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Examining the Emergence of Non-Humorous Laughter in Criticism Sequences

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the existing literature on laughter, criticism sequences, and the management of social relationships in mundane interactions. To achieve its aim, it examines the emergence of laughter in criticism sequences in Saudi Arabic mundane interactions. The study first seeks to identify the sequential positioning of laughter in these sequences and analyzes what action(s) laughter might perform. The data of this study includes 185 minutes of mundane Arabic interactions taken from the Bedaya Channel. It embraces recorded interactions among 43 male participants aged between 19 and 32. The data analysis shows that laughter appears in two sequential positions as it, in the first position, infiltrates the criticizing elements, or secondly emerges in turns' final. The participants employ laughter in their turns to mitigate criticism as a problematic action that might provoke disaffiliation in response. Moreover, analysis shows that shared laughter is a versatile interactional resource that helps participants end the ongoing actions while displaying their overt alignment. In addition, laughter can show participants' intimacy, which maintains their social relationships and sustains group cohesion. The findings of this study enhance our understanding of laughter as a multifaceted interactional phenomenon, its social functions, and its role in the management and maintenance of the participants' social relationships.

Keywords: Laughter; Criticism; Conversation Analysis; Arabic Interactions; Turn-Taking

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1. Introduction

Laughter is an interactional phenomenon that might emerge in our everyday interactions. It is a pervasive phenomenon that is a social activity rather than a solo one, as laughter is produced in the presence of other participants. And though the appearance of laughter in human interactions has been constantly linked to humor, many reasons would enhance or stimulate laughter. People, for example, may laugh because they are well, feel happy, or just when meeting a friend. In addition, laughter could be a response to embarrassment, a show of politeness or even a display of fear. Hence, it is a fertile interactional resource that offers participants a multifaceted tool to which recipients might respond and interpret differently. Exploring what laughter might index is far from being crystal clear.

Conversation analysis (CA) is one of the methods that has been employed to study laughter in interaction. CA, as a research enterprise endeavors to study verbal and nonverbal phenomena in interaction^[1, 2]. The role of CA in interpreting various linguistics phenomena has been emphasized and shown to be fruitful^[1, 3-6]. CA aims to examine interactions to discover how turns are positioned and designed, how sequences are organized and what actions are accomplished with turns^[1]. Laughter is one of the interactional phenomena that CA aims to investigate, including its appearance, how it is positioned and how it might be responded to.

Several studies attempt to examine laughter in mundane interactions^[3, 7-13]. Some of these studies investigate the appearance of laughter in complaint sequences^[3, 11]. In addition, other studies^[7, 10] examine the relationship between laughter and topic-changing in conversations. Moreover, Drew^[8] analyzes the emergence of laughter in teasing sequences, while Jefferson^[13] explores the appearance of laughter in trouble-telling sequences.

This study seeks to examine the emergence of laughter in criticism sequences. It will focus on analyzing the position of laughter in regard to the turns and sequences in which it emerges. Then, it will investigate what action laughter might perform when it appears in these sequences and how it might affect their trajectory.

Furthermore, Laughter research has moved from an early focus on the causes of laughter to an emphasis on its organization and function in interaction^[1-3, 10]. Although some attention to CA has been given to laughter as a distinct

area of research, relatively few studies have drawn attention to what laughter functions in specific sequences, such as criticism in this study. In addition, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has attempted to investigate laughter emergence in a delicate activity such as criticism. Moreover, we believe this is the first study in the Arabic world that examines the emergence of laughter in Arabic interactions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap and contribute to a better understanding of the organization of laughter and its functions in human interactions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conversation Analysis and Laughter

Though laughter had been linked to humor in the past, recent studies in CA find that laughter indexes more than something humorous^[1, 3, 12-15]. In addition, laughter has been noted to be a systematically delivered activity by participants^[2-12]. Therefore, much focus has been put recently on investigating what actions laughter might perform when it appears in everyday interactions rather than why it appears and what makes something humorous^[1].

Various studies relate laughter to affiliation and alignment in conversations^[7, 10, 15, 17, 18]. However, laughter has an intricate and dual nature^[2, 19, 20], as it can indicate affiliation and intimacy among people and show aggression and mockery^[19]. Therefore, it can be disaffiliating and non-aligning in some sequences, such as in trouble-telling^[13] and self-deprecation^[9], where recipients' non-laughter in these events is highly affiliative and aligning. Furthermore, Jefferson et al.^[21] conclude that laughter in impropriety sequences is located in the middle of a continuum varying from the most affiliative responses to the least affiliative ones.

As laughter has a dual nature and can display affiliation and disaffiliation among participants, it has been associated with "creating, maintaining and transforming interpersonal relationships"^[1] (p. 5). In addition, affiliative laughter can indicate more than mutual understanding, as it can show shared intimacy and affinity^[22]. Similarly, Glenn^[1] proposes that laughter:

"allows for the expression and maintenance of group values and standards via the subjects and situations to which it refers. It can boost

morale and ease internal hostilities or differences. Laughing at people or things external to the group can strengthen boundaries, solidifying members in their group identity against outsiders.” (p. 30)

Moreover, Jefferson^[23] suggests that while shared laughter can display affiliation between two participants, it can show disaffiliation with a third participant who does not get the laughable- the source of laughter. In addition, Glenn^[1] proposes that while laughter can indicate group solidarity, it can also dismiss individuals from the same group. An example can be seen in Markaki et al.^[24], who find that laughter has been used in professional meetings to mark (dis)affiliation among groups of employees as participants, in their study, affiliate with participants from their group and disaffiliate, on some occasions, with those from other groups.

Laughter as an activity can perform diverse interactional actions. Deciding what action laughter might accomplish in a particular sequence depends highly on its form and its position in the turn that it appears on or in the sequence. Glenn and Holt^[2] suggest that laughter positions in interactional sequences can affect which actions they might accomplish. Laughter, for example, might emerge in the same turn as the laughable, where it can be seen in the first position^[2]. Laughter also might appear within a turn where it can show that “we are aware of a tension between what we say, how this could be interpreted by others and what we mean”^[25] (p. 124). In addition, it might be shown in the turn final, where it can modulate a potential disaffiliating action^[26], or it might emerge in the same turn but in a post-completion position where it displays a stance on talk^[27], such as nonseriousness^[28]. Moreover, laughter might occur in a second position in the turn following the laughable object^[2], where it can display appreciation^[1, 10, 12, 29] or (dis)affiliation with the speaker^[2, 9, 10, 13].

It can be observed that what function laughter might accomplish can be determined by examining the “position” and the “composition” of laughter in the sequence it appears in^[30]. Schegloff^[30] emphasizes that “both position and composition are ordinarily constitutive of the sense and import of an element of conduct that embodies some phenomenon or practice”. Hence, exploring what action any produced utterance might perform depends on its position in the turn

and sequence and how it is composed (see Schegloff^[30] for more details).

2.2. Laughter and Criticism

Laughter emergence has been well documented in displaying the management of delicate moments of interaction^[1-3, 31-33]. Glenn and Holt^[2] declare that “there is a recurrent relationship between laughter and environments which are in some sense delicate, tricky, dispreferred, or in some other way problematic” (p. 5). Laughter emergence has been found to appear in delicate moments such as complaints^[3, 11, 34], repairs^[35], and in patients’ turns in medical interactions where patients display their rejection of doctors’ commands^[32]. In addition, in her pioneering work, Jefferson^[13] found that trouble-telling is a sequence in which laughter might appear to display the trouble-teller’s resistance. Jefferson^[13] declared that when a trouble teller laughs, he “is doing a recognizable sort of job. He is exhibiting that, although there is this trouble, it is not getting the better of him; he is managing; he is in good spirits and in a position to take the trouble lightly” (p. 351).

Criticism is a delicate activity that includes a problematic action in which a participant might produce a negative assessment or an objectionable turn that is directed to another participant. Producing such an action-criticism- is a dispreferred action^[36] that might initiate disaffiliation and non-alignment from the target of criticism. Therefore, it is initiated and designed delicately by the criticizing participant as participants design their turns to be appropriate and relevant to their recipients. Liddicoat^[37] emphasizes that the turns of criticism are designed with delay and are prefaced with pauses and hesitation.

Criticism is an activity similar to other delicate activities such as complaining, confrontation, and challenging. Only a few studies have examined the emergence of laughter in criticism sequences^[38-41]. For instance, in their study, where they examine the emergence of laughter in criticism sequences in addiction group therapy, Arminen and Halonen^[38] conclude that participants cautiously place laughter in their data. Group therapy is a delicate activity where therapists must confront patients without provoking resistance or losing patients’ attention, Arminen and Halonen^[38] state that laughter can perform different actions in such an interactional activity. They suggest that laughter might appear in

therapists' turns to invite laughter from patients on another patient's problem (a therapeutic technique called mirroring). In addition, they declare that laughter might emerge in therapists' turns to soften their confrontations that their patients have resisted. Likewise, Myers^[40] and Romaniuk^[41] have reported the display of laughter in criticism sequences in news interview settings. They observe the introduction of laughter in interviewees' responses to criticizing questions to mitigate criticizing questions and undermine their damaging propositions. However, these studies have not analyzed the display of laughter in criticizing turns and its functions in these turns. Therefore, this study seeks to throw light on the emergence of laughter in mundane interactions and its interactional roles in managing social relationships.

3. Data and Methods

In order to analyze the emergence of laughter, its design, and its function in criticism sequences, this study follows a conversation analytic method. CA is an inductive qualitative approach that relies on a case-by-case study to draw generalizations across interactional events to characterize and explain the structures of social interaction^[6, 36, 42]. The data of this study includes 185 minutes of mundane Arabic interactions taken from Bedaya Channel, a Saudi channel. The data embraces recorded interactions among 43 male participants. Bedaya programs involve participants living together for some time. Based on the audience's votes, only one participant will win in the final episode. The participants' interactions are authentic and not controlled, allowing them to interact spontaneously.

Conversation analysts observe spontaneous exchanges to uncover patterns and consistencies, paying close attention to how participants engage with the sequences of actions that unfold^[36]. Thus, the author initially observed the data multiple times to identify the occurrence of laughter within criticism sequences. Subsequently, a preliminary collection of instances was identified where participants presented or addressed criticism. Subsequently, these instances were transcribed to allow the author to examine the data in detail. The data was then divided into interactional patterns according to participants' orientation to criticism. Next, the analysis started with the most transparent cases and then moved to the least clear ones.

The author and two raters coded laughter emergence in criticism sequences. This study employed Cohen's Kappa^[43] to assess the degree of concordance among the raters to ensure the validity and reliability of the coding. The coding of emergent patterns achieved a score over 0.84, indicating a high degree of consistency across raters and a robust level of reliability.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The observation of the data of this study shows that laughter appears in criticizing turns, where it mitigates criticism as a problematic action that might provoke disaffiliation in response. This, for instance, can be noted in Extract 1 below, in which two participants- A and B- speak about a song that A was singing. Following some turns, between Ls5-15, that includes a discussion of who is the original singer of the song, A, in L16, initiates a question with a declarative statement, "*Have you heard the other one who sings it*". However, B does not align with A's question as, instead of producing a yes-no answer that the question makes relevant, he responds with a dispreferred response in which he displays a lexicalized assertion, in L18, that the original song is for another singer "*ah he does not imitate the song it is originally not his (1.0) it is Talal's*". B's response shows an absence of a Second Pair Part (SPP) for its first, which is a yes-no question. This absence breaches the "conditional relevance" between the first and the second parts and leads to A's orientation to the pursuit of the answer^[44] with a follow-up question in L19. In L19, A reiterates the same question, "*Have you heard the other one who sings it*".

"Extract 1": A and B speak about a song that A was singing.

Following the follow-up question, B aligns, in L20, with A as he responds with a relevant answer and a type-conforming answer, "*no-no*" (see Raymond^[45] for details about type-conforming and non-conforming answers). After a short silence in L20, A initiates a new turn that includes a lexicalized objection, "*xa ha I just as(h)k heh you about the one who imitates it*" to B's answer in L18 as he displays that he merely "*just*" asks if B listened to the cover song and that B's answer is inappropriate. A's turn includes a dispreferred and problematic action; therefore, it appears delicately designed. First, A's turn is preceded by a short silence, in L21, that falls in his account. Second, A's turn initial includes

hesitation tokens “*xa ha*” that show that the turn is delicately constructed. Third, A’s turn embraces laughter that infiltrates and follows the word “*as(h)k heh*”. A’s delicate construction of his turn displays his experience of the problematic and delicate action that his turn embraces.

The emergence of laughter in criticism sequences can also be viewed in Extract 2 below. A is a group leader who is not happy because a member-C- of his group last week joined the group this week. Group leaders choose their members, but as C was the only member who did not have a group yet, he joined A’s group. Following the formation of his group, A went to address the audience about the reasons behind his selection and why he was unhappy. Before the beginning of the extract, A and C were discussing what he said to the audience. The extract starts, in L41, with C’s complaint of A’s remarks during his appearance on air. Before C completes his turn, A misaligns and disaffiliates with him as he overlaps with C, in L42, to produce the question “have you heard me” and then repeats the same question but this time imitates C’s accent as he changes the sound “s” to “j” in the equivalent word to “heard” in Arabic. After a short pause, A proceeds, in the same line, to produce a directive, “Listen to me” which he directs to C.

“Extract 2”: C and A discuss what A said to the audience on air.

Once A completes his turn, D produces, in L43, a new turn that includes a negative assessment and is prefaced with a summon to A “*Ebrahem do not be ridiculous >ebrahem do not be ridiculous<*”. C, also, overlaps with D, in L44, with the same assessment and proceeds his turn to display his refusal of A’s imitation “*This is not my accent heard me or did not h[ear me by the way] (I) am not*” with a repetition of the word “heard” that A, in L42, used to imitate C. Before C completes his turn, A overlaps, in L45, with him with a misaligning and disaffiliating turn that includes a dispreferred objection “*oh all↑ah this sensitive(heh) guy this*”. A’s objection involves an assessment “*sensitive guy*” that shows C as someone who might be upset even with some common comments or actions. In addition, it is prefaced with a summon to god, “Oh Allah” that someone might produce when they are under a lot of pressure or feel upset. This shows the misalignment and the disaffiliation between the two participants as it displays how much the recipient, A, treats C’s prior turn. In addition, it displays a distilled

assessment of the dispute, which shows C as being sensitive, and that is why he cannot accept what A says when he talks to the audience. A’s production of the criticizing turn, which displays C as a sensitive guy, includes laughter that is appended to the word “*sensitive(heh)*”. As A’s turn, in L45, is in overlaps with C’s turn, C proceeds to complete his turn in L46 “from there” where he shows that what A imitates in L42 is not his accent and that he is not from their place that has that accent.

It can be observed how disagreement is constructed in participants’ turns. Following some negotiated turns that show the misalignment and the disaffiliation between the two participants and with the participation of some of the audience, one of the participants produces a criticizing turn that displays the distillation of the argument as it provides an assessment of the other participant of being “*sensitive*”. The turn that includes the assessment is designed with laughter that appears following the word that displays the assessment.

After examining this study’s data, it can be observed that the emergence of laughter in criticizing turns has functions to accomplish. As has been observed in other studies that examine the appearance of laughter in delicate moments of interaction^[3, 32, 46], the emergence of laughter performs a notable action in criticizing turns that involve a problematic and delicate action. In Extracts 1 and 2, it can be seen how the emergence of laughter, in the delicate words that might initiate disaffiliation from participants, can minimize the chance of the appearance of disaffiliation as it offers the targets an opportunity to treat the on-going action-criticism-less severe than it might be. This can give laughter the potential to mitigate criticism, which might create disagreements, disaffiliation and non-alignment and, then, affect social relationships. In addition, critics’ laughter can display their pursuit of affiliation from their targets, which, if it appears, targets might affiliate by laughing in response. When participants engage in shared laughter, this displays intimacy between participants and shows coherence in relationships, which can be useful for maintaining participants’ relationships and solving interactional problems.

Extract 3 involves a discussion between participants of the effects of fasting for a long time. Following some lines, particularly in L88, a participant -C- initiates a story about a man who did not eat for a long time.

Though this extract, similar to the two previous ex-

tracts, includes a criticizing turn that involves an objection and embraces laughter, the emergence of the turn, unlike the previous extracts, appears contingent in the sequence. This will be shown in detail below.

“Extract 3”: C narrates a story about a man who has not eaten for a long time.

In this extract, C starts to narrate a story, in L88, “*there is an Indian did not eat (.) for approximately possibly*” where he appears, with the short pause and with the repetition of the words “*approximately possibly*”, searching for the period of time that the man fasted. While C appears to think of the time, D, immediately produces a turn, in L89, that provides a proposition of a period of time “*two years*”. Following a short silence, C, in L91 “*approximately*”, confirms that the proposed time is the approximate duration that the man fasted and while he proceeds to complete his turn, D overlaps with him in L92, with a misaligning and disaffiliating turn “*no*” that might show D’s objection or exclamation. This objection and D’s disaffiliation might be shown in the next turns as following D’s turn, in L92, C responds, in L93, with an account “*(I) swear that (I) am truthful*” that is preceded with a “*no-no*” preface which shows C’s orientation to reject and to obstruct what D is projecting in his prior turn in L92. Once C completes his turn, D responds with a disaffiliating turn that, though designed as a tease, “*(I) will hit you with the table now he[h]*” as it involves an exaggerated formulation^[8] where D threatens C that he will not only beat him but also with a table that is heavier than to be simply carried to beat someone with. As teases might embrace serious propositions^[7, 46, 47], D’s turn, though it is encapsulated as a tease, is a criticizing turn that displays D’s misalignment and speculation of the accuracy of the proposed time as being a long time for someone to stop eating and drinking. D’s turn includes laughter that appears in turn final. Following D’s turn, B aligns with D’s turn, which invites laughter in response^[12]. However, the target of the criticizing turn, C, misaligns with D as he responds, in L96, with a po-faced response^[8] in which he provides an account “*(I)swear*” and a directive “*put this one included in the bag of the village*” where the discussion might involve a more considerable number of participants. This shows C’s disaffiliation as it displays his assertion of the correctness of the duration of the time that he proposed. B disaffiliates with the target as he produces, in L97, a new turn that includes an assessment

“*(I) swear(h) you are truth(h)ful he(h)*” that displays B’s alignment with D’s proposition that such time is difficult to be real. B’s turn includes laughter that infiltrates some of its words and appears in turn final which invites laughter in response. D aligns with B as he laughs in response. However, the target, C, pursues his correction of the proposition of the tease as he overlaps with D’s laughter with his turn, in L99 “*ind no-no*” where he starts his turn with “*ind*” which he does not complete, and then reformulates his turn with “*no-no*”. The construction of C’s turn displays his affiliation with “*no*” showing his rejection of B’s turn, in L97, which proposes that the proposition of D’s tease is correct. C does not complete his turn as E holds the floor and initiates a new turn. Following some turns that include requests to listen to the target and for the target to narrate the story again, such as in Ls 100-104, the target reformulates his story in L106. In his new turn, the target provides the same description, “*Indian man*” for the person who fasted, but when he reaches the duration that the man fasted, he displays his negation to the previous time that has been criticized “*is not for two years*”. Then, he provides a new proposed time, “*approximately fort days (1.0) certainly (0.5) certainly*”, which is designed delicately as hesitation appears in the target’s turn with his lexical choices “*approximately*” and the repetition of the word “*certainly*” in addition to the pauses in the target’s turn. While C constructs his turn, he looks at the critic as if he is pursuing a preferred response from him as he is the one who showed his objection and disaffiliation following C’s initial narrated turn in L93.

It can be observed that the emergence of the criticizing turn in the sequence appears delayed, such as in extracts 1 and 2, while it appears contingent in Extract 3. In the previous analysis, the sequences, where criticism emerges have been examined. In addition, it has been displayed how criticism turns are delicately constructed and produced by the critic participants. It has been realized that criticizing turns embrace laughter that infiltrates some of their designed words or emerges in turns finals.

If the criticizing turns are extracted from their sequential contexts, they can be introduced as the following

xa ha I just as(h)k heh you about the one who imitates it
[oh all↑ah this sensitive(heh) guy this]
 = *(I) will hit you with the table now he[h]*

In the above criticizing turns, it can be observed that laughter infiltrates two words in the first two extracts while it appears final in the last extract. In addition, it can be identified, that the three turns involve producing objections to criticize recipients and appearing in sequences where disaffiliation and non-alignment emerge between two participants in interaction. To determine the action(s) that laughter might function in such a delicate moment of interaction, the position of laughter and its effect on the trajectory of the sequence, where it occurs, will be analyzed.

In extracts 1 and 2, laughter infiltrates and follows certain words in the criticizing turns. In the first extract, laughter infiltrates and comes after the word “*as(h)k heh*”. In this extract, the sequence involves a discussion of a cover song where a participant- the critic- produces a question where he asks the target of the criticism if he listened to the cover song or not. Following the target’s misalignment with the critic, in L18, the critic reiterates the question that the target aligns with and responds to. At that moment, the critic produces the criticizing turn where he displays that he only wanted to know if the target listened to the cover song and that the target’s prior turn misaligned with his question. The placement of laughter appears within and after the words “just ask”. These words display the critic’s orientation to specify the reasons behind his criticism and that he only asks if the target listened to the cover song. Following the criticizing turn, the target aligns with the critic with an acknowledgment token, in L23 “*okay*”. Following the target’s minimal response, the critic initiates a directive that is followed by four beats of laughter, “*watch who imitates it heh hah heh h[ah]*” where with his directive and laughter, the critic pursues the target’s affiliation^[1] and invites laughter in response. The target affiliates with the prior turn as he produces an account, “we are sorry” which displays his understanding of what the critic means and his orientation to apologize for his misalignment before the criticizing turn.

xa ha I just as(h)k heh you about the one who imitates it

The emergence of laughter in the criticizing turn, in Extract 2, occurs following the word “sensitive”. The sequence, in this extract, involves a discussion, between the critic and the target, about the critic’s speech to the audience in which he justifies why he is unhappy about the target being in his group. Misalignment and disaffiliation emerge early in the

sequence between the two participants such as in the target’s response, in L23, to the critic’s question. In addition, this appears in the critic’s assessment in L39 “*he is angry*” and his mockery imitation of the target’s

[oh all↑ah this sensitive(heh) guy this]

Accent “*WHAT did you say o↑n air*”. This is followed by the target’s disaffiliation “(I) *did not say what did you say on air*”. Moreover, when the critic produces a question, in L42 “*Have you heard me have you heard me](0.5)listen to me*”, his question is followed by a directive. Still, the target misaligns and disaffiliates with the critic to produce a directive in response “*Ebrahem do not be ridiculous this is not my accent*”. Then, the critic produces his criticizing turn, “*Oh all↑ah this sensitive(heh) guy this*”, which includes a negative assessment that displays the target as sensitive. The critic displays that the target’s sensitivity is the reason behind the dispute and that the target displays a misinterpretation of the critic’s speech to the audience, which is normal, but as the target is sensitive, he misunderstands its orientation. As the negative assessment in the criticizing turn involves the word “sensitive”, it is observed that laughter appears immediately following it.

So, in extracts 1 and 2, laughter emerges within and after the words, in the criticizing turns, that distill the confusion sequence “*just as(h)k heh*”, in Extract 1, and the disagreement one in Extract 2 “*sensitive(heh) guy*”. As producing an action that involves criticizing an activity done by recipients, such as the misunderstanding shown by the target in Extract 1 and the sensitivity displayed by the target in Extract 2, is a problematic and delicate action that requires delicacy in its delivery. Laughter position and composition, in this sequence and within the words of the criticizing turns, display its function in such a problematic action. It can be observed that laughter works to minimize the disaffiliation and the misalignment that might be produced in response to criticism as laughter might show the criticizing words, such as “*sensitive(heh) guy*” in Extract 2, as produced to be displayed less severe. In addition, laughter emergence displays critics’ pursuit of affiliation and alignment with their targets. While the critic in Extract 1 gets affiliation and alignment in response from the target such as with the target’s response “*okay*” and with his account “*we are sorry*”, Extract 2 develops differently as following the criticizing turn, the target disaffiliates with the critic with his turn in L50 “*you are just*

mocking and talking by the way we know your accent (0.5) do not mock me". The target with a disaffiliating turn displays his orientation to respond to the critic's turns in Ls39 and 42, where he imitates the accent of the target when he is angry rather than to the criticizing turn where he is shown as being sensitive.

The position of laughter in the criticizing turn, in Extract 3, is in turn final. The sequence of Extract 3 involves a story-telling in which a participant, C- the target, narrates a story about someone who has not eaten for a long time. When the target appears to be searching for the duration that the man fasted in L88 "*did not eat(.) for approximately possibly*", the critic participant introduces a suggested period of "*two years*". When the target confirms the indicated period with his turn in L91 "*approximately*", the critic misaligns with him as he overlaps with the target with "*no*" which might display his speculation of the accuracy of such period. Following the critic's turn, the target produces a new turn in L93, "*no-no (I) swear that (I) am truthful*", where he initiates his turn with a "no-no" preface which displays his negation of what the critic might be projecting, and he produces an account to display that what he proposed is correct. The critic, then, initiates the criticizing turn that is encapsulated as a tease but involves a serious proposition^[8].

(I) will hit you with the table now he[h]

The critic's turn shows the critic's misalignment and his speculation about the accuracy of the proposed fasting time. The emergence of laughter in turn finally displays the turn as being non-serious and that the target does not take it seriously. In addition, laughter might mitigate the serious proposition of the teasing turn as it, first, displays the turn as being non-serious and, second, shows the critic's pursuit of affiliation from the target. If the target affiliates with the critic and orients to the humorous proposition of the teasing turn, the two participants might have shared laughter which will highly minimize the chance of the emergence of disaffiliation between them. However, in this extract, the target orients to the serious proposition of the tease as he responds with a po-faced response^[8] that shows his tendency to correct the proposition of the tease. This can be shown in his po-faced response in L96 "*yes(I)sw↑/ear father of*", his pursuit of the correction of the tease in L99 "*ind no-no*" and, then, his successful turn where he corrects the tease in L106 "*(it) is not for two years approximately forty days*".

It can be noted, after examining the data of this study, that the emergence of laughter in criticizing turns has functions to accomplish. As has been observed in other studies that examine the appearance of laughter in delicate moments of interaction^[3, 13, 31, 46], the emergence of laughter performs a notable action in criticizing turns that involve a problematic and delicate action. In Extracts 1 and 2, it can be seen how the emergence of laughter, in the delicate words that might initiate disaffiliation from participants, can minimize the chance of the appearance of disaffiliation as it offers the targets an opportunity to treat the ongoing action-criticism less seriously than it might be. This can give laughter the potential to mitigate criticism which might create disagreements, disaffiliation and non-alignment and, then, affect social relationships. In addition, critics' laughter can display their pursuit of affiliation from their targets who could affiliate by laughing in response. When participants engage in shared laughter, this displays intimacy between participants and shows coherence in relationships which can be useful for maintaining participants' relationships and solving interactional problems. In Extract 3, laughter in turn finally accomplishes an interactional recognizable task in criticizing turns. The emergence of laughter in these turns displays them as being non-serious. This provides an opportunity for the target to orient to the non-serious proposition of the turn and respond by aligning the turn with the critic. In addition, laughter mitigates the appearance of objection in the criticizing turn as it shows it as being less serious than it might be taken.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the emergence of laughter in criticism sequences. This study concludes that laughter appears in criticism turns that involve a problematic action in which speakers produce negative assessments or objections to their recipients. Critic participants design their turns, in the data of this study, with laughter that appears infiltrated, in two criticizing turns out of three, in the most delicate constructed words in these words. In addition, laughter, in the third turn, emerges in turn final. The analysis of the emergence of laughter in these turns shows that laughter can have a certain interactional action. Laughter appears to work to minimize the disaffiliation and the misalignment that

might be produced in response to a problematic action, like criticism here, as laughter might show the criticizing words as produced to be displayed less seriously and that targets have not to take them seriously. Hence, laughter functions to mitigate the appearance of criticism.

Laughter is an influential interactional resource that participants might employ to minimize the opportunity for the emergence of disaffiliation and misalignment between them. As participants tend to avoid disagreements and disaffiliation in their interactions, laughter is a tool they can use in constructing their turns to reduce the possibility of disagreement. For example, critic participants' laughter can appear in the delivery of such a delicate and problematic action, criticism, to display their produced negative assessments or objections as being less serious.

Due to its ambiguous nature, laughter is a versatile interactional activity that involves accomplishing diverse actions such as mitigating criticism, showing alignment and pursuing affiliation in this study. In addition, its effect can extend to influencing social relationships and group solidarity. It is hoped that this study will be the groundwork that will open the path for studying laughter in Arabic interactions. In addition, hopefully, it will contribute to the study of laughter in human interaction.

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Not applicable.

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Not applicable as the data is available for public use through media channel platforms.

Data Availability Statement

The data is available online through media channel platforms.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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