

Laughing Online: A Morpho-Semantic Study on Typed Laughter-Derived Expressions Used in Hijazi Twitter and WhatsApp Instant Messages

Najah Ali Al-Jahdali

Department of European Languages and Literature, King Abdulaziz University (KAU)

P.O. Box 5294, Jeddah 23835, Saudi Arabia

E-mail: naljahdali@kau.edu.sa

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the morpho-semantic features of Typed Laughter-Derived Expressions (TLDEs) used by sixty young Hijazi females aged (18-25) through instant messaging (IM) in online chatting on two social networking sites (SNSs) confined in this study to Twitter and WhatsApp. It focuses on the ways those Hijazi females express their online laughter in the absence of face-to-face interactions. Forty-five Twitter messages and one hundred and nine WhatsApp messages were screenshot by those Hijazi females and were submitted for morpho-semantic analysis. The results show that the following morpho-semantic processes are used: onomatopoeia, borrowing some English acronyms, hyperbole, parts of the body that are physically associated with laughter, haphazard letters, and repetition of a letter. Even though this study does not focus on emojis, emojis are found to be important in packing up those TLDEs to make the virtual situation similar to the real face-to-face one and to mark social interaction among online users as well.

Keywords: Typed laughter-derived expressions, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instant messages, Morphology, Semantics, Borrowing, Hyperbole, Onomatopoeia, Computer-mediated communication

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the Background

Language is our human means of communication. It is used for many social functions such as building social relationships with others, stressing our points of views, expressing our emotions, etc. (Trudgill 2000). Human communication is divided into verbal and nonverbal

(Kreidler 2002). Verbal human communication includes the use of words to convey a specific message such as talking, ordering, requesting information, sharing thoughts, etc. Primitively speaking, all native speakers whether literates or illiterates use their mother tongue verbally. The written representation of the varieties they are orally using is only confined to literates. On the other hand, nonverbal human communication is the use of body language, gestures, and facial expressions in order to convey messages such as silence, boredom, laughter, etc. (Kreidler 2002). This study is confined to one aspect of nonverbal human communication namely, laughter. Laughter mainly exists in face-to-face physical contexts where people react to a funny situation, a joke, a funny story simply by laughing. With the advancement of technology, new ways of communication have been developed and have taken place on mobiles, computers, and iPads. These ways provide its users (literates and illiterates) a virtual context where they can virtually meet online and communicate. Online communication includes online chatting, sending emails, videoconferencing, or even recording voice messages marking a new era in socializing. Crystal (2006) termed the written language we use online as *Net-Speak*. He described it as having unique features that help users achieve an easy and fast way of writing through many processes such as abbreviations, acronyms, and inventing new online terms. Internet users do have the full freedom to create their own rules of online communication with great simplicity. Crystal (2006) also claimed that the way we use the internet and telecommunication technologies will shape the way we communicate and it will contribute to the development of a whole new variety that will define internet culture. The language used by the users of platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook, etc., is a variety peculiar to fit in with the rules of the cyber world. This written form of the variety used in these platforms has gained great interest in linguistics. It is a reflection of the different functions of language use used to render different kinds of intentions and meanings. It has a distinct kind of written form that is described as brief, fast and could be executable anywhere online even in contexts which are unrelated to the topic discussed (Alazzawie 2020). Drouin (2011) termed this language of texting as *textese*. It depends on the variety of its user. Textese of an English speaker is totally different than the textese used by an Arabian speaker, for example. This study focuses on analysing TLDEs used by sixty young Hijazi females to express online laughter in Hijazi Dialect of Arabic (HDA) textese in the city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in two SNSs namely Twitter and WhatsApp IMs. (Note 1)

1.2 Significance of the Study

According to the researcher's best knowledge, there are no studies that have been made on HDA TLDEs in Twitter and WhatsApp IMs or any other SNSs. This study is a first attempt to check how HDA TLDEs are morphologically formed and how their meanings are semantically expressed online by young Hijazi females in the absence of face-to-face interaction.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To check the kinds of HDA TLDEs used by young Hijazi females in Twitter and WhatsApp IMs to express online laughter as a non-verbal cue in an entirely textual medium.
2. To describe the morphological processes by which these TLDEs are formed.

3. To check the semantic processes used to achieve meanings in relation to expressing online laughter.
4. To check whether there are any TLDEs borrowed from other languages.
5. To check the approximation of similarity between the different TLDEs used to represent online laughter in comparison to physical laughter in face-to-face interaction.

1.4 Hypotheses

The study aims to test the validity of the following hypotheses:

1. The advancement of technology and telecommunication has led young Hijazi generation (females in this study) to create their own HDA TLDEs whenever they want to express online laughter.
2. There are many morpho-semantic operations that are used to form these HDA TLDEs.
3. Since English is an international internet language, borrowing English TLDEs will occur.
4. In the absence of face-to-face interaction, HDA TLDEs will attempt to be similar to expressing the physical situation of laughter as it happens.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to orient the cosmopolitan readers with the many important components related to the present study. These are: HDA, Twitter, WhatsApp, nature of laughter in real and online situations, and all the related studies done on them. This section will begin with the linguistic situation in the Arab world followed by all the components that contribute to expressing online laughter.

2.1 The Linguistic Situation in the Arab World

As stated in (Trudgill 2000), the Arab world is diglossic consisting of two varieties: High (H) and Low (L). MSA is the (H) variety used mostly by educated Arabs in formal settings and is represented by Arabic alphabets. (L) varieties are used in informal settings and they depend on the geographical area where they are spoken. Examples of these varieties are Egyptian Arabic in Egypt, Saudi Arabic in Saudi Arabia, etc. Each one having its own subdialects, such as HDA in the Western province of Saudi Arabia. These Arabic subvarieties are orally used in everyday communication and in informal settings. They have no written alphabets to represent them since they are not standardized (L) varieties. With the advent of technology and cellphones, young Arabian generations represent their (L) varieties by using MSA alphabets (Al-Jahdali 2010). As stated in (Al-raily 2020), "colloquial or dialectal Arabic is the language used in social media, and reflects the spoken Arabic of daily life". Accordingly, Arabic alphabets are used online to represent each of these (L) varieties. A chat by Egyptians for example is very-well distinguished linguistically compared to a chat written by Hijazis, etc. This study focuses on the variety used to represent HDA in the city of Jeddah (Note2). HDA has been studied from different linguistic perspectives such as phonology (Alzaidi 2014), cognitive semantics (Al-jahdali 2010), syntax (Eifan 2017) to name only a

few. This study; however, will study HDA in relation to TLDEs used in IMs in two SNSs: Twitter and WhatsApp (Note 3). These two platforms are of the most used online among those young Hijazi females because they give them the opportunity to communicate and share their daily life activities, photos, live locations, and express their happy, sad, or deep emotions with others among which laughter is one. Both are considered as a medium of online communication that are available for any user in any part of the world. They are considered as a live and rich pool and evidence for researchers interested in the effect of social media on language.

2.2 SNSs

2.2.1 Twitter as a Social Media Platform

Founded in 2006, Twitter is a free micro-blogging service that allows its users the opportunity to write about their everyday life, comment on others' views, follow news and global organizations, etc. It has become one of the most popular social media platforms with 500 million tweets per day (Kulkarni et al. 2016). Twitter users are allowed to write brief messages known as tweets that have 280 characters as its total number. Furthermore, those users can like, repost other users' tweets as well as engage in conversations by using replies, mentions, and hashtags. Not only that, hashtags are used to ensure brevity and avoidance of repetition where *#concerttoday* for example would be an appropriate hashtag for tweets about a current concert. Such hashtag will attract other users to reply or tweet on this topic under this specific hashtag and also makes it easy to track back the conversation. This limited number of characters used in a tweet has led to brevity as a main characteristic of the written social media language in general. Abbreviations include *RT* to stand for *ReTweet*, *AMA* to stand for *ask me anything*, among others. Having all of these advantages, users worldwide enjoy this platform and are indirectly influenced by these characteristics that should be used whenever they want to tweet. These technology developments have been welcomed in the Arab world with more than 11 million Arab users tweeting 27.4 million tweets per day. More than half of the total number of tweets are by Saudi (30%) and Egyptian users (20%) (Salem 2017). There have been many linguistic studies done on Twitter in relation to: language change (Dijkstra et al. 2021; Bohmann 2016), semantics (Nakov 2018) to name only a few. Out of all the abbreviations and netspeak used in this social platform, this study will be confined to HDA TLDEs in IMs that express online laughter.

2.2.2 WhatsApp as a Social Media Platform

Launched in 2009, WhatsApp is a social media platform that is usually downloaded and used on different kinds of cellphones and computers. It is an app that offers its users a messaging service that helps them communicate online through a chat box with others. WhatsApping is available through distance calling, texting, recording/listening to voice messages, sharing locations, pictures, documents, and videos. Users of WhatsApp can invite other contacts and send them messages and start conversing. Not only that, WhatsApp groups are created for many purposes such as studying, talking to friends, family gathering, work group discussions, etc. This proves that this digital technology has made it easier for people to communicate even when they are in their own place at different times of the day. WhatsApp has proved to

be one of the most popular and used chat applications in the world today with two billion active users and more than 100 billion messages sent each day on WhatsApp (Note 4). Linguistic studies made in relation to WhatsApp include: applied linguistics (Otemuyiwa 2017); genre analysis (Alazzawie 2020); semantics (Al-Khawaldeh 2016) to name only a few. This study will focus on HDA TLDEs as used in WhatsApp texts.

2.3 Laughter as a Nonverbal Human Social Communicative Activity

2.3.1 The Nature of Laughter

Laughter is a form of nonverbal human communicative activity and is regarded as a universal marker of joy (Ruch and Ekman 2001). It is pervasive in social interaction and is crucial in bonding (Provine and Fischer 1989; Kurtz and Algoe 2015). In daily life, it is expressed through face-to-face interaction where a sound of giggling is produced with the lips slightly or widely opened. The face shows laughing gestures where the eyes tend to get smaller and the cheeks get cupped. The head tends to shake and sometimes goes downwards or backwards according to the extremity of laughter. In some cases, tears tend to go down and some kind of pain is felt in the belly area. Laughter is associated with many funny contexts such as laughing at a joke, a sitcom comedy, or in a group of friends' talk, etc. on the one hand. On the other hand, laughing for nothing funny or not engaging in laughter with others might be regarded as: rude and can cause hurt to others' feelings, being nervous, or implying complete ignorance to others (Note 5). Human laughter has been studied from many scientific perspectives such as psychology where theories are applied in an attempt to understand the message behind human laughter. Explanations found were on situations in which laughter could be a natural reaction to a funny situation, one's emotions upon victory, or a shock that one feels that contradicts with their reality. All of which attributing these messages as an internal psychological state (Glenn 2003). In different psychological studies, it was found out that laughter might indicate many different emotions such as embarrassment or even implying a kind of threat. All of these different emotions depend on the surrounding interaction with the participant/s (Glenn 2003). Although laughter is confined with certain etiquette rules concerning specific contexts, it is similar in almost all cultures more than any other form of nonverbal communication (Glenn 2003). In Hijazi culture for example, it is impolite for a female to laugh loudly in public or to share her laugh with a strange man (Note 6). Certain contexts prohibit laughter in certain contexts such as in a funeral or in the presence of elder people, for example. Also, there are certain Hijazi proverbs that talk about the consequence of extreme laughter that would lead to forecasting bad news on those who are associated with that laughter. (Note 7)

2.3.2 The Context of Laughter Compared

2.3.2.1 Face-to-face Context

Since laughter is a social activity that we share with others, its most natural context is the physical face-to-face context where there are participants and a kind of communicative interaction taking place among them. Laughter cannot be inhibited in isolation. It is most likely that we laugh in groups rather than alone (unless we are watching a comedy movie or

remembering a funny situation, for example). We tend to laugh with close friends/relatives rather than with strangers. The physical context of laughter includes the tone, facial expression/s, body movement, gestures, the choice of words, and the extremity of the funniness of the situation. Since it is essential that laughter occurs in social environments with participants, it can be said then that laughter is produced for the benefit of others (McKay 2015: 7). Even though laughter is non-verbal and is regarded as a non-linguistic phenomenon, it can be analyzed linguistically in real face-to-face interactions by applying linguistic theories. Peräkylä (2007) describes how Conversation Analysis (CA) looks at the effects laughter imposes on the flow of the interaction. It focuses on the tone, body movement, discourse markers etc. Pragmatic studies on laughter such as (Rees and Monoroux 2010) looked at the role of gender identity in relation to inviting and accepting the invitation to laughter in a mixed medical environment. Their study found that the gender of the participant is of great importance when determining the function of laughter in interaction.

2.3.2.2 SNSs Context

As defined by O'Neill (2010: 117), CMC is "any method of communication between two or more sentient individuals occurring via interaction with a computational device (computer or cell phone) across a physical separation between interlocutors". She further describes IM as constituting a communication event that is text-based and synchronous that occurs between two participants who use messaging applications such as AIM, MSN Messenger, or Facebook chat. With the advancement of technology, laughter as a human nonverbal social activity is very much needed in online social communication as an important marker of interaction. Consequently, two important questions arise here: How would laughter be expressed since it is nonverbal and how can it be expressed in an online context where face-to-face interaction is absent? Crystal (2006: 28) claims that in virtual world facial expressions, gestures, and deictic expressions are not possible. He adds that rich nuances of intonation, loudness, rhythm, and pause cannot be written down as well since there is no physical interactive environment. He further adds that since there is no visual contact between participants, those participants cannot rely on context solely to make their intended meaning clear. Laughing with letters, words and emojis has been the only means by which laughter is expressed online. This has been documented by different forms of laughing online in different languages on online blogs such as (Linguisticator 2018). In the section below, some of the linguistic studies that looked at online laughter from different linguistic perspectives will be presented.

2.3.3 Expressing Laughter Online

Online laughter is not an easy task to analyze since it represents a phenomenon of short-message written communication and an approximation of face-to-face conversational tool (McKay 2015: 4). Though literature on written laughter is scarce, the studies that will be included here are some of the studies made on online communication in general where written laughter has been taken either directly or indirectly. In a comparative study between laughter as a non-verbal communication in physical and CMC contexts, O'Neill (2010: 118) defines non-verbal communication to "encompass paralinguistic cues such as vocal tone and

non-lexical sounds, proxemics, haptics, posture, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions." on the one hand. On the other hand, in the absence of physical space between interlocutors, non-verbal communication will include "paralinguistic cues defined as onomatopoeic items and textual variation such as capital letters indicative of loudness, facial expression translated into emoticons or icons representing common facial expression, and gestures, also shown by emoticons" (O'Neill 2010: 118). In other words, when letters are used, auditory and visual signs are lost and replaced by onomatopoeic utterances and emoticons. Studying online laughter in English, it was found that laughter can be expressed through the use of acronyms and initialisms such as *lol* to stand for *laugh out loud*, onomatopoeic expressions such as *haha*, haphazard letters such as *mwhaha*, or specific emojis such as 😄 (McKay 2020; Christopherson 2013; Kadir et al. 2012). Grundlingh (2020) studying written laughter online in different languages from a sociolinguistic and pedagogical point of view found out that written language is language-specific marking the user's identity. He provided examples such as: (1) *hahaha* (English) (2) *jajajaja* (Spanish) (3) *kkkkkkk/ㅎㅎㅎ* (Korean) (4) 哈哈哈哈哈 (Mandarin Chinese) (5) *wwwww* (Japanese) (6) *xaxaxaxa* (Russian or Greek) (7) *55555555* (Thai) (8) ههههههههه (Arabic). She further recommended that written laughter in different languages must be used for pedagogical purposes in teaching second language. O'Neill (2010: 117) studying written laughter in CMC found that written laughter is "more conservative than speech but less conservative than written speech." Hence, she recommends further research to support her claim. In a framework developed for scientists who are not familiar with Arabic natural language processing, Rodrigues et al. (2018: 1241) listed the onomatopoeic words found in Twitter. These included: ولوي هههه هاهاي ههههه خخخخ هههه. In his comparative text mining study between dialectal Saudi, Egyptian, and Arabic corpus in Twitter in relation to the language of the internet used, Alruily (2020: 371) examined the issues in relation to compounding, neologism, concatenation, shortening, spelling errors found in the collected data in general. Repetition of words is seen in many words such as ههههههههه standing for *hhhhhhhh*. He states that repetition depends on the emotion of the writer of which the longest repetition for ههههههههه in his corpus was 114 letters. By reviewing the previous literature, this study is an attempt to studying online laughter from a morpho-semantic perspective. It is also a contribution to studying HDA as used in two online platforms by Hijazi females. The purpose is that HDA might show different kinds of TLDEs that might be compared with other languages.

3. Methodology

Expressing online laughter depends on certain morpho-semantic processes as seen in the studies made on the literature reviewed above. These studies proved that morpho-semantic processes included acronyms, initials, repetition of letters, haphazard words, onomatopoeia, and emojis. This study aims to check if these morpho-semantic processes are present in HDA TLDEs or whether there are other processes as well. There will be no focus on the location of laughter within the conversational context or their distribution; rather the focus is only on HDA TLDEs used to express online laughter.

4. Data Collection

Since there are no studies made on HDA TLDEs, the collection of data has been done from a qualitative point of view. This is the best approach for the scarce nature of the data under collection (Creswell 2002: 22). Since language is an ever-evolving phenomena, the study is a study from a synchronic point of view that describes the current HDA TLDEs used online. This is also important in getting a first-hand collection of HDA TLDEs. These were the two methods I followed for the collection of data:

1. Sixty young Hijazi females participants: I asked sixty Hijazi females between the age of (18-25) to screenshot their own way of expressing online laughter on Twitter and WhatsApp IMs that were exchanged for personal purposes. These participants were King Abdulaziz University (KAU) students (Note 8), relatives, and friends. This is to ensure that all of them are Hijazis and live in Jeddah to verify the kind of variety being used. The choice of this young age is because this is the generation of the internet as being referred to by (Alajmi 2014). These participants were given one month to submit their screenshot messages to my email. The collected data consisted of 76 Twitter messages and 132 WhatsApp IMs. A thorough check up was conducted to confirm that the collected data included TLDEs only and to ensure that the context is a context of laughter and not sarcasm for example. TLDEs were found as a back and forth sent messages between two participants or more. A table for each participant was formed with their own TLDEs used. It was found that students who attended international schools, where almost all of their subjects and their means of instruction is in English, used English TLDEs among each other. These included *lmao*, *OMG*, *HAHAHA*, etc. Their data was excluded since it is not the focus of this study. As a result, forty-five Twitter messages and one hundred and nine WhatsApp messages constituted the data ready for morpho-semantic analysis. (Note 9). The nicknames, numbers, and identities of the users were anonymized so that they are not to be identified by others. These IMs and all the Hijazi expressions that might be included in this study were translated literally by the researcher because of the cosmopolitan readers who might not be speakers of Arabic or HDA. The data appears in the same way it has been collected.

2. Personal Observation method: Since I am an active user of different social platforms including Twitter and WhatsApp, I have been able to observe the different HDA TLDEs used. I started this process in December 2021 and carried on until the submission of the study for any recent update. The purpose of this is since netspeak is always on the move of change, I wanted to make sure that new additions might be included. I used to take screenshots of Hijazi-speakers posted interactions in both platforms. It is important to note that my data was of an ultimate use to me as a researcher and has never been used in this study since they represented the same as found in the participants' data.

5. Data Analysis

The analysis conducted in this study found out that HDA TLDEs used in Twitter and WhatsApp by Hijazi young females are formed by using different morpho-semantic processes. The analysis below shows in detail how these processes are used and how they are in interplay with each other to express online laughter:

5.1 Borrowing Some English TLDEs

Acronyms are a rich word formation process especially in the age of fast advancement technology. As defined in Yule (2020), this word formation process involves taking the initial letter of a set of words to form a single word. Usually, the formed word is spelled as a one word. It helps to abbreviate long words and makes it easy for users not to disturb themselves memorising complex technical terms. In English TLDEs, *lol* is an acronym standing for ‘laughing out loud’. It was firstly published in 1989 in FidoNet newspaper. Since then, it has been widely used in different online contexts by many internet users (Hiscott 2014). Not only that, many people started using it in spoken communication standing as a word *loll* and not as an acronym (McWhorter 2013). Interestingly enough, many words were formed on the basis of *lol* such as *lolz* for ‘many laughs’, *lolcats* for ‘funny pictures of cats’ (Morgan 2011). Users use the acronym *lol* for efficiency and saving time. There are different ways of using it as seen in these examples: *looooool*, *looooooooool*. As stated in Nilsson (2009), *loool* does not imply ‘laughing out out out loud’, hence it emphasizes an acronym in a dramatic way. Whenever laughter is to be emphasized, capitalization is used as *LOL* (Note 10). *Lol* found its way into almost all of English dictionaries such as Oxford Dictionary and Urban Dictionary since it became both spoken and written (Note 11). *lol* became so widespread on internet sites to the extent that it has lost its real use to denote laughter and has been used to indicate a ‘marker of accommodation’ (McWhorter 2013). *لول* ‘lol’ as an English borrowed word entered into Hijazi as a result of early borrowing that was introduced with netspeak. *lol* entered into HDA as an abbreviated acronym standing for ‘laugh out loud’ in English. In HDA, borrowing happened by using the same exact sounds in HDA as in English however not standing as an acronym or implying the same English meaning (i.e. laughing out loud). It came to be a borrowed word standing for expressing online laughter only. It is widely used by Hijazi non-native speakers of English marking an important phenomenon in semantic borrowing between unrelated languages. It is used in many instances with lengthening of one of its letters to show extreme laughter as in English. In its early use, the purpose of using *lol* is to feel ‘cool’ since it is an English word that shows that the user is regarded as sophisticated. Currently, it is not much used as it is considered an old-fashioned expression that has been replaced by other expressions of laughter. Another borrowed English acronym is *lmao* standing for ‘laughing my a** off’. It is used for contexts where the context is far funnier where a less funny context a *lol* is used. This acronym has entered into HDA as well in the same process of transferring the same sounds *لمافو*. Semantically speaking, it bears no semantic representations for the initial letters the English acronym represents. *lmfao* standing for ‘laughing my f** a** out’ is also borrowed by those young Hijazi females as well in the same kind of morpho-semantic processes stated above. It is written as *لمفاو*.

Table 1 lists all the morpho-semantic processes used in HDA in relation to the English borrowed acronyms. Figure 1 is an example of HDA English acronyms used in written Arabic alphabets (Note 12).

Table 1

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
لول*	<i>lol</i> ‘laughing out loud’ (an English acronym).	-The Hijazi written form and the pronunciation are phonetically presented exactly as in English.	-Borrowing from English	Expression of laughter.
لولز*	<i>lolz</i> ‘laughing out loud’ (an English acronym+ suffixation of -s for pluralization).	-The Hijazi written form and the pronunciation are phonetically presented exactly as in English including the {-z} sound for plural in English.	-Borrowing from English	Expression of laughter.
لماااو*	<i>lmooooo</i> ‘laaaaughing my a** out’ (an English acronym)	-The Hijazi written form and the pronunciation are phonetically presented exactly as in English. - Repetition of a letter.	-Borrowing from English	Expression of laughter.
لمفاو*	<i>lmfao</i> ‘laughing my f** a** out’ (an English acronym).	-The Hijazi written form and the pronunciation are phonetically presented exactly as in English.	-Borrowing from English	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above borrowed acronyms varies.

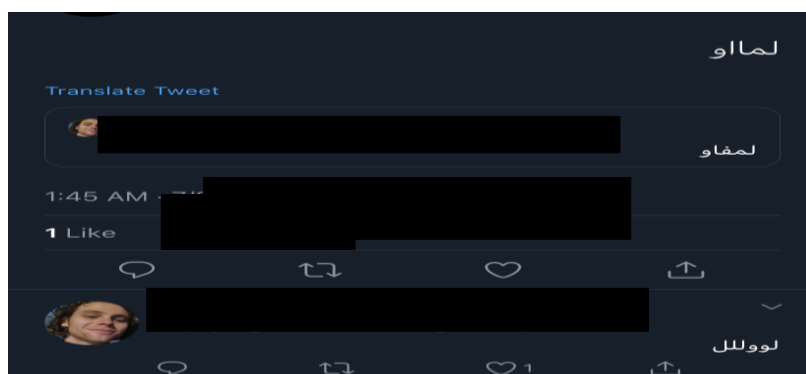


Figure 1

5.2 Onomatopoeia

Osaka (1990: 25) claims that onomatopoeia is formed as a word based on the imitation of natural sound produced. He further notes that the interpretation of that sound changes as language changes. His claim is further supported by Nash (2001:185) who gave an example of a dog's barking expressed differently in three languages: *woof-woof* by English, and *ham-ham* by a Romanian and *gong-gong* by Indonesian. He also noted that there is a non-arbitrary relation between the sound of a cat or a cow in most languages. As suggested by (Provine et al 2007) *haha* does appear in IMs to mimic the sounds produced when laughing. *hahaha* is the most common way used to express laughter online. It has been estimated by Ho (2018) that around 312 million users in the USA, 149 million internet users in Brazil, 462 million in India used this onomatopoeic expression on the internet. The reason behind using this expression is that it mimics the laughing sound as perceived in English. Interestingly, since English has been the first language used to introduce the internet with Latin keyboards, many languages presented this 'English-based laughing sound' using their own language orthography. These include Arabic, Korean, and Spanish, representing the [h] sound respectively (Ho 2018). According to Garber (2012), this kind of expression is a direct analogue of English. The sounds used to represent laughter in Greek, Thai, and Russian were different from English but still representing onomatopoeic sounds that expressed laughter evidencing that written laughter is language specific (Ho, 2018). Japanese rely on Kanji character for laughter 'warai' to represent laughter even though 'www' does not mimic laughter but still expresses laughter representing Japanese identity of laughter online (Garber 2012). Marković and Stojičić (2020) studying Serbian written laughter in literature to address readers found that the sounds that represented laughter were *xa*, *xu*, *xe* with *xy* and *xo* as rarely used. The most widely used are *xaxa*, *xa* to represent loud laughter while *xe* and *xu* representing quite laughter. Confirming de Saussure's view in that the relation between sound and meaning is arbitrary, *x* as a sound does not exist in Serbian vernacular orally but exists in the written form. As Provine et al. (2007) describe IMs as lacking auditory and visual cues, they should be rapid in response since they occur in a synchronic context where the interlocutor has no time to paraphrase. As a result, onomatopoeic utterances and emoticons come into play forming a similar physical face to face communication. Their function is purely an emotional cue in a merely textual context. It is as Nilsson (2009) describes it as a 'phonetic way of writing'. Imitating the sound of laughter as it is heard in real face-to-face contexts. Hijazi females use different onomatopoeic words listed in Table (2) along with their morpho-semantic processes. Figure (2) are examples of onomatopoeic data used.

5.3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole has been used extensively in the data collected and summarized in (Table 3) (Note 13). It has been used in order to show extremity of laughter. It is a kind of figurative speech where the speaker says something while they mean another thing (Stern 2000). The literal meaning of what has been said is extremely different than the intended meaning (Recchia et al. 2010). The main purpose of using it is to show exaggeration (Burgers et al. 2016). Speakers do not take the meaning literally, however, they know that the speaker is showing that they laughed a great deal. In this study, the meanings of these exaggerated words are based on bodily experiences we feel while laughing as well as our knowledge about different kinds of health conditions.

Table 3

HDA TLDE	Literal Translation	HDA TLDE	Literal Translation
1. موت	'Death'	9. كتمة	'Shortage of breath'
2. بكاء	'Crying'	10. انهيار	'Collapse'
3. جلطة	'Stroke'	11. صياح	'Loud shouting'
4. صراخ	'Screaming'	12. ذبح	'Slaughter'
5. قتل	'Killing'	13. تعب	'Tiresome'
6. القدرة	'Ability'	14. صداع	'Headache'
7. فطس	'Shortage of breath'	15. رحمة	'Mercy'
8. صرع	'Seizure'	16. ضحك	'Laughing'

5.3.1 /moat/ 'Death'

Death is the final stage of life. Death has been used here to describe a person who is experiencing extreme stages of hard laughter that have had led or might lead to their death.

Table 4

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
مت ضحك	'I died out of laughing.'	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
مت	'I died.'	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
بمووت	'I will diiiiie.'	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*بمووت * ضحك*	'I will diiiiie out of laughing.'	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
ميتة ضحك	'I am dead (f.) out of laughing.'	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
احس بمووت	'I feel that I will diiiiie.'	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a sound in all the above words varies.



Figure 4

5.3.2 /bokaa?/ 'Crying'

Extreme laughter might lead to crying out of extreme joy because we cannot control our tears falling off our eyes. Crying is used because it portrays the actual picture we experience when we laugh in an extreme way.

Table 5

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*ببكي	'I am about to cry.'	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*بكاااا من الضحك	'Cryyyyyy out of laughing.'	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*لي ساعة بالضبط ابكي من الضحك	'It has been exactly one hour since I have been crying out of laughing.'	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*قاعدة ابكي من الضحك	'I am crying out of laughing.'	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*حرفيا جالسة ابكي من الضحك	'Literally, I am crying out of laughing.'	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

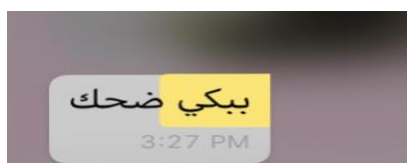


Figure 5

5.3.3 /ʒalTah/ 'A stroke'

A stroke is a medical condition where the experiencer experiences a sudden one side numbness in the area of the face, arm, or leg. This will lead to sudden confusion and difficulty of speaking or understanding others. Physical problems would also include difficulty in walking, loss of balance and dizziness. This is a very exaggerated way of showing that the person cannot function properly because of laughter.

Table 6

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
انجلطت	- ‘I got a stroke.’	(Derivational): forming a verb out of the noun (stroke).	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
جلطيني	- ‘You caused me a stroooke.’	(Derivational): forming a verb out of the noun (stroke). -Repetition of one letter.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

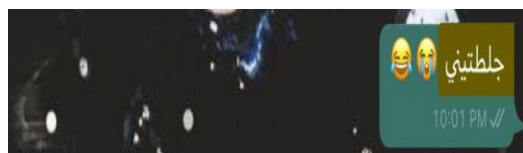


Figure 6

5.3.4 /Soraax/ ‘Scream’

This is a portrayal of a real situation when we fall out of extreme laughter. We tend to scream as a result of the unbearable pain we experience.

Table 7

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
صرررررخت	‘I screeeeeam.’	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
صراااخ	‘Screeeeeam.’	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
بصرخ من الضحك.	‘I am screaming out of laughing.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

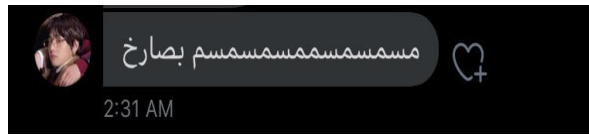


Figure 7

5.3.5 /gatil/ ‘Killing’

The act of being killed entails that the killed person is now dead and cannot function at all. Exaggeration is to show that extreme laughter will prevent them from any kind of action because they are already killed by those who made them laugh.

Table 8

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*قتلني	‘He killed me.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*قتلني بالضحك	‘He killed me out of laughing.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*قتلتوووووني	‘You (pl.) kiiiiiiilled me.’	- Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

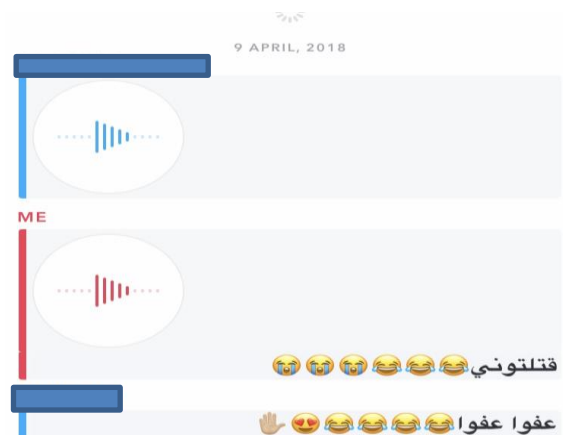


Figure 8

5.3.6 /?algorith/ ‘The ability’

Extreme laughter would make the experiencer not being able to laugh because the ability to do so is impossible. This is a portrayal of exact situations of extreme laughter where we are not capable of breathing or even trying to stop laughing.

Table 9

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*مقدرررررررر	‘I cannnnnnnnnn’t.’	- Repetition of one letter.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*مقدر اتنفس	‘I can’t breathe.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*موقادره أوقف ضحك	‘I can’t stop laughing.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 9

5.3.7 /faTas/ ‘Shortage of Breath’

In real comic situations, extreme laughter would lead to shortage of breath by the experiencer. The word /faTas/ is describing a person’s nose that is closed and there is no way the air comes in.

Table 10

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*فطست ضحك	‘I got out of breath because of laughing.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 10

5.3.8 /Sara9/ ‘Seizure’

Out of exaggeration, Hijazi females use this medical condition where a person experiences a seizure out of extreme laughter. A seizure is about temporary mental confusion, loss of consciousness, etc. Extreme laughter might lead to these symptoms as an exaggerated statement.

Table 11

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*انصررررعت ضحك	‘I got seeeeizured out of laughing.’	- Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
انصرررررعت	‘I got seeeeeizured.’	- Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 11

5.3.9 /katmah/ ‘Shortage of Breath’

A person experiencing extreme laughter will lead them not being able to breathe properly. This is out of exaggeration.

Table 12

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
انكتمت من الضحك	‘I got short breatherd out of laughing.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

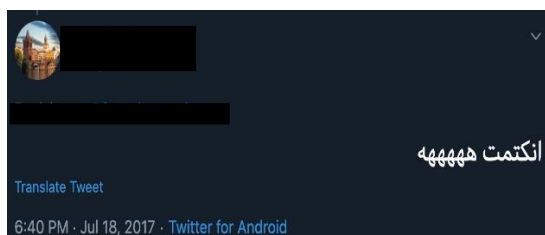


Figure 12

5.3.10 /ʔinhijaar/ ‘Collapse’

In real comic situations, we might fall off the place out of extreme laughter. This has been portrayed as a complete collapse that we experience out of extreme laughter.

Table 13

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
انهرت	‘I collapsed.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
بنهاااار	‘I am about to collaaaaapse.’	- Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
انهرت من الضحك	‘I collapsed out of laughing.’	-	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

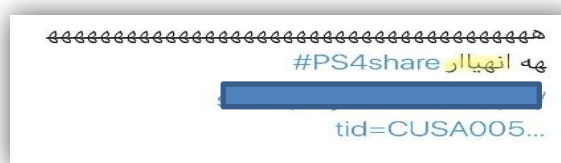


Figure 13

5.3.11 /SijaaH/ ‘Loud Shouting’

When experiencing extreme laughter, we tend to shout out loud since we are experiencing some kind of pain in our belly.

Table 14

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
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بصبيبيبيبيح	‘I am about to shout out louuuuuud.’	- Repetition of one letter.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
*صياااa	- Repetition of one letter.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.	

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 14

5.3.12 /dhabH/ ‘Slaughter’

A person who is slaughtered is a person who cannot function at all because they are already dead. Extreme laughter is portrayed as making the person slaughtered by those who make them laugh.

Table 15

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
ذبحتني ضحك	‘You slaughtered me of laughing.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
تكفون دبحتووني	‘I beg you (pl.), you(pl.) slaughteereered me.’	- Repetition of one letter.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 15

5.3.13 /ta9ab/ ‘Tiresome’

Experiencing extreme laughter might lead to feeling tired out of laughter. This will lead to that the person cannot take it anymore.

Table 16

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
* تعبت وربي من الضحك	‘I am tired I swear to God from laughing.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
* تعبت وانا اضحك*	‘I got tired of laughing.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 16

5.3.14 /Sodaa9/ ‘Headache’

Headache could be experienced as a result of blood flowing extensively into the brain as a result of extreme laughter. In this case, the person is implying that because of this headache, they are indirectly asking others to stop making them laugh.

Table 17

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
* صدعت من الضحك*	‘I have a headache out of laughing.’	-	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 17

5.5.15 /raHma/ ‘Mercy’

The experiencer of laughing is asking those who make them laugh to have mercy on them because they are experiencing bodily aches. It is an exaggerated statement.

Table 18

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
*ارحمييييييني	‘Have meeeeeeeery me.’	-Repetition of one letter.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 18

5.3.16 /DiHik/ ‘Laughing’

/DiHik/ ‘laughing’ is the lexeme used in MSA as well as in HDA to express laughter. Even though this lexeme is available for HDA users, the words used above (1-15) are used more frequently because they express extreme laughter. /DiHik/ is not the lexeme preferred because it does not express that extremity. (Note 14)

Table 19

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
بضححككككك	‘It makes you laaaaaaugh.’	-Repetition of one letter.	-Using the exact lexeme for expressing laughter. -Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
وربي كمية ضحك	‘Swear to God, it is a really big amount of laughing.’	-	-Using the exact lexeme for expressing laughter. -Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.

* صدع laughing.⁷
راسي من
الضحك

*Note: Repetition of a phoneme in all the above words varies.



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

5.5 Haphazard Letters

HDA young females use their keyboard letters in a haphazard way to show that they are very much at loss of choosing the correct forms of expressing laughter. This is to show their extreme laughter that prevents them from doing so.

Table 21

HDA TLDE	Literal Meaning	HDA Word-formation process at play	HDA Semantic process at play	Meaning intended
نبنبن	'nbnbnb.'	Haphazard typed letters.	-Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.
نمدخدخهه فطنس	'gjljgihjdfnkh.'	Haphazard typed letters.	- Hyperbole	Expression of laughter.



Figure 23

5.6 Emojis Used

In her study on WhatsApp messages among Nigerian University students, Otemuyiwa (2017) found that emojis and smileys not only are used to represent the digital version of body language, but have the power to reduce ambiguity and add emotional context to what is said in these conversations. Due to the limited space and time, emojis are not dealt with in this study. The purpose is to list all the emojis found in the collected data only (Figure 24).



Figure 24

6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the morpho-semantic processes used to form HDA TLDEs by sixty young Hijazi females in order to express online laughter. In the absence of face-to-face interaction, HDA TLDEs are used in an attempt to make the virtual situation similar to the real face-to-face one by using onomatopoeic words that mimic the sound of laughing, words that express extreme laughter through hyperbole, parts of the body that are physically felt when laughing, and haphazard words that denote that a person cannot type properly on the keyboard because of extreme laughter. Extremity of laughter is also expressed by the repetition of a letter. It portrays the actual real situation where we tend to have a very long laugh. The repetition differs from one user to another according to the emotion and the funny situation felt. Even though capitalization is used to denote extreme laughter in English, this phenomenon is absent in Arabic writing system and that explains its absence in the present data. Borrowing some English acronyms has been found as well. It has been used for these reasons: English as being the language of the internet and that those youngsters find themselves 'cool' since English is a prestigious variety in the Saudi society. Those borrowed words mark a distinguishable phenomenon in borrowing between unrelated languages in that the sounds are borrowed exactly as in the donor language with no meanings standing for the abbreviations of these acronyms. Brevity and saving time for using these acronyms are the main reasons in English, however, these are not the reasons for those Hijazi users. Getting on with the world's international language schemes with those youngsters'

spirit and it marks the influence that English has on other languages including HDA. It is important to note also that all of the TLDEs used in this study mark the user's identity as being Arabian and Hijazi in specific, Even though it is not the focus of this study to examine emojis, it has been found that two emojis are used with these HDA TLDEs to pack up and add to expressing the real face-to-face situation. The following emojis 🤔 😂 portray the physical appearance of our face when we laugh adding more to the HDA TLDEs used. Using all of these ways denotes that it is an attempt to make the situation real and to mark social interaction among online users. The contribution found in this study that has not been found in previous studies is the use of hyperbole, borrowing English acronyms as a sign of laughter, and using body parts that are associated with laughter. This marks a very important proof that Hijazi females are aware of the virtual context and are trying to make it similar to the real one. It has also been found that these HDA TLDEs are the same in their use whether in Twitter or WhatsApp IMs since they represent online laughter as a human social activity. This is to prove that HDA is a rich and flexible dialect that can have its own morpho-semantic processes that help to accommodate with the cyber world.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study has not focused on males or on other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. It is interesting to make future research in relation to males or mixed males and females' interactions and to other online platforms to check the kind of TLDEs used. Comparative studies are interesting as well in relation to different dialects and languages. Other branches of linguistics such as sociolinguistics and discourse analysis could contribute to social variables such as age, gender, and formal/informal contexts in relation to expressing online laughter.

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Notes

Note 1. Being a conservative community, this study focuses on young Hijazi females for three important reasons: it is far easier to reach young Hijazi females than young Hijazi males. The second reason is related to that females are far more willing to share and screenshot their private messages to a female researcher rather than males. Thirdly, gendered language studies such as (Bamman et al.: 2014) have shown that emoticons and laughter words such as *haha*, *lol*, and *lmao* are used more by females than males. Consequently, this will make it a gender-based study that attempts to check the morpho-semantic ways used by those females. Such study will encourage future comparative gender-based research in relation to males.

Note 2. It is important to mention that there is another written form used online to represent (L) Arabian varieties. It is known as *Arabizi*. It is a new online form of writing which is a mixture of romanised/latinized Arabic (Alghamdi and Petraki: 2018). It is mostly used by young generation. In Jeddah, this variety is very much used by youngsters who attend international schools where their medium of instruction is in English. They find it easy to text using latinized alphabets over Arabic alphabets since they are more familiar with Latin keyboard. *Arabizi* will not be dealt with in this study.

Note 3. This study will not focus on other computer mediated communication (CMC) such as voice messages, video conferencing, emails, etc. Moreover, it will not focus on any subjective claims related to the negative impact that CMC might have on MSA.

Note 4. <https://backlinko.com/whatsapp-users#whatsapp-statistics>

Note 5. It is beyond this study to study the different uses of laughter (being rude, ignoring others, etc.). The only use which the study will focus on is laughter in its most naturally-used way (i.e. funny contexts).

Note 6. It is interesting though to study IMs related to formal settings on social media platforms where the participants are both males and females interacting to check the kind of TLDEs used.

Note 7. *Allah yi9Tiina xair haDDiHik* ‘May Allah give us the best of what comes out of our laughter.’

Note 8. KAU is a governmental educational institute where the researcher works.

Note 9. The frequency of distribution in regards on to which TLDE is used more is not considered here since it is a morpho-semantic scope of study.

Note 10. Capitalization is a known feature of written English. This feature is absent in MSA and HDA writing system.

Note 11. lol exclamation - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com

Note 12. One of the morphological processes used in all the data collected in this study is the repetition of one of its phonemes to denote extreme laughter. It is according to the number of repeated times of the one phoneme, the more extremity of laughter is expressed.

Note 13. The list is presented haphazardly with no attention to their number of frequencies in the data.

Note 14. Many of the participants have informed me that */DiHik/* ‘laughing’ as a lexeme does not satisfy them in expressing extreme laughter. It might do so if one of its sounds is repeated many times.

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