

Memes of Saudi Arabian National Soccer Team in World Cup 2022: A Focus from the General Theory of Verbal Humor

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Abstract. This qualitative descriptive study attempts to investigate verbal humour in nineteen Saudi Arabian national soccer team's memes on the event of their participation in 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Since this study uses Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) as its methodology, it attempts to check whether GTVH six Knowledge Resources (KRs) apply to the different methods and strategies Saudi fans used in the creation of these humorous memes. Data has been randomly selected from various users' accounts on X (formerly known as Twitter) under different hashtags related to the Saudi Arabian national soccer team's participation. The results reveal that all the analysed nineteen memes were structured around the six KRs proposed by GTVH. These are: Script Opposition (SO), Logical mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative strategy (NS), and Language (LA). This ultimately supports Attardo's (2001) view that all kinds of humorous texts, memes in this study, are within the scope of GTVH KRs. The types of verbal humor used were: irony, wordplay, exaggeration, coincidence, juxtaposition, sarcasm, humor, and satire. Their selection depended on the surrounding context and the user's intention supporting Dynel's view (2009). The creation of these memes relied on images related to famous national and international media figures such as singers, actors, players, coaches, and soccer events forming a framework that shaped the soccer humorous discourse of memes in social media. Humor in these memes has been found to originate from the interplay between the different script oppositions used in the image of the meme and the text in the caption. In addition, memes were found to be mainly used for humorous effects in three occasions: (1) celebrating their team's victory by mocking international players who participated in Saudi Arabia-Argentina match, (2) relieving different emotions such as stress and concern on the occasion of their team's defeat by Poland, and (3) satirizing Saudi team players after their loss to Mexico. These memes also have been found to have an implicit (non-literal) meaning that depends on culture, time, and the recipient's personal experience supporting the views of Attardo (2003; 2014), Lestari (2018), and Beskow et al. (2020).

Keywords: Verbal humour, Knowledge resources, World Cup 2022, Internet memes, Saudi Arabian National Soccer Team, Argentina, Poland, Mexico.

1. Introduction

Humor, as a vital tool for social interaction, holds a significant part within every society. It plays a central role in our everyday conversations with all individuals naturally engaging in humorous exchanges and situations. We encounter humor in a joke we hear, a funny story we read, a hilarious sitcom we enjoy watching, or a humorous standup comedy we attend. Jay (2003) relates humor to everything funny whether intended or unintended that makes someone laugh or smile. Westwood (2008) defines humour as "ubiquitous, pervasive, universal phenomenon potentially present in all situations in which people interact".

The evolution of technology has reshaped the way we communicate from traditional face-to-face interactions to the internet discourse including many social media platforms for online communication such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Tik Tok, etc. Internet humor discourse nowadays includes various kinds of funny videos, pictures, memes, GIFs, stickers, and other multimedia content. Memes, chosen for this study, are usually created in response to the current situation (Glăveanu & Laurent 2021) and in 2022, the world witnessed an important event that is the FIFA World Cup held in Qatar.

The FIFA World Cup, usually referred to simply as ‘the World Cup’, is an international soccer competition in which teams represent their countries. They compete for the title of ‘World Champion’ every four years. The format includes a qualification process that lasts three years to determine which teams advance to the tournament stage. During the tournament phase, 32 teams compete for the title over a period of about a month. The host nation automatically qualifies to participate in the group stage of the tournament (FIFA 2022). Saudi Arabian national soccer team has been nominated to participate in the qualification rounds for the 2022 FIFA World Cup scheduled in Qatar. The qualification process entails that the Saudi team plays many scheduled rounds of matches against other qualified national teams. Enrolled in Group C, they competed against three national teams: Argentina, Poland, and Mexico. All the national soccer teams in Group C were famous for their performance and well-known players such as Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. The Saudi fans’ expectations of winning against the three teams were extremely low. Their first match against Argentina turned out to be a surprise to the whole world. The Saudi team won and Saudi fans started posting humorous memes on X that revealed their joy upon victory mocking international players who participated in the match. However, upon their loss against Poland and Mexico, their memes were both humorous and satirical as to relieve their stress, concern, and sadness upon loss.

This study addresses humor as it is used on the internet and specifically focuses on internet memes of the Saudi Arabian national soccer team’s participation in 2022 FIFA World Cup posted on X.

2. Literature review

Humour has been long studied by different theories related to different fields. Three of the most prominent humour theories are: The Incongruity Theory of humour which is commonly associated with the philosopher James Beattie’s book *Essays on Poetry and Music* in 1776. The main claim of this theory is based on congruity which involves the perception of something incongruous and expecting similar outcomes. However when an unexpected surprise or deviation happens on an absurd situation, humour and laughter result. The Relief Theory of humour, on the other hand, is related to the philosopher Sigmund Freud who viewed humor as a psychological phenomenon that plays an important role for releasing tension and allowing liberation of negative thoughts.

The third theory is based on linguistics and it is the one used as the methodology framework of this study. The first formal semantic theory of jokes was presented by Raskin (1985) known as the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH). Its basic notion is the ‘script’ which is related to “a structured chunk of information about lexemes and/or parts of the world” (Ruch et al. 1993). Under this theory, any text is considered to be funny if it satisfies two conditions: “a. Each joke must contain two overlapping scripts (that is, the joke must be

interpretable, fully or in part, according to two different scripts); b. The two scripts must be opposed (that is, they must be the negation of each other, if only for the purpose of a given text), according to a list of basic oppositions, such as real/unreal, possible/impossible, etc.” (Ruch et al. 1993). SSTH stresses on the role of cognitive scripts and any violation of these scripts will result in humor.

On the basis of revision of SSTH by Attardo and Raskin (1991), an expansion on SSTH was made resulting in General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). The ‘script’ in SSTH was broadened to six Knowledge resources (KRs) that must be appointed when creating a joke. According to GTVH, KRs are explained as follows: Script oppositions (SO) are of great importance to this theory. For them, humor arises when there is a violation or incongruity within the mental scripts that people use to understand the world. Examples of (SO) are real/unreal, normal/abnormal, actual/nonactual, etc. Logical mechanism (LM) refers to the underlying structure that connects different parts of the text allowing it to be funny or humorous. These mechanisms are essential in creating humor hence they vary in their complexity. A few common examples of logical mechanisms are: puns, wordplay, exaggeration, incongruity, satire, false analogies, faulty logic, etc. Situation (SI) refers to the setting of the text or scenario in which a story or narrative takes place. It includes various elements such as participants, the place, activities, etc. Target (TA) refers to the person or group of people who are the subject of a joke. Humor builds on characteristics or attributes associated with that person or group. Narratives strategy (NS) is a framework used to analyse various forms of verbal humor based on their narrative format. This includes simple narrative, a dialogue, or a riddle. Language (LA) refers to all the linguistic levels of verbalization of a text that people use to convey information, thoughts, and ideas. Dialects and languages are the verbal domains by which these linguistic levels become apparent.

GTVH stresses on the presence of these specific linguistic elements and structural incongruities to create humor through the manipulation of language, scripts, and incongruities. Attardo’s (2014) linguistic and semiotic analysis on humor has made significant contributions to the understanding of humor. He asserts that humor depends not only on the content of a joke rather it is influenced by the context in which it appears in. The social and cultural factors that surround the joke are of great importance as well. He further adds that humor is a social and communicative phenomenon that could be funny in one context but not another. His work has manifested the interplay between linguistic and contextual elements. Ever since GTVH has been proposed, many studies applied it as a linguistic framework on different humorous texts of different languages (Saude 2018; Wananda et al. 2021, to name a few). In her research, Dynel (2009) classified the interrelated types of verbal humor which included irony, metaphor, hyperbole, witticism, pun, simile, spoonerism, sarcasm, register clash, retorts, teasing, banter, and self-denigrating humor. She further claimed that the choice of any of them depends on the context and the user’s intention. Firjatullah et al. (2021) studied verbal humor in some selected Hololive English Selected Clips according to the GTVH framework and found out that the six KRs were all used. They also found that after parody, irony, pun, tall tale, riddle, sarcasm, satire, and farce, the second-highest appearance was pun in these clips.

The term ‘meme’ was formed by Richard Dawkins (1976) describing the cultural counterpart to genetic evolution. He views memes as information units that are transmitted

through symbol (Johann & Bülow 2019). With the evolution of computer-mediated communication, the term ‘meme’ has been evolved to updated definitions. Kostadinovska & Shalevska (2018) define internet memes as “part of the online culture; mostly jokes, that are presented through mediums such as image+text or GIF+text combinations or just plain text and are spread virally on all internet-based platforms, changing along the way”. In Arabic, the term ‘meme’ is borrowed from English and is written and pronounced as in English but with Arabic alphabets ‘ميمج’. Memes are now regarded as an essential communication online tool (Nazeer & Ashfaq 2023) and social media users use them to deliver messages that carry feelings (Ortiz et al. 2021). In addition, memes can have positive uses, such as serving as an expression of curiosity or entertainment (Rahmayani & Febriarini 2021). They are also part of the phenomenon of delivering messages in a new form to describe something in a current factual situation. Memes, as a form of cultural expression, originate organically and are a reflection of societal responses to various events (Ortiz et al. 2021). The World Cup is an example of such a situation. To be interpreted correctly, memes should contain an image along with a short caption. According to Dongqiang et al. (2021), a meme delivers a powerful visual impact through the arrangement and combination of its images or text. In addition, memes serve a variety of functions, one of which is to disseminate information (Nazeer & Ashfaq 2023). When individuals encounter a meme as their initial source of information, they are often compelled to delve deeper into the news to fully comprehend the context behind the meme (Laineste & Voolaid 2017). Given that memes aim to foster a sense of solidarity and belonging among internet users, they serve as a powerful tool for connecting the online community (Petrova 2021). Furthermore, memes have been popularised on many social media networks. Some examples include Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X (Beskow et al. 2020; Mahasneh & Bashayreh 2021). Memes are transmitted across social media at high speed; indeed, they spread like viruses (Wiggins 2019). As a result, sometimes they can have unanticipated consequences in people’s lives. For instance, humour found in memes can sometimes conceal elements of sexism, misogyny, or racial bias (Dickerson 2016; Harlow et al. 2020). However, it is crucial to remember that not all meme usage implies negative consequences. Some memes can also serve a positive purpose (Wasike 2022). Along with that, there are many variables that affect how memes are interpreted. Lestari (2018) asserts that because culture, time, and personal experience all impact a meme’s meaning, a meme has an implicit (non-literal) meaning. Beskow et al. (2020) believe that memes are culture specific. Given that one way to understand a meme is by looking at the image and comparing it with the current situation. In addition, memes usually transfer different meanings and convey various social, political, and economic messages (Beskow et al., 2020; Laineste & Voolaid 2017). Sometimes they express universal emotions; at other times, they only intend to be humorous and to entertain social media users. As such, creators of memes come up with innovative and creative ideas to deliver their messages. FIFA World Cup in Qatar 2022 memes, for example, have been studied from the field of semiotics. Panjaitan et al. (2023) conducted semiotic analysis to check the signifier and the signified as well as the denotation and connotation on four 2022 FIFA World Cup memes. They found that the signifiers were “very random and unique”. The signs used in creating memes have “objective or literal meanings (denotation) and subjective or other meanings (connotation)”. They further stressed on the necessity of watching 2022 FIFA World Cup matches in order to form a shared experience for comprehension. They found that the purpose behind these memes was trolling both players and football supporters. It is important to mention

that linguistic studies on internet memes are scarce (Nissenbaum & Shifman 2018) and the present study furnishes the ground for further linguistic studies while it attempts to reveal the kinds of verbal humor, techniques and methods employed by Saudi fans in the creation of the memes under analysis.

3. Objectives of the Study

There are three primary objectives to this study:

1. Checking whether the six KRs of Raskin's GTVH apply on the different methods and strategies Saudi fans used to create humor in memes of Saudi national soccer team's participation in 2022 FIFA World Cup.
2. Investigating the kind of verbal humor used in these memes.
3. Checking the reason/s behind Saudi fans creating memes and posting them on X.

4. Significance of the Study

It is to the best of the researcher's knowledge that there has been no prior linguistic study conducted on memes related to the Saudi Arabian national soccer team. This study fills in an important gap in the literature of computer-mediated communication and its connection to humor, memes, and linguistics.

5. Methodology and Data Collection

GTVH, as a linguistic framework, has been applied and used as a theoretical framework for understanding and analysing verbal humour in a wide range of contexts such as jokes, puns, and various humorous discourses in many languages. As been claimed by Attardo (1994), a wide range of hilarious literature can be analyzed by focusing on all linguistic aspects including semantics and pragmatics. Ultimately, this study is an attempt to apply GTVH on internet memes peculiar to soccer discourse. The researcher uses a qualitative descriptive approach since it is the most suitable method for research that examines a situation as it exists in its current state (Williams 2007).

In terms of data collection, thirty-one memes were randomly collected from various accounts on X. X is a free social networking site where users post tweets that may include texts, photos, memes, videos, or links. Registered users can post, share, like, and reply to tweets on this microblogging service, which combines blogging and instant messaging. On the other hand, non-registered users can only read tweets. Using this social media platform enables individuals to follow business leaders, politicians, and celebrities, as well as to communicate with friends, and get new updates. Based on the elaboration above, the rationale for selecting X as a platform was that a survey⁽¹⁾ published in 2022 showed that its position as the 'king of memes' peaked in 2020.

It is worth mentioning that the language expressed by football fans within stadiums can occasionally be derogatory, offensive, provocative, and in severe instances, unlawful (Penn 2016). Accordingly, twelve memes were excluded from the data for violation of words and taboo expressions resulting in nineteen memes only (Appendix1). This proves in a way that

(1) <https://twitter.com/knownyourmeme/status/1564692945827205132?s=20>

although memes are meant to be humorous, they can be threatening and disrespectful to certain people or societies (Suryawanshi et al. 2020).

The current study involves a humor-based analysis of nineteen randomly selected samples of internet memes concerning Saudi Arabia's matches in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. An English translation of the examined memes is provided in the analysis alongside the Arabic original caption. Kozulyaev & Stepanove (2021) argue that the method of translating memes from one language to another should take into account important elements of a correct understanding, a metacognitive analysis, and specific meme translation techniques. All the nineteen memes were analysed but because of the limited time and place, only six memes are used as representatives of the whole data. Analysis of the six KR's will be presented in a table underneath each meme.

6. Data Analysis

This study adopts an interpretivism paradigm. According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), interpretivists frequently focus on people's subjective experiences, establishing a social reality through shared meanings and interactions. They further claim that meta-eye enables an interpretivist investigator to see beyond what may be readily apparent as well as empirical data to include subjective features such as personal views, feelings, standards, and other variables that are not easily identifiable or measurable. To that end, a qualitative descriptive analysis based on GTVH is provided in this section of six different kinds of memes, along with six figures to show how Saudi fans reacted and consequently created humorous memes in the three matches against Argentina, Poland, and Mexico.

6.1 Saudi Arabia vs. Argentina

The first match in group C was between Saudi Arabia and Argentina. Saudi Arabia defeated Argentina 2–1. The first half saw Lionel Messi, a world-famous Argentinian football star, scoring a penalty goal. However, Saudi Arabia dominated the second half. Saleh Al Shehri, a left-footed striker, scored a goal, followed by Salem Al Dawsari, a left winger, who scored an exceptional goal that put Saudi Arabia in the lead. Memes (1) and (2) below show how Saudi soccer fans reacted on social media after Saudi Arabia's historic win against Argentina. As demonstrated in Meme (1),⁽²⁾ an interesting insight into how football fans utilized memes to mock Messi, who is frequently referred to as 'the GOAT' an acronym that stands for 'the greatest of all time' after Argentina's 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia. The meme below features an image of a random Saudi man getting ready to roast a 'goat' over a fire while wearing a *thawb*, an ankle-length Arab white gown with long sleeves often worn by Saudi men. The symbolism in this meme is multifaceted and culturally specific. Saudi fans humorously took advantage of the word GOAT and connected it with what 'goat' represents in the Saudi culture. The 'goat' is connected to hospitality and generosity in Saudi culture. It is accustomed that Saudis serve roasted or cooked goat with rice for welcoming their guests. Therefore, the act of roasting the goat in this meme can be interpreted as a comical critique of Messi's performance in the match against Saudi Arabia. The match's context adds even more complexity to the meme. FIFA had anticipated that Argentina might win in that match, but despite these predictions, the Saudis

(2) This meme was originally created by an anonymous meme creator with English caption. Saudi fans on X modified it by adding an Arabic caption in addition to the English one.

came out on top. They are humorously suggesting that they are roasting the GOAT (Messi) in honor of their victory. The caption's use of language demonstrates an irony in this circumstance. When it comes to nicknames, Saudi players' nickname is the 'الصقور', *falcons*, whereas Messi is 'the GOAT'. A falcon is a predator in nature, and a goat may be considered its prey. As a result, the act of the 'Falcons' (Saudi Arabia) roasting 'the GOAT' (Messi) after their win might be seen symbolically as a predator triumphing over its victim. This adds a degree of irony to the meme through the wordplay of 'GOAT', as it is rarely often that a 'falcon' (Saudi Arabia) gets to roast a goat (Messi), especially one who is widely regarded as the greatest footballer of all time. The opposition here can be seen between the expected and the unexpected (Argentina's predicted win versus Saudi Arabia's winning), and between what is actual (the match changing aspects) and what is non-actual (the representation of Messi as a roasted goat).

Meme (1)



Meme (1) KR

Script Opposition (SO)	- Expected and unexpected - Actual and non-actual
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Sarcasm - Humor - Wordplay - Irony
Situation (SI)	- A random Saudi guy roasting a goat. - A goat
Target (TA)	- Lionel Messi
Narrative strategy (NS)	- Printed simple narrative (Declarative)
Language (LA)	- Saudi cultural referents (Falcons) - International referent (Messi) - A hashtag which refers to the current match back then (Saudi vs. Argentina) - Saudi dialect

In addition to this meme, Saudi fans went further in their creativity by editing an image of Messi and Ronaldo, two of the greatest players of all time who have won several awards and gained international recognition, playing chess in a posted LV advertisement.⁽³⁾ Meme's

(3) The original image is from an LV advertisement, yet Saudi fans adopted it and edited it by adding the face of Salem instead of Messi along with an Arabic caption.

creators have substituted Messi's image for that of Salem Al-Dawsari, the Saudi player who scored the winning goal in the match against Argentina. The caption for this modified image reads as 'The GOAT Salem,' indicating that Al-Dawsari is now on par with Ronaldo as one of the greatest players of all time. Al-Dawsari, while a famous player among Saudi fans, is not as globally recognized as Messi and Ronaldo. Understanding the pre-match context is needed to interrupt this meme correctly. Before the game, the Argentines were incredibly positive and confident about their winning to the point of asserting in the media that the match will be a practice for them due to having the GOAT Messi in their team. However and despite these predictions, Saudi Arabia won the match with Al-Dawsari scoring the second goal. Although GOAT is a title given to prominent footballers such as Messi, it was reassigned to Al-Dawsari by Saudi fans 'القوت سالم', *the GOAT Salem*, turning the initial confidence of Argentine fans into a source of sarcasm. Here the (SO), or element of surprise, is between the expected and the unexpected. While it is expected that Al-Dawsari would receive appreciation for his efforts, it is surprising that Messi and Ronaldo, two players who are regarded as internationals, are compared to him. Not that such a parallel is not possible in real life, but it was unexpected and amusing in the context of the meme. Together, these components produce a comical instance that challenges expectations and shows an exaggerated situation making the meme humorous and funny for viewers.

Meme (2)



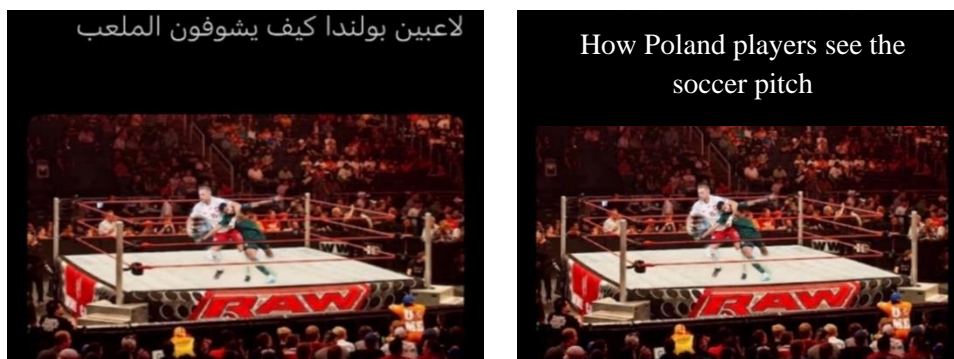
Meme (2) KR

Script Opposition (SO)	- Expected and unexpected
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Sarcasm - Humor - Exaggeration
Situation (SI)	- An LV advertisement featuring two soccer players (GOATS) playing chess.
Target (TA)	- Lionel Messi
Narrative strategy (NS)	Printed simple narrative (Declarative)
Language (LA)	- Soccer jargon. The acronym 'GOAT' has been borrowed from English and has been presented and written with the exact phonetic assimilation of the sounds in Arabic alphabets. The definite article 'ال', <i>the</i> , has been used to identify and assert him as 'the GOAT'. -Saudi dialect

6.2 Saudi Arabia vs. Poland

The second match between Saudi Arabia and Poland was on November 26, 2022. The Saudi national soccer team had defeated Argentina in a historic match the previous Tuesday. Still, they could not sustain their enthusiasm during the 90 minutes as Poland prevailed with two goals. After such a defeat, Saudi fans created memes on X to release their tension and express their concern about the Polish tough style of play. As meme (3) shows, in the aftermath of the FIFA World Cup 2022 encounter between Saudi Arabia and Poland, Saudi supporters raised worries about the Polish team's aggressive tactics. The image, captured from the match between Saudi Arabia and Poland, shows a Polish football player attempting to choke Saleh Alshehri who scored the opening goal for Saudi Arabia in the previous game. While this picture shows a tragic situation, it was posted with a humorous tone. It visually reflected some Saudi fans' complaints over the Polish team's aggressive playstyle. This meme was accompanied by amusing and snarky remarks by Saudi fans. One common reaction was, 'If we had won, we would be saying "get well soon" to the players instead of "congratulations"'. This statement may reflect the Saudi players' experiences after a physically exhausting match against Poland. It implies that if Saudi Arabia had won the match, their celebration would have been swamped by worries regarding the players' safety. The irony of this situation is quite interesting. In this scenario, the (SO) is between the possible and the impossible. A soccer game can be physically demanding, but it is thought to be impossible for it to transform into a wrestling scenario. Furthermore, instead of displaying their skills on the field, the players are represented in a Wrestling ring scene. This is an impossible situation for players to be in, and it is quite different from the norm since one would expect to see these players on a football field using their feet (possible), not in a wrestling ring using their hands (impossible). Exaggeration and juxtaposition are the logical methods employed in this meme. It is drawn between the actual football match and the meme's humorous representation. Furthermore, the phrase in the caption uses the phrase (Poland players) as a means to provide an exaggerated and hilarious representation of the situation. It also expresses the attitudes and views of a group of individuals (Saudi fans) toward this occurrence.

Meme (3)



Meme (3) KR

Script Opposition (SO)	- Possible and impossible
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Juxtaposition - Sarcasm - Irony

	-Exaggeration
Situation (SI)	- Soccer players fighting on a wrestling ring.
Target (TA)	- Poland soccer team
Narrative strategy (NS)	- Printed simple narrative (Declarative)
Language (LA)	- Soccer jargon - Saudi dialect

Meme (4) depicts the Poland coach giving instructions to one of his players before the footballer enters the pitch. This is a typical scene in soccer matches where coaches provide last-minute strategies and advice to their players. However, the context of this meme is influenced by some fans' perception that Poland employed a rough style of play against the Saudi team. The humor and sarcasm in this meme originated from the idea that the coach's strategy was to secure victory by injuring Saudi players. The caption of the meme reads, 'ما عليك من الكورة انت ، بس اضرب أي واحد قدامك', *Ignore the ball, just hit anyone who faces you!*, suggesting that the coach is instructing one of his players to target players on the Saudi team instead of the ball. This is, of course, an exaggeration and a humorous take on the perceived aggressive tactics of the Polish team. Adding to the humor is the player's expression in the image. He appears to be concentrating intensely as if he is trying his best to comply with the coach's instructions. The meme satirically implies that the coach's target was to injure the competing team's players rather than to play football. This may be interpreted as a criticism of the Polish team's harsh practices. The meme also depicts a conflict between two alternative situations. In this case, the contrast is between what is actual (the coach offering instructions and advice) and what is non-actual (the representation of the coach encouraging his player to cause harm to other players). Exaggeration is also employed here. It is noticeable from the caption which says that the coach's aim was to win by striking and hurting Saudi players and ignoring the ball. This adds a satirical aspect to the meme as it contrasts with the usual fair play ethic. The meme's language incorporates several Saudi colloquial terms with an instructive tone. Phrases like 'ما عليك', *ignore*, and 'اضرب أي واحد', *hit anyone*, are used, which are commonly heard in some coaches' speeches. Furthermore, the meme is intended to be relatable allowing viewers to put themselves in the coach's place.

Meme (4)



Meme (4) KR

Script Opposition (SO)	- Actual and non-actual
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Exaggeration - Sarcasm - Humor - Satire
Situation (SI)	- The Poland coach instructing a Polish player.

Target (TA)	- Polish coach and team
Narrative strategy (NS)	- Printed simple narrative (instructive)
Language (LA)	- Saudi dialect

6.3 Saudi Arabia vs. Mexico

The match against Mexico was the Saudi team’s last and most crucial game because a win was required to proceed to the round of 16. Mexico defeated Saudi Arabia 2–1 in this match. Despite their victory, the Mexican team was not able to advance because Poland took the second place in the group on the basis of goal differential. Once again, Saudi fans created amusing memes on X. As illustrated in meme (5), this meme presents an image of a relaxed individual, who is not the Mexican goalkeeper, casually consuming food on the football pitch. The caption humorously suggests that the only thing missing for the Mexican goalkeeper is a cup of tea, implying that he had little to do during his team’s match against the Saudi team. In Saudi culture, tea is often associated with improved and relaxed mood. Therefore, the reference to tea in this meme could be interpreted as suggesting that the Mexican goalkeeper was calm and relaxed during the match. However, this meme carries more than just surface humor. It subtly denotes the dynamics of the match itself. On the day of the game, the players were predominantly near the Saudi goal with most of the balls being played in the half-way line on the Saudi side. This resulted in minimal action on the Mexican side of the pitch, hence the depiction of the Mexican goalkeeper as having an easy day. As a result, this particular aspect of the match became a memorable feature for fans. It was humorously captured in this meme, which uses cultural references and situational irony to comment on the match. In this picture, there are two forms of (SO): the first is the normal vs. abnormal opposition, which derives from the meme's framework. It is normal in football matches to see one team dominate and possess the ball more than the other. However, it is abnormal to see a relaxed goalkeeper who does not contribute to the match at all. A contrast can also be observed between what is actual (the ball was mostly dominated by Mexico in the half-line of Saudi’s goal) and what is non-actual (the depiction of the goalkeeper casually eating and wearing casual clothes on the pitch). In addition, the creator of the meme employs juxtaposition and exaggeration. The calm appearance of the goalkeeper is contrasted with the intense game environment. Exaggeration is used to emphasize the goalkeeper’s lack of activity throughout the game. The meme’s language combines Saudi colloquial words like ‘ناقصه’, *what he is missing*, to capture viewers’ attention. It also mocks many Saudi players who rarely targeted the Mexican goal.

Meme (5)



Meme (5) KRrs

Script Opposition (SO)	- Actual and non-actual - Normal and abnormal
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Juxtaposition - Exaggeration - Satire - Humor - Irony
Situation (SI)	- A random Saudi guy relaxedly eating on the football field.
Target (TA)	- Saudi national team players
Narrative strategy (NS)	- Printed simple narrative (Declarative)
Language (LA)	- Saudi dialect - A hashtag (Saudi vs. Mexico)

Any soccer team will typically consist of one goalkeeper and ten players, each of whom plays diverse roles in the defending, midfield, and attacking areas. This explains the player's primary occupation as well as their zone of duty on the field. Goalkeepers are unique in the sense that they are the only players who do not play on the soccer field. However, according to Saudi fans, meme (6) displayed the picture of Mohammed Alowais, the Saudi goalkeeper, to play and occupy all positions. This perception arose from the belief that while all the Saudi players were physically present on the field, they were mentally absent. As a result, a meme was created to both thank Mohammed Alowais for his hard work on the day and to humorously critique the performances of the other Saudi players. Interestingly, some Saudi fans attributed their team's defeat in this match to injuries sustained by most of the players during their game with Poland. These injuries necessitated substitutions which some fans believe impacted the team's performance. The meme also carries a hidden message suggesting that all the players depended heavily on their goalkeeper. The script presents a contrast between what is actual (each player performing their specific role on the field) and what is non-actual (the image of the goalkeeper appearing in every position). Additionally, it highlights the possible (the goalkeeper's efforts in blocking the ball from entering the goal) and the impossible (a match with only one player performing all tasks). Exaggeration is evident in the depiction of Mohammed Alowais who is shown not only performing his role as a goalkeeper but also seemingly occupying every spot on the field. Furthermore, the meme also uses role reversal. This is depicted through the Saudi goalkeeper taking on all roles on the pitch which is a reversal of the typical roles in a soccer team. Typically, each player has a specific task and spot, but in this case, the list was edited to have only one player playing all sites. This role reversal contributes to the humour of the situation. Finally, the language used consists of clear and declarative sentences taking on the form of current news as well as soccer jargon (starting lineup) to add impact and attract soccer fans' attention.

Meme (6)



Meme (6) KRrs

Script Opposition (SO)	- Possible and impossible - Actual and non-actual
Logical mechanism (LM)	- Exaggeration - Juxtaposition - Satire - Humor
Situation (SI)	- Saudi Arabia lineup with the picture of the Saudi goalkeeper repeated 11 times to represent the number of Saudi players on the field.
Target (TA)	- Saudi national team players
Narrative strategy (NS)	- Printed simple narrative (Declarative)
Language (LA)	- Soccer jargon - Saudi dialect - A hashtag (Saudi Arabic vs. Mexico)

7. Results and Discussion

The study has three main objectives. First, it aims to assess whether GTVH six KRrs are applicable to the different methods and strategies used by Saudi fans to create humor through memes featuring the Saudi national soccer team's participation in the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The analysis revealed that all the six KRrs have been used in the construction of the nineteen memes. Script oppositions had a major effect on the whole meme because they were based on the interplay between the image in the meme and the accompanying caption. Script oppositions that have been used with different frequencies (listed from the highest in use until the lowest) are: Actual vs. non-actual, Possible vs. impossible, Normal vs. abnormal, Expected vs. unexpected, and Appearance vs. reality. Results show that Actual vs. non-actual and Possible vs. impossible were the most prominent types, and some memes even employed multiple script oppositions for added exaggeration, aligning with GTVH's view that humor often arises from contrasting themes within the script.

In the context of these memes, various elements were skilfully combined. Saudi meme creators incorporated famous images related to well-known national and international media figures such as singers, actors, players, coaches, activities, and soccer events. These settings ranged from soccer fields and wrestling rings to e-commerce platforms and familiar advertisements enhancing humor by creating connections between the image and the caption.

The target audience of these memes was clearly identifiable. They included worldwide soccer fans, FIFA, famous players, specific teams (Argentina, Poland, and Mexico), and Saudi referents and fans. The memes were designed to engage and amuse these particular groups while using various verbal humor techniques like irony, wordplay, exaggeration, coincidence, juxtaposition, sarcasm, humor, and satire according to the creator's intention.

Meme creators used a variety of written caption forms including declarative, instructive, threatening, and dialogue-based narratives that were based on their own intentions. They primarily used Saudi colloquial dialect in these captions that included soccer jargon, Saudi culture, and international and national referents. The dialect has been chosen due to its informal nature, aligning with the humorous and informal style of memes. Hashtags, a metadata tag on X, has been used to make the meme go viral to broad audience on X. Meme captions were found to be typically short and funny aligning with the short and concise structure of jokes. The aim behind this short structure is to keep things brief and humorous. Moreover, it has been found that Saudi meme creators frequently borrowed online memes and made changes as they become popular. They made new versions with different words or texts to images to fit current social and cultural situations. Accordingly, time, culture, and shared experiences (as 2022 World Cup) are vital in understanding these memes. In other words, these memes become tied to current events in order to be understood.

The interplay between the image and the surrounding context formed a framework that shaped the humorous discourse of soccer memes on social media. Also, this study aimed at checking the reason/s behind Saudi fans creating memes and posting them on X. Results revealed that Saudi soccer fans used memes as their tool to express different feelings upon their team's performance during the 2022 World Cup. After their victory over Argentina, they used humor and sarcasm to celebrate their success. However, after a loss to Poland, they created memes to vent their frustration and anger from the Polish tough play style using images and captions that emphasized exaggeration and sarcasm. Their final match against Mexico led to the use of satire, exaggeration, and sarcasm, especially directed towards Saudi players. These memes were created within the context of the 2022 World Cup and both creators and receivers of these memes shared a common experience interpreting the messages as satirical, humorous, sarcastic, or exaggerated depending on the situation of the meme.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the ways in which humor and memes were utilized by Saudi soccer fans during the 2022 FIFA World Cup. It highlights the diverse humor techniques and script oppositions employed by these fans which align with GTVH six KR's, to communicate their emotions, opinions, and reactions to their team's performance. Memes were used as a versatile medium through which Saudi fans could engage with national and international audiences to convey their sentiments humorously whether they were celebrating victories or expressing frustration in defeat. In the context of the World Cup, international and national player names, famous actors and signers, and tournament-related terms were humorously manipulated to form sarcasm, humor, satire, and exaggeration through memes. This apparently marked the meme humorous discourse in social media.

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Appendix 1: Memes' references on X

Figure Number	Online source
1.	https://x.com/d7mmey/status/1595033755932135424?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
2.	https://x.com/abadihakami25/status/1595319620692492288?s=12&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
3.	https://twitter.com/oo_99e/status/1596507393139085313?s=46&t=DfkO_QAWBAh43BUOmN-e3g
4.	https://x.com/yousifshm/status/1596608701557010432?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
5.	https://twitter.com/_0pwx/status/1598062489375485952?s=46&t=DfkO_QAWBAh43BUOmN-e3g
6.	https://x.com/azooz_altulaihi/status/1598056478694592514?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
7.	https://x.com/rogercopyout/status/1595105433743921152?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
8.	https://x.com/user16192941/status/1595054392738467841?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
9.	https://x.com/kau_context/status/1596486086313869312?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
10.	https://x.com/vz1_7/status/1596510315021479936?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
11.	https://x.com/msstol/status/1596565037749272576?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
12.	https://x.com/vz1_7/status/1598038724843036672?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
13.	https://x.com/coach_khaled0/status/1596493812410777601?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
14.	https://x.com/29llp/status/1598038992481620003?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
15.	https://x.com/world_error/status/1595104671760543745?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
16.	https://x.com/29llp/status/1597959271274098689?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
17.	https://x.com/kau_context/status/1595028524703907847?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
18.	https://x.com/ema_vidal16/status/1598060297704550400?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ
19.	https://twitter.com/rogercopyout/status/1595105729622556675?s=46&t=VL0hg6O_D3deVtd_7V-OSQ

الميمات الخاصة بالمنتخب السعودي الكروي في كأس العالم ٢٠٢٢: دراسة من وجهة نظر النظرية العامة للفكاهة اللفظية

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أستاذ اللغويات المساعد بقسم اللغات الحديثة وآدابها، و^٢طالبة الماجستير بقسم اللغات الحديثة وآدابها، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الملك عبد العزيز، جدة، المملكة العربية السعودية

المستخلص. تهدف هذه الدراسة النوعية الوصفية إلى تحليل الفكاهة اللفظية لتسعة عشر ميمات خاصة بالمنتخب الوطني السعودي الكروي خلال مشاركتهم في فيفا كأس العالم في قطر ٢٠٢٢. ونظراً لأن الدراسة تتبع (النظرية العامة للفكاهة اللفظية) الخاصة باتاردو وراسكن (١٩٩١) كمنهجية للبحث فإنها تهدف إلى التحقق مما إذا كانت مصادر المعرفة الست في النظرية تنطبق على الأساليب والاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي استخدمها المشجعون السعوديون في تشكيل هذه الميمات الفكاهية. وقد تم جمع العينات عشوائياً من عدة حسابات لمستخدمين على منصة اكس (تويتر سابقاً) لهاشتاقات تتعلق بمشاركة المنتخب الوطني السعودي الكروي. وتشير النتائج إلى أن كل الميمات التسعة عشر تكونت حول مصادر المعرفة الست المقترحة في هذه النظرية، وهي: التضاد النصي، والآلية المنطقية، والموقف، والهدف، واستراتيجية السرد، واللغة. وهذا بدوره يدعم وجهة نظر اتاردو (٢٠٠١) بأن جميع أنواع النصوص الفكاهية، الميمات في هذه الدراسة، تقع ضمن نطاق النظرية العامة للفكاهة اللفظية. وأما أنواع الفكاهة اللفظية التي استخدمت فقد كانت السخرية، والتلاعب بالألفاظ، والمبالغة، والمصادفة، والتجاوز، والتهكم، والفكاهة والهزاء. ويعتمد اختيارها على السياق المحيط ونية المستخدم مما يدعم وجهة نظر داينيل (٢٠٠٩). وقد اعتمد إنشاء هذه الميمات على الصور المتعلقة بشخصيات مشهورة محلياً وعالمياً في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مثل فنانيين وممثلين ولاعبين ومدربين وأحداث كروية مشهورة مكونةً منهجاً للخطاب الفكاهي الكروي الخاص بالميمات في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وقد وجد من خلال تحليل العينات ان الفكاهة تصدر من التفاعل ما بين التعارض النصي في صورة الميم والنص الموجود في التعليق المصاحب. وقد تبين أيضاً أن الميمات استخدمت للفكاهة في ثلاثة مواضع: (١) السخرية من اللاعبين العالميين المشاركين في مباراة السعودية والبرازيل للتعبير عن فرحتهم بفوز فريقهم السعودي، و(٢) التنفيس الهزلي عن مشاعر الضغط النفسي والقلق جراء هزيمة فريقهم امام بولندا، و(٣) هزاء فريقهم السعودي بعد خسارتهم امام المكسيك. وقد وجد أيضاً أن الميمات تحتوي على معنى (غير حرفي) مخفي يعتمد على الثقافة والوقت والتجربة الشخصية للمتلقي، والذي يدعم وجهة نظر اتاردو (٢٠٠٣، ٢٠١٤) ولستاري (٢٠١٨) وببيسكو وآخرين (٢٠٢٠).

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفكاهة اللفظية، عناصر المعرفة، كأس العالم ٢٠٢٢، ميمات الإنترنت، المنتخب الوطني السعودي الكروي، الأرجنتيين، بولندا، المكسيك.