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Seriocomic: The contemporary way of polite expression

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Abstract

Seriocomic communication, characterized by the strategic fusion of seriousness and humor, represents a dynamic and multifaceted form of discourse that permeates various facets of contemporary interaction. This examined the intricate interplay between face and face threatening acts, Hudson's view of face; it covered the role of politeness in seriocomic communication, contemporary seriocomic expression in different contexts, politeness strategies in seriocomic communication, the impact of seriocomic polite expression, challenges, controversies, and future directions. The findings reveal that seriocomic communication serves as a versatile and powerful tool for conveying messages, forging connections, and addressing diverse topics across a range of contexts. Politeness strategies, including positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness, bald-on-record speech acts, and the use of irony and ambiguity, form the core elements that weave humor and politeness into the fabric of seriocomic expression. This study highlights the profound impact of seriocomic communication on social relationships, intercultural interactions, psychological well-being, and ethical considerations. It serves as both a bridge and a potential barrier, depending on how it is wielded. The delicate balance between humor and politeness in seriocomic communication significantly influences the outcomes of interpersonal exchanges. The study emphasized the enduring potential of seriocomic communication to bridge divides, convey complex messages, and foster meaningful connections in an increasingly interconnected world.

1. Introduction

Communication is an unavoidable act of every human as social beings, and to do so, certain language nuances are needed as means for a smooth and hitch free communication. Furthermore, the communication can be carried out verbally or nonverbally depending on the intention of the communicator. In present times, people communicate indirectly through many forms which can come as a comics, skits, seriocomic, stickers, and memes, among others targeting a particular individual or group. Doing so is what we may call politeness. In the context of pragmatics, it can be glossed roughly as tact which is very important in communication. During communication, we need to save our face by saving the face of everyone, particularly, looking at the current situation of Nigeria where people no longer have freedom of speech.

Moreover, practicing tactfulness plays a vital role in encouraging a positive response from the intended recipient, whether it's an individual or a group. Therefore, it is essential to carefully manage our verbal and nonverbal communication. In this regard, our language choices encompass various decisions, including what we wish to convey, how we wish to convey it, and the specific elements like sentence structures, words, sounds, and forms that align with our message's content and delivery. The manner in which we articulate our thoughts holds equal importance alongside the content itself. In the words of Holmes (1998) [17], the context is a crucial factor in understanding the intended meaning, and pragmatics takes the analysis of meaning beyond grammar and word definitions to encompass the dynamic relationship between participants and their shared background knowledge. Politeness, therefore, is an integral part of these interpersonal interactions. Consequently, a thorough exploration of politeness can be conducted through the study of pragmatics.

On a different note, Nigeria is a West African nation situated between the Sahel in the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the south, along the Atlantic Ocean. Encompassing a land area of 923,769 square kilometers, it stands as both the most populous country on the African continent and the sixth most populous globally. Nigeria shares its borders with Niger to the north, Chad to the northeast, Cameroon to the east, and Benin to the west. It

operates as a federal republic, comprising thirty-six states and a Federal Capital Territory, where the capital city, Abuja, is located. Lately, Nigerians have been facing so many challenges resulting from ethnic marginalization, disappointment by the judiciary, insecurity emanating from the kidnappers and Boko Haram, election hijacking, bad government, the yahoo boys and ritualists alongside their unspeakable acts, fuel subsidy removal which has resulted to the massive high price of commodities and the people daily rituals, and the everyday depreciation of naira. All these have put the country in a fix so much so that people are beginning to revolt by using various ways tools/medium to have their voice to be heard.

One of the ways which people are reacting to these misfortunes that have befallen on them is through what we call seriocomic and this is the crux of this work. Seriocomic is the combination of two words, serious and comic which means a serious expression or words content expressed in a humorous way. This act can be deduce as being polite to the people the message is meant for as well as a source of entertainment to some individuals. However, being polite in this context seems not to be an act of respect for others feelings but more of being aware of the negative aftermath of the message you are disseminating. Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] conceptualize politeness strategies as a means of preserving an individual's "face." In this context, "face" represents the respect and self-esteem that a person upholds in both public and private situations. This concept can be categorized into two distinct types: negative and positive face. Negative face pertains to the wish of any competent adult within a cultural group to have their actions free from interference by others, while positive face involves the desire of all cultural group members to have their wishes align with the preferences of others (Grundy, 2008) [14]. In simpler terms, positive face relates to the consistent self-image people hold and their desire for approval, whereas negative face revolves around asserting one's rights to personal boundaries and non-interference.

Politeness can also be perceived as the effort to prevent embarrassing or causing discomfort to others, and the connection between face and politeness is captured by Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] as "Face Threatening Acts" (FTAs). FTAs are actions that undermine a person's need to maintain self-esteem and respect. Examples of FTAs include insults, direct commands, remarks that lead to humiliation, demanding tasks, or those that hurt the recipient's feelings. Politeness emerges from attempts to mitigate actions that could threaten either negative face (such as making a request) or positive face (like declining a request). The fulfillment of positive face is known as positive politeness, which involves highlighting commonalities between those involved in the interaction and expressing appreciation for the other person's self-image. Conversely, negative politeness involves respecting the addressee's right not to be imposed upon and safeguarding their negative face. In a conversation, a tactful interlocutor avoids such FTA and tries to perform face saving acts instead. This has to do with a speech act that minimizes or prevents potential threats to the addressee's self-worth. Face saving act is more of indirect speech acts. This is a situation whereby the speaker says one thing but intends to mean another.

For instance, a beggar who approaches a passerby saying, "Do you have any spare change?" rather than "Give me some money". Likewise, in a situation a pupil might say to the teacher, "Teacher, its 3.49" by which she might intend to mean, "the lesson has gone beyond the closing time (3.30), it is home time". Even when power disparities are non-existent, indirectness helps to oil the wheels of social interaction by saving the other person's face. For instance, rather than say to your housemate, "Go and make me some tea, now" which will be a command and affront you might say, "If you are making tea, I wouldn't mind having a cup", (O'Grady, Archbald & Katamba 2011:234). Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] propounded four politeness strategies with many sub sections for the main purpose of dealing with Face threatening act FTA for easy communication. They also state that recognizing what people are doing in verbal exchange, for instance, in making request, offering, criticizing, complaining, etc is not mainly based on what they overtly claim to be doing as a fine linguistic detail of utterances; which means it is not only speaking in fine language but also considering others' feelings. However, this work focuses on the politeness expression tagged seriocomic used presently in Nigeria not as mark of respect but as mark of fear.

2. Review of related studies

Goffman (1967) [13] introduced the concept of "face" to describe the public image an individual presents to others. He posits that our position and understanding of the world are greatly influenced by social interactions. Consequently, "face" plays a pivotal role in these interactions, as its presentation contributes to social harmony. Therefore, it becomes the shared responsibility of participants to preserve face because any loss of face during an interaction can lead to a breakdown in communication. Goffman (1967) [13] further argues that, although face is an individual's possession, it is effectively on loan from society and can be revoked if the individual's behavior contradicts societal norms. This view of face is "collective," with individuals not having absolute freedom but instead being subject to societal standards. When individuals deviate from these standards, their face is at risk, which may result in negative consequences.

Regarding face, Goffman (1967) [13] distinguishes between three states. First, a person is considered to have a "good face" when their presented image is internally consistent, supported by judgments and evidence from others, and confirmed by impersonal sources in the situation. Second, a person is "wrong-faced" when information emerges that challenges their social worth and cannot be integrated into their sustained image. Lastly, a person is "out of face" when they engage in an interaction without adopting the expected role or stance.

In addition to defining the concept of face, Goffman acknowledges the role of saving one's "self-face," emphasizing the importance of conducting oneself in a way that preserves both one's own face and the face of other participants. Goffman suggests practical procedures for saving face, including avoidance to prevent interaction when a loss of face is likely, and defensive procedures to maintain face and enhance the face of others. Defensive procedures may involve discontinuing an activity that

threatens the hearer's face, adjusting the conversation to align with the others' discourse, and displaying diffidence and composure.

Lakoff (1973) [25] introduces two fundamental rules for "pragmatics competence," which go beyond the scope of traditional syntactic and semantic considerations: "Be clear" and "Be polite." While the first rule advocates clear and straightforward communication, the second rule presents a potential conflict. In situations where maintaining politeness is essential, individuals may sacrifice clarity to avoid appearing impolite, leading to indirect speech acts, especially when dealing with social situations marked by high social distance. Lakoff (1973) [25] argues that these two rules can sometimes be in tension, with clarity and politeness at odds. The choice between them depends on the communicator's primary goal: conveying a message directly or fostering a harmonious relationship.

Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] build upon the idea that every member of society possesses a "public self-image" or "face." Their understanding of face aligns with Goffman's (1967) [13] definition, which characterizes face as "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself through the line assumed by others during an interaction." Face corresponds to an individual's self-esteem, implying that it represents how a person is perceived and is subject to continuous development in interactions. Within the context of maintaining face, individuals have two aims: protecting their own face (defensive orientation) and safeguarding the face of others (protective orientation) (Goffman 1967) [13]. Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] argue that cooperation in preserving face arises from the mutual vulnerability of face. Since anyone's face can be threatened by another participant, there is a collective interest in showing concern for each other's face and defending one's own face. A central concept in politeness theory is the "Model Person" (MP), which Brown and Levinson (1987) [6] define as a "competent speaker of a natural language" endowed with "face" and "rationality." Face is characterized as "the public self-image that every member aims to claim for themselves," and rationality pertains to the mode of reasoning used to achieve desired ends. Brown and Levinson treat face as "basic wants" rather than "norms or values" because society, in general, understands the desires of its members.

Brown and Levinson's work comprises two main parts. The first part involves their fundamental theory on politeness and its role in interaction. The second part introduces their face theory, encompassing three fundamental concepts: "face," which pertains to feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, or "losing face" and includes positive and negative face; the idea that most speech acts inherently threaten either the hearer's or speaker's face-wants, termed "face-threatening acts" (FTAs); and five politeness strategies for performing speech acts, with examples from English, Tzeltal, and Tamil. In this discussion, the focus will be on the concepts of face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies.

2.1 Face and Face Threatening Acts

Face represents an individual's self-esteem and comprises two facets: negative face, which pertains to the desire for unimpeded actions, and positive face, which involves the

desire for approval (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. In social interactions, it's crucial to uphold one's own face and avoid threats to another person's face. To mitigate these Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), we employ various politeness strategies during interactions. Brown and Levinson categorize these strategies based on our responses to FTAs and link them to three key sociological factors: the relative power dynamics between the speaker and the hearer, the social distance separating them, and the severity of the imposition inherent in the FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6].

FTAs are actions that jeopardize someone's face. While it's in the interest of all participants to steer clear of FTAs during interactions, avoiding them isn't always possible, as some actions inherently pose a threat to either the hearer's or speaker's face. Common examples of FTAs include accusations, insults, interruptions, complaints, disagreements, and requests. Disagreement, for instance, endangers the positive face by implying non-acceptance of the hearer's viewpoints, while requests threaten the hearer's negative face because they impose and limit the addressee's autonomy. Requests can also pose a risk to the positive face if the addressee intends to decline them.

Although FTAs cannot always be circumvented, there are strategies to minimize the potential threat. Brown and Levinson outline five choices a speaker can consider when dealing with a face-threatening act, each involving a varying degree of effort to preserve face. When faced with an FTA, individuals decide whether to execute it or not. If they choose to do so, they can either perform it directly, "on record," or indirectly, "off record." If they perform it without considering the impact on the hearer, they do it "baldly." In an effort to reduce the threat to the hearer, speakers can opt for positive politeness or negative politeness. Positive politeness involves preserving the hearer's positive face by minimizing the social distance between them, while negative politeness seeks to uphold the hearer's negative face by respecting the hearer's personal boundaries.

This is crux of this research; questioning the applicability of the universality of this theory. Therefore, this research goes on to find the linguistics ways Igbo people portray politeness as it reflects to the movies under study using the above mentioned politeness strategies for mitigating face threatening acts. However, each of these politeness strategies has sub strategies that discuss extensively various linguistics forms politeness can take and this will be seen during the analysis.

2.2 Hudson's view of Face

The concept of "face" is a synonym for politeness, as noted by Hudson (2001) [19]. It is associated with notions like "self-respect" and "dignity." This theory, referred to as "face theory," was developed by the American sociologist Goffman (1967) [13], who termed the effort needed to preserve one's face as "face-work." The essence of this theory is that in our social interactions, we endeavor to protect our own face while not undermining the face of others. Essentially, face is a delicate aspect of our social existence that others can easily harm. Consequently, we navigate our social lives guided by the principle of the Golden Rule, which encourages us to treat others as we

would like to be treated. This means taking care of other people's faces with the expectation that they will reciprocate. Insulting others is considered an exceptional behavior, as we typically aim to preserve face.

In the realm of sociolinguistics, the most significant exploration of face is by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) [6], who distinguish between two types of face: positive and negative faces. However, Hudson (2001) [19] finds these terms somewhat misleading because both faces hold value. Hudson prefers to call positive face "solidarity-face" and negative face "power-face." Both can be understood as expressions of respect but with different nuances in each case. Solidarity-face involves respect in the context of appreciating the approval and recognition that others show for the type of person we are, our behavior, and our values. Threats to our solidarity-face can make us feel embarrassed or ashamed. On the other hand, power-face represents respect for the right to non-interference. It underlies most formal forms of politeness, like stepping aside to let someone pass. When our power-face is threatened, we may feel offended. Each type of face corresponds to different manners of politeness. Solidarity-politeness reflects respect for the person, often showing intimacy and affection through terms like "mate," "darling," or "love." First names may be used instead of titles like "Mr.," such as "William" or "Bill." In power-politeness, different address terms, such as "sir" and "please," are employed, alongside euphemisms designed to prevent the other person from feeling offended, such as using "spend a kobo" instead of "pass away.".

This review put us more on the spotlight of politeness; arguing and explaining more on the concept of politeness. However, this explanation on politeness is embedded on English language, also without laying emphasis on the constructive aspect of the language but the present research goes deeply into the constructive part of politeness in order to bring out the real reason for every politeness speech act and the social factors that result to each speech act.

3. The role of politeness in seriocomic communication

Seriocomic communication, characterized by a delicate balance between seriousness and humor, is a fascinating and intricate facet of human interaction. Politeness plays a pivotal role in seriocomic communication, shaping the tone, context, and effectiveness of these exchanges. Politeness in seriocomic communication serves as a vital tool for creating a comfortable and inviting atmosphere (Beale & Beale, 2020) [4]. Humor often involves risky content, such as sensitive topics or mild teasing. Politeness acts as a cushion, softening the potential impact of humor and reducing the likelihood of causing offense. Through polite expressions and gestures, individuals can signal their intention to engage in light-hearted banter rather than engage in genuinely hurtful or offensive discourse (Ishi, Mikata & Ishiguro, 2020) [20].

Face, a fundamental concept in politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6], refers to an individual's sense of social identity and self-esteem. In seriocomic communication, humor may momentarily challenge one's face, especially when the humor targets personal traits, quirks, or behaviors. Politeness strategies, such as positive politeness, allow speakers to mitigate these threats to face by emphasizing commonality, shared experiences, or positive qualities

(Azwan, 2018) [2]. This helps maintain a positive social equilibrium even in the face of humorous commentary. Politeness in seriocomic communication is instrumental in building rapport and solidarity among participants. By engaging in polite forms of humor, individuals can signal their intention to bond, share a laugh, and create a sense of camaraderie (Jansen & Janssen, 2010) [21]. This shared laughter can strengthen social bonds, promote group cohesion, and enhance the overall quality of interpersonal relationships.

Seriocomic communication often provides a socially acceptable avenue for expressing critique and dissent. Politeness strategies like irony and sarcasm allow individuals to comment on sensitive or contentious issues indirectly. By masking criticism in humor, speakers can convey their perspectives without resorting to confrontational or offensive language (Förster & Brantner, 2016) [11]. This indirectness can be especially useful in contexts where open disagreement may be discouraged or seen as impolite. Politeness in seriocomic communication becomes particularly important when addressing taboo or stigmatized topics. Humor can serve as a coping mechanism, allowing individuals to broach difficult subjects indirectly (Hoover, 2020) [18]. Politeness strategies help individuals navigate these conversations delicately, making them more approachable and less intimidating. In this way, seriocomic communication can foster understanding and empathy even when discussing sensitive issues.

The persuasive power of seriocomic communication relies heavily on politeness. By blending humor and politeness, individuals can make their arguments more engaging and memorable (Paynter, 2016) [34]. This combination encourages active listening, making the audience more receptive to the message being conveyed. When humor is used strategically and politely, it can influence opinions and behavior positively. Politeness in seriocomic communication can serve as a bridge for initiating and sustaining difficult conversations. When addressing topics like personal habits, mistakes, or social faux pas, humor and politeness work in tandem to reduce defensiveness and promote receptivity (Holmes, 1998) [17]. The humorous element allows the communicator to broach the subject with a lighter touch, making it easier for the recipient to acknowledge and address the issue.

4. Contemporary seriocomic expression in different contexts

Everyday conversations serve as fertile ground for seriocomic expression, where individuals often employ humor as a means of forging connections, easing tension, and conveying messages indirectly (Warren, Barsky & McGraw, 2018) [43]. In informal settings like family gatherings, casual outings with friends, or even workplace watercooler chats, seriocomic communication is a natural part of social interaction. Seriocomic expression in everyday conversations often involves sarcasm, irony, and playful banter (Harrison & Harrison, 2017) [15]. These forms of humor allow individuals to navigate sensitive topics or gently tease one another without causing offense. Politeness strategies are crucial here, as they help maintain social harmony and ensure that humor remains light-hearted and inclusive (Holmes, 1998) [17]. Positive politeness strategies,

such as emphasizing shared experiences or using in-group humor, are commonly deployed to foster camaraderie (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. By combining politeness and humor, individuals in everyday conversations create an environment where laughter and bonding go hand in hand. Whether it is poking fun at a common quirk or sharing amusing anecdotes, seriocomic expression enriches social interactions, making them more enjoyable and memorable.

Digital communication, driven by social media platforms and messaging apps, has become a playground for seriocomic expression. Memes, GIFs, and witty one-liners allow individuals to infuse humor into their written and visual messages. The brevity of digital interactions demands succinctness, and emojis often serve as a form of nonverbal seriocomic expression (Nguyen, Gruber, Marler, Hunsaker, Fuchs & Hargittai, 2022) [32]. In the digital realm, seriocomic expression can be spontaneous and viral, reaching a vast audience in a matter of moments. Internet culture has given rise to unique forms of humor, often rooted in internet memes or trends. Politeness strategies in digital seriocomic communication may involve the use of self-deprecating humor or employing humor to disarm potentially contentious discussions (Castro-Blanco, 2022) [7]. Humor in digital communication serves multiple purposes: it entertains, relieves stress, and reinforces social connections. Whether through a well-timed GIF or a clever comment, seriocomic expression in digital contexts adds a layer of enjoyment to online interactions, making them engaging and memorable.

Entertainment media, including television, film, and literature, frequently employ seriocomic elements to engage and entertain audiences. Comedy-dramas, for instance, explore serious themes while injecting humor to make them relatable and emotionally resonant (Merritt, 2022) [30]. In these narratives, humor becomes a vehicle for social commentary and emotional depth, allowing viewers to reflect on serious issues from a different perspective. Politeness in entertainment media is essential to maintain a balance between humor and sensitivity. When addressing complex or sensitive topics, writers and filmmakers use humor to ensure that the audience remains engaged without feeling uncomfortable (Bore & Reid, 2014) [5]. This allows for a more nuanced exploration of societal issues and human experiences. Seriocomic expression in entertainment media is not limited to scripted content. Late-night talk shows, stand-up comedy specials, and satirical news programs use humor to comment on current events and politics (Waisanen, 2019) [42]. In these contexts, politeness often takes the form of satirical humor, pro Waisanen iding both entertainment and a critical perspective on the world.

The incorporation of seriocomic expression into professional settings represents a nuanced and strategic approach to communication. While humor in the workplace is not new, the contemporary understanding of seriocomic expression in professional contexts recognizes its potential benefits and challenges (Beale & Beale, 2020) [4]. Humor in professional settings can serve as a catalyst for creativity and team cohesion. When used appropriately, seriocomic expression can break down barriers and facilitate open communication. In brainstorming sessions or team meetings, light-hearted humor can ease tension and create a relaxed atmosphere where team members feel comfortable

sharing ideas and opinions (Holmes, 1998) [17]. Politeness here is crucial; humor should never target individuals or groups in a way that could be perceived as offensive or exclusionary (Gili-Fivela & Bazzanella, 2014) [12]. The workplace often comes with stress and pressure. Seriocomic expression provides a release valve for this stress. A well-timed joke or a humorous anecdote can relieve tension, improve mood, and reduce the negative effects of workplace stress (Holmes, 1998) [17]. In this context, politeness involves being sensitive to colleagues' boundaries and ensuring that humor remains appropriate and supportive.

Humor is an effective tool for building rapport and enhancing professional relationships. Light-hearted banter and shared laughter can create bonds among colleagues and between managers and employees (Holmes, 1998) [17]. Positive politeness strategies, such as using humor to emphasize shared experiences or common challenges, can be particularly effective in fostering camaraderie (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. While seriocomic expression can enhance professional environments, it must be carefully managed to avoid crossing boundaries or causing discomfort. Politeness strategies play a crucial role in ensuring that humor remains respectful and inclusive. Self-deprecating humor, situational humor, or humor that addresses common workplace challenges are often more acceptable in professional settings (Mathies, Chiew & Kleinaltenkamp, 2016) [27]. It is essential to consider the context and the audience to determine the appropriateness of seriocomic expression. Leaders and managers can use seriocomic expression strategically to lead and motivate teams. A well-timed joke or humorous anecdote from a leader can create a positive and relaxed atmosphere, making employees more receptive to guidance and feedback (Holmes, 1998) [17]. Politeness in leadership involves setting the tone for respectful humor and modeling appropriate behavior.

5. Politeness Strategies in Seriocomic Communication

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in shaping seriocomic communication, allowing individuals to navigate the delicate balance between humor and respect. These strategies, drawn from politeness theory, enable communicators to convey messages effectively while minimizing potential threats to face and maintaining social harmony (Mahmud, 2019) [26]. In seriocomic communication, several politeness strategies come into play. Positive politeness strategies aim to emphasize commonalities, shared experiences, and the establishment of a friendly, inclusive atmosphere (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. In seriocomic communication, positive politeness is often used to make humor more palatable and to create a sense of camaraderie among participants. For example, when friends playfully tease each other, they may employ positive politeness by highlighting their friendship and shared history, ensuring that the humor is taken in a spirit of affection rather than as an insult.

Negative politeness strategies are employed to show deference, respect personal boundaries, and avoid imposing on others (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. In seriocomic communication, negative politeness may be used to cushion potentially offensive humor or criticism (Suyono & Andriyanti, 2021) [40]. For instance, when humor involves

teasing someone about a sensitive topic, individuals may use negative politeness by prefacing the remark with disclaimers or expressions of empathy to reduce the threat to the recipient's face.

Off-record politeness, also known as indirectness, involves conveying a message indirectly or hinting at a request rather than making a direct statement (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. In seriocomic communication, off-record politeness is frequently used to add humor while maintaining politeness. In contrast to off-record politeness, bald-on-record speech acts involve direct and unambiguous communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [6]. In seriocomic communication, bald-on-record speech acts can be used to deliver humor that relies on straightforwardness and clear language (Sudarmawan, Juliari & Yuniari, 2022) [38]. For instance, a stand-up comedian may employ bald-on-record speech acts to deliver a punchline that is meant to be taken at face value, eliciting laughter through its sheer directness.

Irony, sarcasm, and ambiguity are linguistic devices that enable seriocomic communication by creating a gap between the literal meaning of words and the intended message (Weitzel, Prati, & Aguiar, 2016) [44]. In these cases, individuals may use irony and sarcasm to convey humor indirectly while maintaining a semblance of politeness. Ambiguity, on the other hand, can allow for multiple interpretations of a statement, leaving room for humor while minimizing the risk of offense. In seriocomic communication, these strategies are often employed strategically, depending on the context, the audience, and the relationship between participants. By deftly utilizing these politeness strategies, individuals can infuse humor into their interactions while preserving respect and social harmony.

6. The Impact of seriocomic polite expression

Seriocomic polite expression, characterized by the fusion of humor and politeness, exerts a multifaceted influence on individuals, relationships, and broader societal dynamics. Seriocomic polite expression can significantly affect social relationships by fostering rapport and intimacy (Atabay, 2018) [1]. When individuals engage in light-hearted banter and shared laughter, it strengthens bonds and creates a sense of camaraderie (Holmes, 1998) [17]. This form of communication often serves as an icebreaker, helping people connect on a deeper level. Friends who playfully tease each other, for example, use seriocomic polite expression to reinforce their friendship. However, the impact can vary depending on the individuals involved and the context. While seriocomic communication can enhance relationships among friends and close acquaintances, it may require careful consideration in more formal or hierarchical settings to ensure that it doesn't inadvertently harm social dynamics.

The use of seriocomic polite expression has significant implications for intercultural communication. Cultural norms and sensitivities can greatly influence how humor is perceived and received (Roodsaz, 2018) [37]. What may be considered humorous and polite in one culture may be seen as disrespectful or offensive in another. In intercultural interactions, individuals must navigate the fine line between humor and politeness with cultural sensitivity (Sudjirman, 2016) [39]. Misunderstandings can occur if one culture's form

of seriocomic expression clashes with the norms of another culture. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of cultural context and awareness of potential cultural differences in humor is essential to ensure effective communication. Seriocomic polite expression can have profound psychological and emotional outcomes for both the communicator and the recipient. Humor, when used politely, can act as a stress reliever (Holmes, 1998) [17]. It can reduce tension, elevate mood, and improve overall well-being. In professional settings, for example, appropriately timed humor can alleviate workplace stress.

Additionally, seriocomic expression can be an effective tool for coping with difficult or sensitive topics. When individuals use humor to address personal challenges or societal issues, it can facilitate emotional processing and provide a sense of relief (McIntosh & Wright, 2017) [29]. However, it is crucial to recognize that the impact of seriocomic polite expression on psychological and emotional outcomes can vary widely based on individual differences and contextual factors. What one person finds humorous and comforting, another may perceive as hurtful or offensive (McGraw, Warren, Williams & Leonard, 2012) [28].

Seriocomic polite expression raises ethical considerations, particularly regarding the potential for humor to cross boundaries and cause harm. While humor can be a powerful tool for communication, it can also be wielded irresponsibly, leading to unintended consequences (Penelope-Wardman, 2021) [35]. Off-color jokes, insensitive comments, or humor that targets vulnerable individuals can damage relationships and perpetuate stereotypes. Ethical considerations also extend to the use of humor in professional and public discourse. Public figures, including politicians and media personalities, often employ humor to connect with their audiences (Kramer, 2020) [24]. However, the line between humor and offensive speech can be thin, requiring careful judgment and a commitment to respecting ethical boundaries.

7. Challenges and Controversies

Seriocomic expression, characterized by the fusion of seriousness and humor, is not without its challenges and controversies. Seriocomic expression often relies on irony, sarcasm, and ambiguity, which can be prone to misinterpretation (Beale, 2022) [3]. What one person perceives as humor may be seen as sarcasm or offense by another. This misalignment in interpretation can lead to misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and strained relationships. The potential for misinterpretation highlights the importance of context and shared cultural or social norms in seriocomic communication. Clarity and awareness of the audience's sensitivities are crucial to minimize the risk of miscommunication (Deen, 2020) [9].

Gender dynamics can introduce complexities into seriocomic expression. Research has shown that gender can influence the perception of humor and the types of humor considered appropriate (Crawford & Gressley, 1991) [8]. Gendered expectations may lead to disparities in how men and women employ humor and how their humor is received. Gender-based humor, when used inappropriately or to reinforce stereotypes, can perpetuate biases and lead to gender-related controversies (Tabassum & Karakowsky,

2023) [41]. Sensitivity to gender dynamics and an awareness of the potential for offense are essential in navigating these challenges.

Cross-cultural differences pose significant challenges in seriocomic expression. What is considered humorous and polite in one culture may not translate well to another (Kim & Plester, 2019) [23]. Humor that relies on cultural references or wordplay may be entirely lost on individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural misunderstandings in seriocomic communication can lead to unintended offense, strained relationships, or even conflicts (Kim & Plester, 2021) [22]. To address these challenges, individuals engaging in cross-cultural communication must be aware of cultural nuances and be prepared to adapt their humor to the cultural context. Seriocomic expression can raise ethical concerns, particularly when humor crosses ethical boundaries. Jokes that target sensitive topics, marginalized groups, or individuals with vulnerabilities can perpetuate harm and discrimination (Holmes, 1998) [17]. Public figures, in particular, face scrutiny regarding the ethical use of humor in their speeches and actions. Ethical considerations also extend to the use of humor in professional settings (Navarro-Carrillo, Torres-Marín, Corbacho-Lobato & Carretero-Dios, 2020) [31]. While humor can enhance team dynamics and relieve stress, it must be employed responsibly to avoid creating a hostile or uncomfortable work environment.

8. Future Directions

Seriocomic communication, with its blend of humor and politeness, continues to evolve and shape our interactions. Seriocomic expression in digital communication is likely to continue evolving, with the increasing use of memes, GIFs, and multimedia elements in online interactions (Erdoğdu & Çakıroğlu, 2022) [10]. Understanding the impact of digital platforms on seriocomic expression and its implications for online communities is a promising research avenue. Given the interconnected global society, there is a growing need to adapt seriocomic expression to different cultural norms and sensitivities. Emerging trends may involve the development of cross-cultural humor guides for effective communication in diverse settings. Artificial intelligence and natural language processing are advancing rapidly. Research into the role of AI in generating seriocomic content and its impact on human interactions, particularly in digital communication, is an exciting area for exploration (Pulley, 2020) [36].

Deeper investigations into how seriocomic expression varies across cultures and the role of cultural context in shaping humor and politeness are essential. Comparative studies can shed light on cross-cultural similarities and differences. Research on the psychological and emotional effects of seriocomic expression, especially in terms of stress relief and enhancing well-being, can provide insights into its therapeutic potential and its applications in fields like mental health. Further exploration of gender dynamics in seriocomic expression and its implications for gender equality and perceptions of humor is needed. This includes studies on the impact of gendered humor in various contexts.

9. Conclusion

This comprehensive exploration of seriocomic communication has unveiled a dynamic and multifaceted form of interaction, characterized by the delicate fusion of humor and politeness. The journey through the intricacies of seriocomic expression has revealed several key findings and insights that contribute to our understanding of this nuanced communication style. Seriocomic communication, as we have discovered, is marked by its artful blending of seriousness and humor. It serves as a powerful and adaptable tool for conveying messages, forging connections, and addressing a wide array of topics across diverse contexts. Politeness strategies, drawn from politeness theory, play a pivotal role in shaping seriocomic expression. These strategies encompass positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record politeness, bald-on-record speech acts, and the use of irony and ambiguity. They serve as the threads that weave humor and politeness into the fabric of seriocomic communication.

The exploration has illuminated the profound impact of seriocomic communication on social relationships, intercultural interactions, psychological well-being, and ethical considerations. It serves as both a bridge and a potential barrier, depending on how it is wielded. The delicate balance between humor and politeness in seriocomic communication can significantly influence the outcomes of interpersonal exchanges. Challenges and controversies related to seriocomic communication have also come to the forefront. These include the potential for misinterpretation and ambiguity, the influence of gender dynamics, cross-cultural differences in humor, and the ethical dimensions of humor that can cross boundaries and perpetuate harm.

Drawing from the study, the study proposes the following recommendations for those engaging in or studying seriocomic communication. In an era of digital transformation and artificial intelligence, adapt to evolving communication landscapes. Embrace emerging tools and platforms for seriocomic expression, such as memes, GIFs, and AI-generated humor. Given the increasing interconnectedness of our world, prioritize cross-cultural adaptation in seriocomic expression. Be attuned to cultural nuances and sensitivities, ensuring that humor remains effective and respectful across diverse cultural contexts. Promote further research into the psychological and emotional effects of seriocomic expression. Investigate how humor can be harnessed to relieve stress, enhance well-being, and support mental health. Encourage deeper investigations into the role of gender dynamics in humor and seriocomic expression. Explore how gendered expectations and stereotypes influence perceptions of humor and its impact on social interactions.

This exploration of seriocomic communication makes significant contributions to the field by shedding light on the intricate interplay between humor and politeness in contemporary discourse. It has expanded our understanding of seriocomic expression, revealing its versatility and power across a range of contexts. By dissecting the role of seriocomic communication in shaping social relationships, influencing intercultural interactions, affecting

psychological well-being, and raising ethical considerations, our discussion has opened avenues for further research and practical applications in the field of communication.

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