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A Multimodal Analysis of Spousal Conflicts in Conversational Cartoons

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Abstract:

One of the most significant and essential human relationships is marriage. Marriage is a legally binding partnership between a man and a woman, who are typically referred to as being husband and wife. There is no marriage without any problems and conflicts. Marital conflict has extremely a very detrimental effects, including stress, despair, grief, worry, and feelings of hopelessness. These conflicts affect both the married couple and their children. The research objective is to investigate the different pragmatic acts that are performed by the social actors in the selected cartoons. Therefore, it demonstrates the relationship between the husband and his wife. So as to achieve the previous objectives, this study follows Jacob Mey's (2001) "*Pragmatic Act Theory*" and Theo van Leeuwen's (2008) "*Representation of Social Actors*". The results present the various practs in the different social cartoons, and they are Arguing, Defending, Discussing, Fearing, Indifferentism, Spiritlessness in marriage and Carelessness.

Keywords: Marital Conflicts, Cartoons, Social Actors, Gender.

Introduction

Language is one of the key components of any civilization. It is a method of interpersonal interaction, connection development, and community building. Bruno (2011) believes that "Communication is mainly a cooperative action between two or more persons in which the significance of each transaction is generated by all those actors working together in the shared work of reciprocally paying close attention to the words of other communicants." (p.443). Language is the most efficient way for individuals to communicate with one another, whether it be written, verbal or signed. It enables us to communicate our emotions, ideas, desires, and more. According to Miller (1963), "Communication is so remarkable in all aspects of life that every field of the social sciences is involved with it, studies it, and contributes to the general fund of information about it" (p.1). Thus, everyone uses language as a means of communication in order to convey thoughts and information in daily life. Cartoons are a universal passion. Cartoons are a form of communication, and they continue to maintain an important place because of their capacity to communicate a lot with little words. Cartoons are a powerful tool for communication. They possess the capacity to elicit from readers a world of fantasy and imagination.

Aims

The study's aim is to look into the pragmatic behaviours depicted in several social cartoons of husbands and wives. Additionally, it looks at the contextual elements that express the various practs in few chosen cartoons and identifies many psychological and physical acts in marital conflicts. As a result, the study's major objective is to explain the tense interaction between men and women and to demonstrate how gender differences impact communication.

Questions

The study provides answers to the following questions: (1) What are the various pragmatic practs in the chosen husband-wife cartoons? (2) What are the varied contextual characteristics of the practs? (3) How are social actors represented in the chosen data using various techniques? (4) How can the process of communication be impacted by gender differences?

Methodology

This thesis relies upon two different theoretical frameworks via Jacob Mey's (2001) "Pragmatic Act Theory" and Theo van Leeuwen's (2008) "Representation of Social Actors". The Theory of Pragmatic Acts, developed by Mey in 2001, offers a solution for the weaknesses in the John Austin and Searle-proposed Speech Act Theory. According to Mey (2001), "Pragmatic Act Theory is a quickly developing field of pragmatics. It is a field of study that has to focus on language and its users". (p. 206).

The main emphasis of the proposed theory is centered on the interactional context in which readers and writers both realize or recognize what they want to accomplish. According to Mey (2001), the interactional context is defined as "the environment in which the speaker and hearer discover their affordances and in which the entire situation is transported to bear on both what can be uttered in the situation in addition to what is truly being said". (p.221). He presented his theory in the manner of "Pragmeme," which includes two parts: the activity and the textual parts that help him achieve his goal. On the other hand, Van Leeuwen theory is a technique for revealing the intended meaning of given texts. The way that social actors are presented in various texts is related to how those actors are portrayed

in those cartoons. According to Van Leeuwen (2008), social actors can be categorized in one of two ways: as including or excluding.

Theoretical Framework.

Yule (1996) sees that the major concern of pragmatics is " the investigation of meaning as transmitted by a speaker or writer and explained by a hearer or reader- pragmatics is known as the study of speaker meaning"(p.3). Also, Levinson (1938) describes pragmatics as "the studying of language usage"(p.5). Austin emphasizes when the speaker uses a word, he conveys something by using it. According to Austin in his book "*How to do things with Words*" (1962)", to say anything is to act upon it or to do something." (p.12).

There are some concepts that Mey uses in his theory that help in analyzing the different works, such as the following: First, *inference* is a notion that depends on the facts that are presented by the speaker. Second, Cutting (2002) sees *reference* as "an action in which the speaker employs linguistic forms to enable the listener to identify something (p. 20). Third, *relevance* is a word which means achieving extremely successful communication. Through utilizing relevance, the speaker should create sense in his words, so that he must be pertinent or relevant to the topic. Forth, *voice* is another element in Mey's Theory of Pragmeme that plays a very serious role in understanding the various utterances. It has different forms like voice mash, voice clash, and voice shift. Fifth, clarifying the meaning of "*common sense*" would be inappropriate without exploring the context. According to Mey (2001), "Context is an effective and dynamic element, not a static one; it enables the actors or participants to interact in the communication process."

Van Leeuwen (2008) supposes that there are different elements in performing social practice as the following points illustrate: First, *the participants*, in which a large number of individuals play different roles, are necessary for the social practice. Some of them can be included, and others can be excluded. Second, *action*; according to Van Leeuwen (2008), "the essence of any social activity is a set of actions executed in a sequence which can be fixed to a higher or lower degree" (p. 7). Third, *there are performance modes*, and this idea implies that when performing a specific action, it must be at a specific speed. Forth, *eligibility conditions*, and Van Leeuwen (2008) states that "they are the efficiency and qualifications that participants should have so as to be qualified for playing a particular role in a special social practise (p. 9). Fifth, **presentation styles** Additionally, social practises include dress codes and physical hygiene standards. sixth, the **times and locations** in which any social action must be at a specific time and place. Finally, there are two types: inclusion and exclusion. Each one has different elements in it.

Analysis



3.1.1 Mey's Theory:

It is an eternal truth that there is no marriage without troubles and the continuity of most marriages depends on how husbands and wives deal with their repeated marital disputes. This means that marital problems are normal in married life. This cartoon is represented as a conversational act that takes the dialogue form between the Mr. and the Mrs. Mr. here refers to the male husband while Mrs. refers to the wife. The main theme of this cartoon is coronavirus lockdown.

This cartoon exploits and utilizes Shared Social Knowledge (SSK), which is coronavirus that is generally and commonly known as COVID-19. It is an infectious or destined disease that causes illness in the respiratory system in humans. It is a virus which badly affects the

whole world. This virus makes people stay at home for a long time because it spreads primarily through direct contact.

Some wives are angered by the fact that husbands stay out of the house for many hours. This can generate many marital problems that usually affect the wife and even children. The man, however, finds that the time he spends outside home is a kind of distancing himself away from the household's concerns and responsibilities.

Mrs. in this cartoon reminds Mr. that he spends most of his time in the bar away from his family and his home by making "Reference" in her speech "for the first time you home eating with your family". Another reference (REF) by Mrs. Cartoon is to corona virus "thanks to corona" because this virus forces people to stay home to be safe and follow the lockdown rules. Because of these rules, Mr. Cartoon has to spend time with the family at home.

These references act to generate and produce the "Inference" that Mr. cartoon is in the bar all the time drinking beer and does not stay at home with his family and because of coronavirus the family has the ability or the chance to eat together for the first time. Another inference (INF) is obvious in "woman I am sleeping". These words illustrate that Mr. Cartoon doesn't like being at home, so he is not satisfied by the rules which made him at home. Thus Mr. cartoon is indirect in his speech.

According to Mey, the voice plays a very important role in conversation. This cartoon includes a kind of voice shift in which the voice shifts from one character to another. In this cartoon, the wife speaks first and her husband replies to her .

A gesture is a specific bodily movement that strengthens and reinforces a verbal message or conveys a particular thought or emotion. Although gestures may be made with the head, shoulders or

even the legs and feet, most are made with the hands and arms. Gestures reflect each speaker's individual personality. In this cartoon, there is a physical gesture when Mr. Cartoon raises his arm up and puts it on his head in exasperation. It is a reaction of frustration or anger of being at home because of the rules of the lockdown. Gesture is also clear in the movement of the hands of children that shows that they are sad with their father. This is a physical act because it deals with the parts of the human body.

Facial expressions are one of the most important aspects in human communication. The face is responsible not only for communicating thoughts or beliefs, but also emotions. The face betrays what a person feels. There are different face expressions, here, in this cartoon. There are angry faces with no smiles. Angry faces work so well because each facial movement makes a person look physically stronger. Anger appears in the children's face because their eyebrows are pulled down, upper and lower eyelids are pulled up, margins of lips are rolled in and their lips are tight. This shows that children are angry because their father is always away from them and he is at home because of corona and he is forced to eat with them.

The wife's face expression is happy. There is a smile on her face because corona makes her husband stay at home and eat with his family for the first time rather than being in the bar. On the other hand, the man's face expression is sad: his eyes are down and his inner corners of eyebrows are raised. He doesn't like to be at home all the time, but the regulations force him to do that. So that face expressions can play a very important part in communication.

This cartoon employs conversational and physical acts to appeal to the reader's sense of awareness. Different contextual elements interact to generate the pragmatics acts in this discourse. These elements include: Reference (REF), Inference (INF), Shared Social Knowledge

(SSK), and Voice (VCS). The practs performed from the union between the conversational, psychological and physical acts and the various contextual elements are: arguing, defending, fearing and discussing.

The used Practs
Arguing — Defending — Discussing — Fearing

3.1.2. Van Leeuwen's Theory:

Participants

In this cartoon, there are four participants: a father, mother and two children. They are engaged in verbal action because they are talking with each other. They are in the process of looking and talking. The people who represent the cartoon are family members, consisting of a father and a mother who are the main participants and the children only looking at them in a very sad way. They are in their home eating with each other.

This cartoon is a sort of awareness. It shows the relationship between the whole family and the viewers. Here, in this cartoon, the participants (the father and the mother) give and deliver the meaning to the viewers. So, they are the most noticeable and silent characters in the cartoon. The most remarkable thing that the cartoonist or the artist does is to make the viewers very close to the participants as an attempt or trail to deliver a certain idea of the cartoon.

Setting

The setting in this cartoon contains: a table, plates with food, forks and chairs. So, they are at their home and this also appears in mother's words "you are home" and they are eating together.

Poses

The participants are in a position of talking and arguing. They are sitting on their chairs, having their food and enjoying their discussion and conversation. The mother looks so calm and cool. The above caption shows her relaxation and delight or entertainment during this talk. Her eyes, which are looking directly at her husband as in the picture, refers to her concentration during the conversation. This kind of pose represents a specific type of person, value and a very particular method to deliver the message and deal with it.

On the other side, the father does not seem happy by his wife's words. He keeps looking down away from his wife and children's eyes by avoiding looking at them. By looking at the children, it seems that they concentrate on their mother. The posture of their hands, reveals their inner feelings of being sad and angry.

Objects

In this cartoon, there are some objects, such as chairs, a table, forks and dinnerware like plates. On the other side, we can notice the clothes of the participants. The dining table in the middle of the cartoon is a place where the characters are sitting and communicating with each other and the children are holding their forks to have their food.

The manner of *inclusion* is to present information and to deliver a message about the reason which makes the man stay at home. It's clear in our cartoon by using a certain phrase by the wife when she said "thanks to corona" because this virus prevents her husband from going out to the bar. The inclusion appears in our cartoon by using *activation* as the two characters are active in the context.

The idea of *personalization* that occurs when social actors use personal pronouns also appears in our cartoon. It is obvious through using the personal pronouns, "I" and "YOU".

Passivation is one technique which includes the form of *beneficialization* in which the social actors represent a third party that may be negatively or positively avails and benefits from the action. This idea appears in our cartoon when the wife said “**thanks to corona for the first time you are home eating with your family**”. The family benefits from coronavirus which prevented the father from going out and let him stay at home with his family to eat together as being a normal family.

Specification is another technique that is presented by Van Leeuwen's (2008) which indicates a specific thing, place, people or an action. It also refers to the words that are used in the text to mention a specific thing or action. Here, in this cartoon the word “**corona**” is repeated two times, which points to a specific thing/reason that keeps people from going out by following the rules to be safe.

There is a different technique which is called *Individualization* in which the social actors are mentioned as being individuals by using a singular form, as in our cartoon the word “**woman**” in “**woman I am sleeping**”. This word is used in an individual form to refer to the wife.

The final technique which is applicable, here, is called “*determination*” that occurs when the social actors are presented in a very specific way. As we said the word 'woman' is used by the husband to mention a specific woman that is the wife.

This cartoon can be analyzed as the following:

Textual features	INF, REF, SSK, VCS	REF (Female) INF (Male) VCS (Male-Female)
Conversational Acts	Dialogue form	Both of them
Physical Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Face expressions ➡ Gestures 	They are made by male and female
Practs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arguing • discussing • hearing • defending 	

Table 1: The Analysis of Mey's Theory Cartoon 1
The second theory by Van Leeuwen's (2008)

Inclusion	Activation (participants roles)	Male and female
Personalization	Personal pronouns.	Male and Female
Passivation	Beneficialized	Female
Specification	Specific thing	Female
Individualization	Using singular form	Male
Determination	Specific person	Male

Table 2: The Analysis of Van Leeuwen's Theory Cartoon 1

Cartoon 2:



2.1. Mey's Theory

This social cartoon is presented in the form of dialogue between two characters: the husband and his wife. They are talking about their anniversary and how to celebrate it together. In order for the family to rejoice, the couple should take this opportunity and celebrate these situations even if they are simple. Marital life is always based on sharing and cooperation.

The cartoon applies Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) about the significance of the anniversary and its effect on family stability. A ceremony such as this, is considered to change the daily routine that

the spouse was used. It is not to save the individual from the problems of married life but rather to renew a beautiful memory that has been forgotten by the constant anxieties and pressures of life.

In this type of cartoon, the wife talks to her husband about breaking the boredom and the daily routine, and making a celebration to bring back the happiness and refreshment of their married life. There is a **reference** in Ms. cartoon's speech when she said, “**Honey, tomorrow is our anniversary, what will we do?**”. The wife explains to readers that she cares about this occasion of her life and speaks to her husband very clearly and frankly about what he wants to do on their anniversary. The wife wants to change; she tries to revive her joy to be happy with her husband.

The **inference** appears in Mr. cartoon's speech when he says, “**we will get up in the morning and stand two minutes of mourning** “. The husband does not want to make any effort to change. Thus, married life goes through a cold marriage. He does not care about anything she told him. Ms. Cartoon is waiting for her husband to plan ahead to celebrate this day but on the contrary, he says, “**We will stand two minutes of mourning** “. This is indicative of the husband's lack of harmony in marital life. Moreover, he mocks her words and her feelings and this indicates his cruelty.

Voice is one of the factors that play a key role in the existence of role-sharing between the main cartoon characters. In this cartoon, the voice goes from wife to husband and this type is called voice shift.

Body language is not easily recognizable because it has many secrets inside. Facial expressions have an important impact on the audience. Readers focus on the facial expressions of the characters in front of them, they show the face clearly and honestly to understand the intended message. The eye is one of the most remarkable elements of

body language where the audience focuses on the speaker’s eye and therefore understand at what the speaker is looking at. Ms. cartoon has a surprised face; she is surprised by her husband’s reaction when she asks how to celebrate their wedding anniversary. The characteristics of this face include: uppers eyelids pulled up and the lower eyelids neutral, eyebrows raised, but not drawn together and the mouth is opened. Just unlike her husband, he has a happy face, and this is what’s shown in the picture. The features are a smile where the lips pull back and go up, the mouth is opened, the teeth appear and the cheeks rise.

The gesture is shown when Mr. cartoon puts one leg on top of the other one, expressing comfort that no celebration is planned due to the high price, and instead he will stand two minutes mourning, with a board smile on his face. That's why we can say that a husband feels indifferentism to what his wife says.

After analyzing Mey’s theory over this social cartoon, we see the use of certain elements such as inference, reference, voice and shared situational knowledge with physical and conversational acts together has helped to create some practs such as indifferentism, spiritlessness in marriage and carelessness. This image presented the sense of renewal even with a small celebration.

The used Practs
Indifferentism — Spiritlessness in marriage — Carelessness

3.7.2. Van Leeuwen theory

Participants:

From the cartoon in front of us, there are two participants. They talk to each other about something that is special to them: because they are husband and wife. In this social cartoon, the participants are shown in

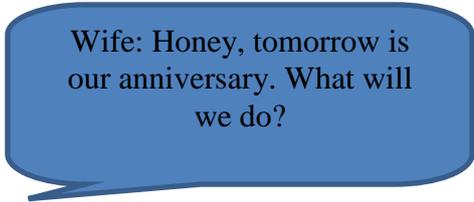
the middle, not looking at the viewers while their full focus is shown by looking at each other like that. Their general appearance manifests that they are dressed in homemade clothes. The husband wears his house pajamas, reads his newspaper and puts one leg on the other. The wife wears homemade gowns, looks well organized and puts on make-up which indicates her self-interest. They are normal people who have a marital conflict because of a harsh life.

Setting:

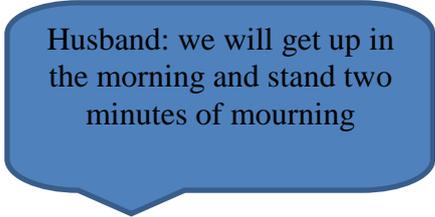
The frame of this cartoon contains only the couch and the participants' clothes indicate that they are at home enjoying their time together. This is an image that symbolizes one's interest in regeneration even if it is a simple event

Poses:

In the figure, the participants are in the speech mode. They are both sitting in the middle of the picture on the couch. The husband seems very relaxed and enjoys a conversation. The sitting position refers to rest and tranquility, signifying his mental relaxation in the conversation and a big smile on his face means that their marriage has gone through a period of spiritlessness. The wife's position on the other side, indicates her concentration. She reveals her inner feelings by celebrating her wedding anniversary. That refers to the seriousness of it. She thinks more about their happiness



Wife: Honey, tomorrow is our anniversary. What will we do?



Husband: we will get up in the morning and stand two minutes of mourning

The use of **inclusion** feature of van Leeuwen theory in which social actors are engaged in the action. The activation means to represent the participants as active characters in the discourse. The two characters are active as they participate in the dialogue.

The second feature is **specification** in which we mention a specific action, person, thing or place. It appears when the wife mentioned specific thing which is their anniversary and how to celebrate it, “**Honey, tomorrow is our anniversary. What will we do?**”.

The third feature that comes up in the cartoon is **assimilation**. This characteristic is recognized when you mention the social actors as a group. It is clear in our cartoon when the wife and her husband use the pronoun “we” to refer to them as the following: “**what will we do?**” and “**we will get up in the morning**”.

Nomination is the last feature in which the social actors are presented by the use of proper names may be formal or informal. This form may use the surname or given name of the actors. In the cartoon Ms. Cartoon, uses the word “honey” to refer to her husband.

This cartoon can be analyzed as the following:

al features	INF, REF, SSK, Voice	REF (Female) INF (Male) Voice (Male – Female)
ical Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Face expressions ➡ Gesture 	Face expressions (Male - Female) Gesture (Male)
ersational Acts	Dialogue	Male - Female
S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ndifferentism • piritlessness in marriage • arelessness 	

Mey's theory:

Table 3: The Analysis of Mey's Theory Cartoon 2

The second theory by Van Leeuwen:

Inclusion	Activation (participants roles)	Male - Female
Specification	Specific thing	Female
Assimilation	Plural form	Male - Female
Nomination	Proper names	Female

Table 4: The Analysis of Van Leeuwen's Theory Cartoon 2

Conclusion

This paper examines the social issue of marital disputes between husband and wife. The aim is to look into the pragmatic behaviours depicted in several social cartoons of husbands and wives. The results display the usage of different devices in Mey's theory and the various techniques in Van Leeuwen's theory. After researching and analyzing these social cartoons, we discover that marriage conflicts and troubles arise for a variety of reasons from both men and women.

المستخلص:

الزواج هو أحد أهم العلاقات الإنسانية وأهمها. الزواج هو شراكة ملزمة قانونًا بين الرجل والمرأة ، ويشار إليهما عادةً باسم الزوج والزوجة. لا يوجد زواج بدون مشاكل وصراعات. للنزاع الزوجي آثار ضارة للغاية ، بما في ذلك التوتر واليأس والحزن والقلق ومشاعر اليأس. تؤثر هذه النزاعات على الزوجين وأطفالهما. هدف الدراسة هو التحقيق في الأعمال البراغماتية المختلفة التي يقوم بها ممثلوا الأدوار الاجتماعية في الرسوم الكاريكاتورية المختارة. لذلك فهي تدل على العلاقة بين الزوج والزوجة. من أجل تحقيق الأهداف السابقة ، تقترض هذه الدراسة "نظرية الفعل البراغماتي" لجاكوب مي (٢٠٠١) و "تمثيل الفاعلين الاجتماعيين" لثيو فان ليوين (٢٠٠٨). تعرض النتائج الممارسات المختلفة في الرسوم الاجتماعية وهي الجدل والدفاع والمناقشة والخوف واللامبالاة والروحانية في الزواج.

المفردات المحورية : الصراعات الزوجية - الرسوم المتحركة - ممثلين الأدوار الاجتماعية - الكينونة الجنسية (الفروق بين الجنسين).

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