavily constrained him from being able to participate in humor practices in Arabic, even though he was good friends with Mousa, Mohamed, and Ihab and joked with them a lot in English.

Lastly, there have been calls for scaffolding to be added to the CoP framework if it to be utilized to advantage in classroom settings (see Haneda, 1997; Wiltse, 2006). Haneda argued that the role of the teacher and more capable peers within a classroom CoP needs to be accounted for in terms of how the teacher enables students to learn in their zones of proximal development. I think that articulating the role of scaffolding more in the CoP framework (Haneda, 1997; Wiltse, 2006) would be useful when utilizing it for classroom settings. Mary was not the only one who benefitted from scaffolding of canned jokes in this CoP; the other students who could hear the scaffolded jokes also benefitted. Therefore, failure to admit that they did not understand the joke did not necessarily deny them the benefits of scaffolding as long as at least one person was willing to admit that he or she did not understand.

<center>Directions for Further Research</center>

Conducting stimulated recalls on humorous interactions between teacher-student(s) and peer-peer may contribute to a more in-depth and more accurate understanding of humor practices in classroom interaction. Students can explain their intention for the humor, why they did or did not laugh, and so forth, and this can

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triangulated with conversation analysis or other discourse analysis techniques to examine humorous exchanges in a classroom.

In terms of specifically Arabic, it would be interesting to compare the types of humor practices that exist, if at all, in a typical Arabic foreign language classroom at a university. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare to an immersion environment, like the Middlebury Arabic language school, where students are under a pledge to speak Arabic at all times, and thus creative and humorous uses of the language abound in the interlanguage. Of importance to investigate would be how these humor practices or other practices which are part of the shared repertoire provide opportunities for students to move from peripheral to more full participation. Additionally, it would be important to consider how the resources that learners bring with them facilitate or constrain their participation in the practices of a CoP.

Of particular importance for further research is more longitudinal studies on humor and other practices in the classroom which are able to make claims for evidence of L2 learning by showing practices for interaction between learners and how those practices change over time. The CoP framework can also offer a way of investigating learners' interlanguage, in terms of analyzing the systematic language practices for learners in a classroom CoP and the nature of their shared repertoire.

As this study has demonstrated, humor can play an important role in the display and development of learners' individual and relational identities in a classroom CoP, in the creation of a sense of belonging in a classroom, and it may help develop learners' pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence in the L2. It is indeed an area worthy of further inquiry.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Transcription Conventions

!	animated tone
?	rising intonation (not necessarily a questions)
-	sound cut off; interruption
CAPS	much louder
italics	Arabic language
( )	English translation
(( ))	Additional commentary
bold	linguistic resource of interest to discussion
:	elongated sound
::	more elongated sound
/xxx/	speech hard to discern
[	overlapping speech
(1.0)	approximate length of pause in seconds
hhh	aspiration
HHH	louder aspiration/laughter while speaking

(Based on Pomerantz & Bell, 2007; Schiffrin, 1994)

APPENDIX B

IJMES Transliteration Guide for Arabic

Consonants

ء	ʾ
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʿ
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k or g
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y
ة	a

Long vowels

ا or ى	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short vowels

◌َ	a
◌ُ	u
◌ِ	i

(*International Journal of Middle East Studies*. IJMES Transliteration Guide. Retrieved September 10, 2010, at http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/docs/TransChart.pdf)

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