The Humourous Effect of the Inappropriateness of Speech Acts in the Sitcom of *Still Standing*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates selected scenes extracted from the American sitcom of 'Still Standing'. It answers the questions: what is the most common type of speech acts used in the sitcom of 'Still Standing', how is the inappropriateness of a speech act in relation to its context causes humour?, and what is the most common technique of using humour in interaction used in the selected sitcom. This study explores how humour is generated because of the inappropriateness of speech acts in relation to their contexts. The study focuses on the aspects of the humorous language, pragmatic context of humour, and speech act theory. Humour is considered in this study as resulting from the inappropriateness of speech acts in relation to their contexts. The study tries to find out how humour is generated in some selected scenes. The findings of the study provide an outline of the functions of humour in the American sitcom of 'Still Standing'.

Keywords: Humorous Language, Speech Acts, Context, Topical Continuity, Self-Revelation.

1. Introduction

In every humorous scene, there are at least two interlocutors, i.e. a speaker and a listener. The latter has to know the kind of the speech act of any given utterance, in order to comprehend the intended meaning of the speaker. The criteria which have to be satisfied in order for a speech act to be successful are known as felicity conditions. The inappropriateness of the felicity conditions would sometimes lead to comic scenes, jokes, sarcasm, etc. (Crystal, 2003: 179, 247).

Speakers use certain kinds of speech acts to show the illocutionary force of their intended meaning but if those speech acts are used inappropriately, i.e. the felicity conditions of them are infelicitous; there might be a sense of humour. For example:

(1) I hereby sentence you husband and wife.

In the example above, if the sentence is uttered by a child not by a judge, it will be humorous because the felicity conditions are infelicitous with the speech act of declaration once it is uttered by a child.

As far as the researcher could investigate, studying the inappropriateness of speech acts in the contexts of the American sitcom of 'Still Standing' has not been studied before. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap through raising the following questions:

1. What is the most common type of speech acts used in the sitcom of 'Still Standing'?
2. How is the inappropriateness of a speech act in relation to its context causes humour?
3. What is the most common technique of using humour in interaction used in the sitcom of 'Still Standing'?

2. Aspects of Humorous Language

Humorous language differs from ordinary spoken language in its creation of humorous incongruities. The breaking of the rules of standard language could be used to generate humorous incongruity through the use of verbal techniques such as: double meaning, word play, condensations of meanings, and discrepancies between situational context and

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retort. Every one of these techniques contributes in the creation of humorous incongruities (Salman, 2001: 40).

Phonologically, humorous incongruities depend on breaking phonological rules such as tongue twisters, distorted articulations, immature articulations (Shultz and Robillard, 1980: 69).

Morphologically, humorous incongruities are based on breaking morphological rules. There are four different kinds of morphological rules in this concern such as: substitution, subtraction, addition, and reversal. The morphological subtraction, for example, will be humorous, if someone calls 'John' by shouting 'ohn' (Ibid: 75).

Syntactically, it seems that there is no humour that is based on syntactic incongruities. In other words, English depends on invariable word order, i.e. subjects precede verbs, and verbs precede objects etc. Moreover, there are also different word orders that occur in passives and questions but their construction is strictly governed by different transformational rules (Ibid: 81).

Semantically, humour is produced through the absence of word meaning, the use of inappropriate names, and the violation of selection restrictions. (Gardner, 1963: 191).

Pragmatically, the flouting and violation of pragmatic rules seem to be a rich source of humorous incongruity. An interlocutor may appear to ignore intentionality in the essential context making instead a literal interpretation of the utterance (Gardner, 1963: 83). For example:

(2) -Can you hand me the salt?

-yes

Actually, humorous speech is different from non-humorous speech in many aspects. It seems to be more non-standard, less precise in enunciation, more fluent and varied in both pitch and tempo than in serious topic. Therefore, when people move from a serious to a humorous topic, they change their style of speaking (Giles et al, 1976: 149).

3. The Pragmatic Context of Humour

The humorous context must appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions. It is obvious that humour can be hilarious for some people and rude for others. If people get angry once they listen to a humorous utterance, this means that they respond to the insult and rudeness of the given humorous utterance negatively. However, those who have no personal interest in the given humorous utterance, they respond to the insult and rudeness of the given humorous utterance positively (Taflinger 1996 cited in web source: 1).

The humorous context must be mechanical. Laughable elements consist of a mechanical inelasticity, just where one would expect adaptability and flexibility. It is humorous when a person acts in a manner that is inappropriate to a stimulus or situation, as in any slapstick comedy routine. It must be inherently human, with the capability of reminding us of humanity. The audience may laugh at the antics of an animal just because they remind them of humanity (ibid.).

In the humorous context, there must be a set of established social norms with which the observer is familiar. The familiarity of these social norms is either through everyday life or through the author providing it in expository material, or both. It is worth mentioning that one major point that becomes apparent when one examines comedy is that it is based on incongruity, i.e. the unexpected with the expected, the unusual with the usual, and the misfit in what has been established as a social norm (Taflinger 1996 cited in web source: 1).

Furthermore, in the humorous context, the actions performed and the spoken dialogue of the situation are commonly inconsistent or unsuitable to the social norms. For comedy to work there must be an established set of cultural, human and social norms, mores, idioms, idiosyncrasies, and terminologies against which incongruity may be found. The humorous context must be perceived by the observer as harmless or painless to the interlocutors.The comic action is perceived by the audience as causing the interlocutors no actual harm: their physical, mental, and emotional well-being may be stretched, distorted, or crushed, but they recover quickly and by the end of the performance they are once again in their original state (Ibid.).

4. Techniques of Using Humour in Interaction

People may use humour for several purposes. It can be used as a collaborative contribution to an existing topic. They may also use it as an introduction to a change of topic or a response to a specific elicitation. Moreover, humour can be used as a response to an incidental environmental event. These humorous purposes are labeled as topical continuity, topic change, and incidental responses (Norrick et al, 2009: 6).

4.1 Humour as a Topical Continuity

Topical continuity is considered as the most common context for introducing self-directed humour, it is usually happening in cohesive informal conversations. It is found in four contexts: humorous rounds, troubles talk, complex narration, and self-revelation as entertainment. But the extreme case of topical continuity is rounds that share topic and viewpoint through the turns of various speakers (Norrick et al, 2009: 7).

Humorous rounds usually occur in larger groups, they involve the maintenance of a topic and a stance. The most familiar technique used in humorous rounds is self-disclosure. However, troubles talk is considered as a source of laughter by both the speaker and the listener. Although troubles do not begin in humour. In addition to these two contexts there is another one which is concerned with the technique of using humour in complex narration, it is not necessary to be serious all the time in every serious work or conversation. Sometimes humour is used to get people to pay attention to a pressing issue or to see the absurdity of the status quo.

The last type of context is concerned with the technique of self-revelation as entertainment which requires a self-disclosure exchange about specific topic which becomes a kind of entertainment narrative modeled on extra ideas about the same topic. More than one participant is required in such contexts (Ibid: 11).

4.2 Humour as a Means for Changing Topic

The context of using humour to change a topic is less frequent than the context of topical continuity. Topics are changed in three types of situations: mitigations, elicited self-disclosures, and elicited boasts. Humour may occur after the introduction of conversation, i.e. the topic is introduced by the mitigator en route to a request or apology, and can include current or recent impositions or planned ones. Planning future actions is a possible context for mitigating requests by self-directed humour(Ibid: 7).

The topic can be changed by the technique of eliciting humorous self-disclosures. The subject-matter of this technique is that the topic of self-disclosure is elicited by conversational partners, rather than by the speaker or the discloser (Ibid: 15).

Furthermore, the topic can be changed by the technique of elicited boasts which is encountered when the elicited information are not presented as troubles but they are presented as boasts, i.e. there is no sense that the self-disclosure is embarrassing or negative (Norrick et al, 2009:: 17).

4.3 The Use of Humour in Incidental Responses

Teasing is relatively infrequent form of priming for self-disclosing humour; it can be a stimulus for the disclosure of the victim. Thus, it is likely that most friendly teasing receives a retort. Incidental response is one of the humorous contexts that fell into two categories: Response to contextual reminders and responses to teasing. Any topic can be changed through contextual stimuli. There is something, which is considered to be as frequent source of joking, in the immediate context that creates a topic for talk. The technique of using humour as a response to teases, on the other hand, is concerned with those cases of humorous self-disclosures which occur when an accidental gaffe by one participant led to teasing by another. The mood of the interaction, in teasing between friends, is typically already witty, and there is an expectation that participants will make funny criticism of each other. In the contexts of teasing, the retort can either be a counter-tease or accepting of the premise of the teaser. According to this technique, self-directed humour is seen in the acceptance of the premise of the teaser. In such cases, the disparagement is started by the partner as friendly teasing humour with a laugh (Ibid: 23).

5. Speech Acts and Humour

Generally speaking, speech acts are divided into two kinds, i.e. direct or primary and indirect. Needless to say that direct speech acts are distinguished through their syntactic construction (Levinson, 1983:263).

There are three basic types of direct speech acts, and they correspond to three special syntactic constructions, i.e. declarative, interrogative, and imperative constructions. So that, the primary speech act of assertion corresponds to declarative sentences such as: 'John bought a new car', the primary speech act of questioning corresponds to interrogative sentences such as: 'Did John buy a new car?' and the primary speech act of orders and requests corresponds to imperative sentences such as: 'Buy a new car!' (Levinson, 1983:263).

Indirect speech acts are considered as those utterances whose linguistic form does not directly reflect the communicative purpose, as when 'I am feeling thirsty' functions as a request for someone to bring you something to drink (Crystal, 1985: 175).

Allan (1986:238) classifies indirect illocutionary acts into interpersonal acts and declarative acts. The former includes speech acts such as: constatives, predicatives, commissives, acknowledge ments, directives and authoritatives. However, the latter includes effectives and verdicatives. Moreover, Levinson (1983:264) claims that a sentence simply has an inferred indirect force, once it does not have explicit performatives or one of the three major sentence types, namely the declarative, interrogative, and imperative constructions.

It is noteworthy that most peoples' usages are indirect. For instance, it is possible to construct an indefinitely long list of ways of indirect requesting an addressee to bring the book other than asking for it directly through the use of the interrogative construction by means of explicit performative verbs. Consider the following sentences:

(3) "-I want you to bring me the book..

-Won't you bring me the book?

-You ought to bring the book." (Fowler, 1986: 105).

All the sentences in (3) above are likely to be taken as indirect speech acts. It is possible that an order may be successfully communicated by a statement like:

(4) " -The book is close to the fire!" (Fowler, 1986: 105).

Thus, there is no direct, predictable link between a specific type of linguistic construction and a specific speech act.

Searle (1975: 73-5) calls the indirect use of speech acts as the 'non-literal' use. He believes that there are two indirect speech acts available to the listener, i.e. the literal act which is backgrounded or secondary and the non-literal act which is primary. According to him understanding indirect speech acts requires a combination of the knowledge of three elements to support a chain of inference. These elements include:

i.   The felicity conditions of direct speech acts.

ii.   The context of the utterance, and

iii.   The principles of conversational cooperation like Grice's maxims.

Moreover, Searle (1979:60) considers indirect speech acts as cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly through the performing of another. In other words, an indirect speech act is used as a means of performing a direct speech act. Indirect speech acts are commonly used with humour, consider the following humorous situation:

(5)"Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps, "My friend is dead! What can I do?" The operator says "Calm down. I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead. "There is a silence, then a gun shot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says "OK, now what?" (Web source: 2).

In the example above, the researcher finds that the indirect speech act of killing can be inferred from the guy's final reply "ok, now what?". In other words, one of the hunters has killed his collapsed colleague in order to get rid of the boring situation of keep waiting calmly for the operator's help and this behavior makes it funny.

The theory which analyzes the role of utterances in relation to the behavior of speaker and listener in interpersonal communication is referred to as speech act theory. Speech act is widely used in linguistics nowadays, it is a term

suggested by Austin (1962). It is a communicative activity that is concerned with the intentions of speakers during speaking, i.e. the illocutionary force of their utterances.Speech act or linguistic act is a term used to refer to those acts which are performed with expressions whether they are spoken, written, or there in one's mind. It is interested in the intentional meaningful act which is performed with an expression or expressions. Linguistic acts are performed if both speakers\writers and listeners\readers understand each other (Austin, 1962:60).

There are two levels of humour. The first is the level of the joke as being told in a situation for certain people who have their own individual beliefs and values. The second is the level which involves what the joke teller is trying to do in telling the joke. Thus, it is necessary to know the kind of language-game that is involved in this concern (Web source: 3).

Koller (1988:18) claims that humour can be used for different purposes. It is worth mentioning that these purposes or uses of humour are achieved by means of speech acts. The most common uses of humour are as follows:

1. It can be used for accepting people's mistakes.
2. It can be used for attacking existing standards and values.
3. It can be used for avoiding conflict.
4. It can be used for balancing power.
5. It can be used for defensing against attack.
6. It can be used for f demonstrating familiarity.
7. It can be used for the purpose of entertainment.
8. It can be used for expressing hostility.
9. It can be used for getting attention.
10. It can be used for keeping the conversation going.
11. It can be used for moving deep emotions.
12. It can be used for thinking critically.
13. It can be used for provoking thought.
14. It can be used for reducing anxieties.
15. It can be used for reducing hostility.
16. It can be used for reducing or undermining stereotypes.
17. It can be used for relieving from stress and strain.
18. It can be used for replacing anger.
19. It can be used for securing group membership.
20. It can be used for self-effacement.
21. It can be used for showing one's abilities.
22. It can be used for social bonding.
23. It can be used for social control.
24. It can be used for social correctness.
25. It can be used for soothing people.
26. It can be used for surviving.
27. It can be used for symbolizing close ties.
28. It can be used for therapy or catharsis.
29. It can be used for turning negative emotions to positive ones.
30. It can be used for upholding honesty over shame.
31. It can be used for persuading etc.

The intended meaning of the above mentioned uses of humour can be determined by the context of situation.

Humour can be used as a defense mechanism. It involves the apparent contradiction of saying the unacceptable or expressing a dislike in an acceptable way. People laugh at what they disapprove-off because it is put in a humorous or approved-off way. By humour, people say something good about what is bad. Thus, it might allow people to say the unacceptable things that they would like to say (Koller, 1988:18).

The meaning of someone's linguistic act is his intention for the act, i.e. a linguistic act is a meaningful intentional act. Linguistic acts are considered intentional acts performed by language users. An intentional act can be characterized by the speaker's intention for the act. Speakers usually realize the intentions for their acts but they are not always successful. They are not always meaningful those words which are used to perform linguistic acts. Words are conventionally associated with more than one type of act. The intentions of language users determine which particular type of act they perform. Sometimes, speakers use the wrong word in performing a linguistic act by a slip of the tongue or carelessness. They still perform the kind of act they intend, but the expressions they use will probably mislead their audience. Therefore, it is linguistic acts rather than expressions which are meaningful (Ibid.).

Speech act is a genuine piece of language use; it is supposed to have application whenever there is an action. In all actions that are communicative uses of language, illocution is the crux. In other words, there is a speech action if, and only if, something illocutionary is done in using words of some language. For any illocutionary act to be communicative, there are two steps required. These are the intention-successfulness and the purpose-successfulness. The former is concerned with the illocutionary act, and the latter is concerned with the consequences (Hornsby, 1994:199).

The first step is the intentional-successfulness which means that the speaker has a particular illocutionary intention, and this intention is carried out, i.e. the illocutionary act is actually performed by the execution of the act of language, and this happens according to certain constraints which the illocutionary act imposes on the meaning of the utterance. These constraints are called conditions. They include readability condition, preparatory condition, willingness condition, sincerity condition, and good or bad condition (Ibid.).

The purpose- successfulness is the second step, according to this step if a speaker accomplishes the illocutionary act of an assertion by realizing the following sentence: - 'the boy is smart'. However, the listener may change his knowledge in a way that he knows that the speaker wants him to know that the boy is smart. The listener might not have changed his epistemic set with respect to this fact, for several reasons such as: because S\he already knew about this fact. In this case the purpose of the speaker with his\her illocutionary act of assertion is not realized. However, only in the cases where purpose is realized, there will be purpose-successfulness illocutionary act which is also called perlocutionary act. Therefore, a perlocutionary act is an act of which the

conditions of success are given in terms of purposes of the speaker with respect to some change that is brought about in the listener as a consequence of the illocutionary act. In other words, whether the listener follows an advice and acts upon it is beyond the conventional norms of communicative interaction. Thus, perlocutionary effects are considered to be outside the domain of a linguistic theory of pragmatics (Ibid.).

5.1 Components of Speech Acts

Austin (1962 cited in Fasold, 2006: 162) asserts that people use language to perform a kind of action. He called these actions as speech acts. Moreover, he defines speech acts as those actions which are performed in saying something. He claims that the utterance of any sentence in a real speech situation constitutes three kinds of acts, i.e. locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

The locutionary act refers to the utterance of a sentence with a particular meaning, the illocutionary act refers to the act of asking, answering, promising, etc. in uttering a sentence, and the perlocutionary act refers to the often intentional production of certain effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the addressee in uttering a sentence (Ibid.).

Locutionary act is subdivided into three components: phonetic, i.e. phonological; phatic, i.e. syntactic, and rhetic, i.e. meaningful (Austin, 1962:92). Once any given sentence is spoken with certain prosody, the locution will be

recognized. For instance, if the sentence ' the prime minister is an old woman' is spoken with certain prosody. Its locution will have at least two senses, i.e. either the chief minister within the national parliament is a woman of advanced years, or the chief minister within the parliament is a man who complains too much and is over-concerned with trivia. So in order to decide which of these senses of the locution the speaker is using, one needs to know the speaker's denotational act. Sometimes, it is possible that we can find two speakers utter the same locution in two different utterance acts. Yet, they perform different denotational acts. In performing a denotational act, the speaker uses constituents of a sentence to refer to objects in the world which are part of the context, and he uses other constituents to say something about them, i.e. to predict some properly act, event, etc. of them. It can be inferred that there is a hierarchy among the acts of speech. In other words, perlocutionary acts presuppose illocutionary acts which presuppose denotational acts which presuppose locutionary acts which presuppose utterance acts (Allan, 1986:178).

5.2 Classifications of Speech acts

Speech acts are indispensable in our everyday interaction especially the humorous interaction, in the next two subsections; they are going to be clarified comprehensively.

5.2.1 Austin's Classification of Speech acts

Austin (1962:150-51) presents a five-way taxonomy of illocutionary acts. They are as follows:

1- Verdictives

verdictives are verbs which refer to the giving of verdict as the name implies by a jury or umpire. It is essentially giving a finding to something i.e. fact or value. Examples of verdictives are 'estimate', 'blame', 'assess', 'value', 'diagnose', 'analyze' etc. as in:

- The judge acquits the prisoner.

2- Exercitives

Exercitive acts refer to the exercising of powers, rights or influences, such as 'warn', 'dismiss', 'appoint', 'order', 'command', 'proclaim', 'urge', 'claim', 'advice', 'sentence' etc., for example:

- I warn you of driving so fast.

3- Commissives

Commissives are the acts whose point is to commit the addressor to a course of action, such as 'promise', 'plan', 'swear', 'contract', 'undertake', 'adopt', 'contemplate', 'guarantee', 'espouse', 'consent', 'oppose', 'vow' and 'bet' as in: - We plan to travel by car.

4- Behabitives

Behabitives perform an action with attitudes and social behaviour, verbs like 'congratulate', 'compliment', 'welcome', 'apologize'; statements like 'I'm sorry' and expressions of approval like 'Thank you' are all examples of behabitives. Such as:

- Thank you for providing me with food.

5- Expositives

Austin (1962:152) asserts that this class of verbs is difficult to define. Such verbs keep discussion and argument going by providing different kinds of clarification, verbs like 'ask', 'assume', 'concede', 'hypothesize', 'remark', 'expect' etc. For instance:

-I concede that I am guilty.

5.2.2 Searle's Classifications of Speech Acts

Searle (1975: 2, 1979: 17,) states that there is an endless number of illocutionary acts. There are, for instance : 'assertions', 'requests', 'commands', 'warnings', 'promises', 'offers', 'apologies', 'thanks', 'denials', 'appointments', 'baptizing', 'threatening', and so on. He observes that the differences in the illocutionary acts are according to the differences of illocutionary verbs. Searle (1969:37) claims that humour can be created by deviation for instance: 'hooks

made of steel hold fish, hooks made of butter do not'. So that he presents five macro- classes of speech acts but only four of them contain humour. They are as follows:

1. Assertives (Representatives)

Assertive or representative speech acts are used to describe some state of affairs, they take the form of declarative sentences (Crystal, 1997:107). The illocutionary force of representatives is to commit the addressee to the truth of the proposition, i.e. the unit of meaning that identifies the subject matter of a statement. They are used to present the proposition as representing a state of affairs in the world. They have a word-to-word direction of fit. In other words, the addressor fits his\her words to the world in order to express a belief through the established proposition. These speech acts include verbs such as 'assert', 'affirm', 'conclude', etc. to indicate what the addressor believes to be the case or not (Ibid.).

2. Directives

Directive speech acts have the illocutionary force of directing the addressee towards doing or not doing something; therefore, they designate a world-to-words direction of fit. The addressor wishes or wants the addressee to do (or not to do) something. Directives include verbs such as: 'ask', 'order', 'request', 'demand', 'advise', 'warn', etc. Directives cannot be true or false but they can be obeyed or disobeyed. **3.Commissives**

Commissive speech acts are concerned with some future act. In other words, the speaker is committed to some future course of action. The direction of fit of commissives is always world-to-word and the expressed sincerity condition is always the speaker's intention to do something. They cannot be true or false, but they can be carried out, kept or broken. Commissives include verbs such as: promise, vow, commit, threaten, pledge, etc.

4. Expressives

Expressive speech act is used to express the psychological state of the speaker such as: pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes etc. they have no direction of fit in which a wide range of feelings and attitudes can be expressed through the propositional content. They comprise verbs such as apologize, thank, congratulate, welcome, condole etc.

5. Declaratives

Declarative speech acts change the world via their utterance. There is no psychological state expressed by declaration. Verbs denoting declarations are: declare, name, appoint, nominate, quit, etc. Declarations do not contain humour as they are usually seriously uttered. They have both a word-to-world and a world-to-words direction of fit, for this reason, they change the world through their declaration. For instance,

'we named the new-born infant John' (Searle, 1998: 58).

Searle (1979 cited in Hussein, 2005:64) criticizes the overlapping criteria in Austin's classification of illocutionary acts. It does not show the difference between speech act verbs and speech acts. Moreover, Austin ignores the fact that the existence and non-existence of each of them does not necessarily require the existence or non-existence of the other. Searle also notes that there is a great deal of overlap from one category to another and a great deal of heterogeneity within some of the categories. In other words, some verbs can be found in more than one category. For example: the verb 'describe' is placed according to Austin's taxonomy into both verdictives and expositives. Similarly, some categories contain verbs that do not satisfy the definition of the category itself. For example: the verb 'nominate', 'appoint', and 'excommunicate' do not designate the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action.

Furthermore, Austin's claim that there is an explicit performative verb, such as 'to sentence', 'to baptize', 'to name' and so on, corresponding to every illocutionary act seems to be defective and unconvincing, for two reasons. First, there are a lot of speech acts in language that are not expressed by the use of the performative verbs, such as 'out', 'Hush', etc. Second, this claim motivates

6. Data Analysis

This section is intended to examine selected extracts derived from season1\ episodes1,2 and season2\ episode1 of

the American Sitcom of 'Still Standing' (Web source: 4, 5,6). The analysis is going to be based on specific steps; first, identifying the speech acts used in the selected scene according to Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts; second, investigating how humour is generated because of the inappropriateness of speech acts in relation to their contexts; and the last step is identifying the type of interaction used in the humorous situation.

6.1 Scene One

Terrence: let's gather, I hope everybody enjoy reading 'water in the shadows' who would like to start?

Judy: I've some thoughts.

Bell: me too, hey hey I didn't know we were allowed to write stuff down that's cheating.

Terrence: well (smiling) that's not really a competition.

Bell: No but if it was she'd be cheating right? (Audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Terrence, Judy, and Bell in the book club. Terrence uses directive speech acts by saying 'let's gather' and 'who would like to start?' to direct both of Bell and Judy to gather and to start reading. However, Judy uses expressive speech act by saying 'I've some thoughts' to express her thoughts. Bell also uses expressive speech act by saying 'me too, hey hey I didn't know we were allowed to write stuff down' and assertive speech act by saying 'that's cheating'. Terrence uses assertive speech act by saying 'well that's not really a competition'. Bell once again uses expressive speech act by saying 'no but if it was she'd be cheating right?' which is used by Bell to express his feelings and making fun on his wife (Judy) and this is asserted by the laughter of the audience.

Bell's expressive speech act generates humour because it is inappropriate to the context in which it is used. In other words, Bell should not accuse his wife to be cheater in front of Terrence as long as this threatens the positive face of Judy. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk because Bell objects the idea that Judy writes her notes down.

6.2 Scene Two

Bell: I maybe a complete idiot but what the hell is that supposed to mean.

Judy: you've got your thing Bell; you know you're the wild one, the life for the party, the guy who makes funny faces with his belly (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Bell and Judy about the former's behaviour.The first interlocutor uses assertive speech act by saying 'I maybe a complete idiot' to commit the addressee to the truth of the proposition, i.e. the unit of meaning that identify the subject matter of a statement. He also uses directive speech act by saying 'what the hell is that supposed to mean' to direct Judy to answer his question. The second interlocutor uses assertive speech acts by saying 'you've got your thing Bell; you know you're the wild one, the life for the party, the guy who makes funny faces with his belly' to commit the addressee to the truth of the proposition, i.e. the unit of meaning that identify the subject matter of a statement.

Humour is generated because of Judy's assertive speech act once she said 'the guy who makes funny faces with his belly', it is inappropriate to its context. It indicates that Bell has a funny posture because of his big belly which arouse the laughter of others. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk in which Bell was angry.

6.3 Scene Three

Lauren: have you guys seen Jimmy Hatcher, he's gotten cuter this year.

Jessica: he used to think I was hot last year but that was before he got hot. Do you still think he will think I'm hot?

Judy: oh trust me girls hot comes and goes but if you find one who knows how to use a napkin, chain him down (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Lauren, Jessica, and Judy about Jimmy Hatcher. Lauren uses directive speech act by saying 'have you guys seen Jimmy Hatcher?' to direct the addressees toward answering her question. She also uses assertive speech act by saying 'he's gotten cuter this year' to commit the addressees to the truth of the proposition,

i.e. the unit of meaning that identifies the subject matter of a statement. Jessica also uses both of the assertive speech act by saying ' he used to think I was hot last year but that was before he got hot' and the directive speech act by asking the question ' Do you still think he will think I'm hot?' for the same reasons. Furthermore, Judy uses the assertive speech act by saying 'oh trust me girls hot comes and goes' to commit both of Lauren and Jessica to the truth of the proposition that hot comes and goes. She also uses directive speech act by saying ' but if you find one who knows how to use a napkin, chain him down' to direct the girls to marry the one who knows how to use a napkin regardless whether he's handsome or not.

Humour is generated because of Judy's directive speech act once she said ' but if you find one who knows how to use a napkin, chain him down', it is inappropriate to its context. Judy indicates that love and feelings are not important for the relationship between husband and wife, according to her, the most important thing for the girl to have a happy marital life is to marry the one who knows how to use a napkin and this

arouses the laughter of the audience. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of self-revelation as entertainment.

6.4 Scene Four

Lauren: Mom can't you do the laundry tomorrow?

Judy: Then in the morning who's gonna be screaming for cleaning underpants (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Lauren and Judy about doing the laundry. Lauren uses directive speech act by saying 'Mom can't you do the laundry tomorrow?' to direct her mother toward answering her question. However, Judy uses the assertive speech act by saying ' Then in the morning who's gonna be screaming for cleaning underpants' to commit her daughter to the truth of the proposition that she screams for cleaning underpants daily in the morning.

Humour is generated because of Judy's assertive speech act once she said 'Then in the morning who's gonna be screaming for cleaning underpants ', it is inappropriate to its context. Judy threatens the positive face of her daughter by describing her as screaming for cleaning underpants and this arouses the laughter of the audience. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk because Lauren was asking her mother to delay the laundry but her mother rejects.

6.5 Scene Five

Judy: what are you doing?

Bell: The battery in the remote dead.

Judy: So you are taking the one on the smoke alarm in your daughter's room? (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Judy and Bell about changing the battery of the remote. Judy uses directive speech act by saying ' what are you doing?' to direct Bell to answer her question. Bell uses the assertive speech act by saying 'The battery in the remote dead' to commit Judy to the truth of the proposition that the battery in the remote is dead. However, the directive speech act is used once again by Judy when she said 'So you are taking the one on the smoke alarm in your daughter's room?'to direct Bell to answer her question.

Humour is generated because of Judy's directive speech act once she said ' So you are taking the one on the smoke alarm in your daughter's room?',it is inappropriate to its context as Judy implicates that her husband is careless and this arouses the laughter of the audience. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk because Bell was trying to take the battery of the smoke alarm but hiswife rejects.

6.6 Scene Six

Judy: lately Lauren has been such a pain; I can't get her to do anything that is fine for her.

Linda: oh maybe that's the problem sounds like someone's talking at their child when perhaps they should be talking with their child.

Judy: yeah and I guess you would know because your imaginary children are so well behaved (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Judy and Linda about Lauren's behaviours. Judy uses assertive speech act by saying 'lately Lauren has been such a pain; I can't get her to do anything that is fine for her' to commit Linda to the

truth of the proposition that Lauren has been such a pain that Judy cannot get her to do anything that is fine for her. Linda uses the expressive speech act by saying 'oh maybe that's the problem sounds like someone's talking at their child when perhaps they should be talking with their child' to express her psychological state concerning the relationship between Judy and her daughter. However, Judy uses the expressive speech act by saying 'yeah and I guess you would know because your imaginary children are so well behaved' to express her sarcasm about Linda because the latter does not have children.

Humour is generated because of Judy's expressive speech act once she said 'yeah and I guess you would know because your imaginary children are so well behaved', it is inappropriate to its context as Judy implicates that Linda is only philosophize the matters and this arouses the laughter of the audience. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk because was complaining from her daughter and she described her as a pain that she cannot get her to do anything that is fine for her.

6.7 Scene Seven

Linda: I happen to be taking a night class in psychology and we are studying teens right now.

Judy: well let me see, do you sometime heat the food and they turn on you? (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Linda and Judy about psychology class. Linda uses assertive speech act by saying 'I happen to be taking a night class in psychology and we are studying teens right now' to commit Judy to the truth of the proposition that she is well experienced with psychology and teens. Judy uses the commisive speech act by saying 'well let me see' which is concerned with future act and she also uses the directive speech act by saying 'do you sometime heat the food and they turn on you?' to direct Linda toward answering her question.

Humour is generated because of Judy's directive speech act once she said 'do you sometime heat the food and they turn on you?', it is inappropriate to its context as Judy implicates that Linda is only philosophize the matters and she is not factual because she has not experienced that thing that Judy knows about her teenagers and this arouses the laughter of the audience. In other words, Judy threatens the positive face of Linda. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of self-revelation because Linda pretends that she is more experienced than Judy concerning teenagers and Judy confronts her that she knows nothing about teenagers when they are hungry.

6.8 Scene Eight

Linda: Psychology class suggests that you sit down, you just calmly work out a deal, and they got something they want, very simple.

Judy: Well, I like that, let's give it a try. Lauren, come down here, thanks for the advice Linda.

Lauren: What?

Judy: Have you started your homework?

Lauren: No

Judy: Oh well good your aunt Linda has been taking a psychology class and she suggested that I negotiate with you. So here is the deal, you can either go do your homework or you could sit and listen to her talk about her class.

Lauren: Homework (running upstairs) (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Linda, Judy and Lauren. Linda uses directive speech act by saying ' Psychology class suggests that you sit down, you just calmly work out a deal, and they got something they want, very simple' to direct Judy about psychology class. Judy uses the assertive speech act by saying ' Well, I like that', she also uses the directive speech act by saying ' let's give it a try. Lauren, come down here' to direct Linda to give it a try and to direct Lauren to come down. Furthermore, Judy uses the expressive speech act by saying ' thanks for the advice Linda' to express her gratitude to Linda. The directive speech acts are used by Lauren once she asked 'What?' and by Judy once she asked ' Have you started your homework?' to direct each other toward answering the questions. Then, Lauren uses the assertive speech act by saying 'No'. Moreover, the assertive speech act is used by Judy once she said ' Oh well good

your aunt Linda has been taking a psychology class and she suggested that I negotiate with you' to commit Lauren to the truth of the proposition that Linda has been taking a psychology class. The directive speech act is also used by Judy once she said ' So here is the deal, you can either go do your homework or you could sit and listen to her talk about her class' to direct Lauren to make her choice. Finally, Lauren uses the assertive speech act by saying 'Homework' to commit Judy to the truth of the proposition that she prefers to do her homework instead of sitting with her aunt and listening to her boring talk.

Humour is generated because of Lauren's assertive speech act once she said 'homework', it is inappropriate to its context as Lauren implicates that Linda is so boring and this arouses the laughter of the audience. In other words, Lauren threatens the positive face of Linda. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of self-revelation because Lauren does not like to listen to her aunt's talk.

6.9 Scene Nine

Judy: Bell you know how Lauren did her math exam, her algebra teacher sent home her first test. She answered the first three questions 'I don't know', 'I don't care', 'why don't you ask my mom?'

Bell: that is just stupid you don't know algebra. I will talk to her tomorrow (audience laughed).

The conversation above is between Judy and Bell about Lauren's exam in algebra. Judy uses the directive speech act by saying ' Bell you know how Lauren did her math exam' to direct Bell to know how Lauren did her math exam. She also uses the assertive speech act by saying ' her algebra teacher sent home her first test. She answered the first three questions 'I don't know', 'I don't care', 'why don't you ask my mom?' to commit Bell to the truth of the proposition that Lauren did badly in her exam. However, the assertive speech act is used by Bell once he said 'that is just stupid you don't know algebra' to commit Judy to the truth of the proposition that he is expert in algebra. The commisive speech act isalso used by him once he said 'I will talk to her tomorrow' referring to a future action.

Humour is generated because of Bell's assertive speech act once she said 'that is just stupid you don't know algebra', it is inappropriate to its context because the audience already knows that Bell is stupid and he does not like algebra what arouses the laughter of the audience. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of troubles talk because Bell was discussing with his wife the problem of their daughter.

6.10 Scene Ten

Lauren: Mom I love your new hairstyle. I mean, you're already a beautiful woman but it really brings out the brown in your eyes.

Judy: Thank you, and it brings out the brown in your nose (audience laughed), what do you want?

The conversation above is between Lauren and Judy about the latter's new hairstyle. Lauren uses the assertive speech act by saying 'MomI love your new hairstyle. I mean, you're already a beautiful woman but it really brings out the brown in your eyes' to commit her mother to the truth of the proposition that her hairstyle is beautiful. Judy uses the expressive speech act by saying 'Thank you, and it brings out the brown in your nose' to express her gratitude to her daughter, she also expresses her sarcasm about Lauren's nose. Then, Judy uses the directive speech act by saying 'what do you want?' to direct Lauren to answer her question.

Humour is generated because of Judy's expressive speech act once she said 'Thank you, and it brings out the brown in your nose', it is inappropriate to its context because Judy confuses Lauren and this arouses the laughter of the audience. In other words, Judy threatens the positive face of Lauren. Humour is used as a topical continuity in the context of self-revelation as Judy expresses what she feels towards her daughter Lauren.

7. Conclusion

This study provides a pragmatic analysis of the selected scenes extracted from the American sitcom of 'Still Standing'. The analysis is based on Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts. It has come with the following findings: directive and assertive speech acts are the most common types of speech acts used in the American sitcom of 'Still Standing', humour is generated because of the inappropriateness of speech acts in relation to their contexts, and

topical continuity is the most common technique of interaction used in the American sitcom of 'Still Standing'.

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التأثير الفكاهي لعدم ملاءمة الأفعال الكلامية في المسرحية الهزلية "لازال قائما"

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في مشاهد مختارة مستخرجة من المسرحية الهزلية الأمريكية لـ "لازال قائما". واجابت عن الأسئلة: ماهو النوع الأكثر شيوعًا من أفعال الكلام المستخدمة في هذه المسرحية، وكيف أنعدم ملاءمة فعل الكلام فيما يتعلق بسياقه يسبب الفكاهة؟، وماهي الطريقة الأكثر شيوعًا لاستخدام الفكاهة في التفاعل المستخدمة فيها. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف يتم إنشاء الفكاهة بسبب عدم ملاءمة الأفعال الكلام فيما يتعلق بسياقاتها. تركز الدراسة على جوانب اللغة الفكاهية والسياق العملي للفكاهة ونظرية فعل الكلام. تعتبر الفكاهة في هذه الدراسة ناتجة عن عدم ملاءمة أعمال الكلام فيما يتعلق بسياقاتها. تحاول الدراسة معرفة كيف يتم توليد الفكاهة في بعض المشاهد المختارة. وكذلك قدمت نتائج الدراسة الخطوط العريضة لوظائف الفكاهة في هذه المسرحية.

الكلمات الدالـة: لغة الفكاهة، أفعال الكلام،السياق،الاستمرارية الموضعية، الوحي الذاتي.