# LAUGHTER AS A FACE MANAGEMENT DEVICE IN TURKISH: EVIDENCE FROM TURKISH SPOKEN CORPUS

## Türkçede Yüz Kurtarıcı Eylem Olarak Kahkaha: Sözlü Türkçe Derleminden Bulgular

Banu Çiçek Başaran[1]
*Middle East Technical University*

**Abstract:** Laughter, being a significant part of interaction, has been found to have important functions. Goffman (1967) and Brown & Levinson (1987)'s theories in relation with politeness are one of the major approaches to interaction that inter-relate with the function of laughter in discourse. This study aims to examine how laughter is used to achieve politeness according to Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and Goffman's concept of face (Goffman, 1972). For the purpose of this study, 26 laughter tokens out of 729 from the publishable files in Spoken Turkish Corpus (STC) are examined. EXAKT 1.2 is used to examine and retrieve tokens of laughter. The study shows that laughter is used by speakers for maintaining and saving positive and negative face. Laughter is not only used for maintaining one's own face but also employed for saving the face of others.

**Key words:** *Politeness, Laughter, Spoken Turkish Corpus, Face-threatening act, Face-work*

[1]banu.cicek@windowslive.com

**Özet:** Etkileşimde belirgin bir rol oynayan gülmenin birçok önemli işleve sahip olduğu tartışılmaktadır. Goffman (1967) ile Brown ve Levinson (1987)'ın incelik hakkındaki kuramları, etkileşimi gülmenin bağlamdaki işleviyle ilişkilendiren önemli yaklaşımlardan birisidir. Bu çalışma, İncelik Kuramı'na göre (Brown ve Levinson, 1987) ve Goffman'ın yüz kavramına göre gülmenin etkileşimlerde inceliği sağlamak için nasıl kullanıldığını incelemektedir. Çalışma kapsamında, Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi'nden (STD) elde edilen 729 gülme örneği arasından 26 tanesi incelenmiştir. Gülme örneklerini incelemek için EXAKT 1.2 aracı kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, gülmenin konuşucular tarafından onaylayan ve sakınan yüzü korumak ve  yüzü sürdürmek için kullanıldığını; gülmenin konuşucular tarafından sadece kendi yüzlerini korumak için değil, aynı zamanda diğer konuşucuların yüzlerini korumak için de kullanıldığını göstermiştir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *İncelik, Gülme, Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi, Yüzü tehdit edici eylem, Yüze yönelik eylemler*

# 1. INTRODUCTION[2]

Humor, being one of the major topics studied in the literature on conversational interaction, has been examined within the scope of psychology (Martin, 2007), sociology (Kipers, 2006), and linguistics (Attardo, 1994). One of the functions of humor in interaction is mitigating conflict (Norrick & Spitz, 2008). By investigating conflict talk, the study found that humor is used as a means for decreasing conflict in interactions. Laughter, considered as a response to humor (Bergson, 1900), is another notion that has been studied. Bergson (1900) argues that laughter has a social significance. However, Provine (2000) argues that because laughter mostly "is not a response to jokes or other formal attempts at humor forces a reevaluation of what laughter signals" (p. 42). Attardo (1994), too, implies that it would be wrong to determine a direct link between humor and laugh. Identifying one of the functions of laughter in interaction as intimacy builder, Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff (1987) argue that laughter is

---

[2] This article is an extended version of the paper presented at the *16th International Conference on Turkish Linguistics* in Ankara, September 18-20, 2012.

produced with intention and therefore cannot be regarded as non-speech sounds. Jefferson (1985) also mentions laughter functioning as turn taking device. Laughter can indicate the end of a turn in a conversation. Holt (2010) argues that because there is no direct causal relationship between humor and laughter, it is more fruitful to identify the actions of people while they are laughing.

Holt (2010: 1520) also suggests that laughter is used to "terminate the sequence". Another study examining laughter points out that laughter is used to repair breakdowns in conversation and for this reason it is encountered in situations which may potentially cause embarrassment and anxiety (Glenn, 2003). Goffman (1981), too, points out the same idea of repairing during conversation. Another function of laughter is discussed by Jefferson (1984). He suggests that "a troublesteller can, and perhaps should, laugh in the course of a troubles-telling, and thus exhibit that he or she is in a position to take it lightly" (Jefferson, 1984: 367). One of the significant features of this particular study is that the hearers did not join in the laughter straightaway; however, they often refused to laugh, and instead spoke seriously about the former utterance and the causes of the problem.

Partington's (2006) work is among those that place special emphasis on laughter by examining the topic from several linguistically relevant points one of which is face-work and laughter. Partington, (2006) suggests that laughter is not a mere response to humor but functions as a face controlling element in the conversation. Parallel to Partington (2006), Priego-Valverde (2009) also identifies one of the functions of humor and laughter as "management of face". Furthermore, Bauer (2010) combines laughter and politeness and suggests that insulting, lying, irony and interruption cause laughter.

Considering the issues raised by the studies on laughter, this study aims to investigate laughter and politeness in Turkish. The study examines the laughter examples from Spoken Turkish Corpus (Ruhi, et al. 2010) and discusses the function of laughter through face

(Goffman, 1967) and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) concepts.

## 2. FACE AND POLITENESS THEORY

### 2.1. FACE

Erving Goffman (1967) defines the notion of face in his book *Interaction Ritual* by considering face-to-face interaction. Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, 1967: 5). Furthermore, Goffman suggests that "face" is an image that is exposed to others for approval. Since face constructs an important part of social interactions, people try to protect their face during face-to-face interaction. Goffman argues that people attach some feelings to their faces and therefore they feel "good" or "bad" according to their expectations. Should a person want to maintain her or his social position during the interaction, she or he should maintain face.

Goffman defines two points of view in regard to face: "a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face" (Goffman, 1967: 14). This view briefly defines politeness as maintaining all the faces during interaction. He also suggests that maintaining faces is not to be underestimated. During face-to-face interaction, a person's face may be attacked by another speaker. In this case "being in wrong face" or "being out of face" (p. 8) occurs. Goffman argues that in these situations person feels "expressively out of touch with the situation" (ibid.) and that causes the person to feel ashamed and bad because her or his face is threatened.

### 2.2. POLITENESS

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson took on Goffman's theory of face and constructed Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The authors' define face as "something that is emotionally invested,

and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 62). Face is conceptualized in two respects: Positive face and negative face. Positive face is characterized by the desire to be liked, admired; while negative face desires not to be imposed upon. In other words, positive face can be regarded as self-esteem and negative face can be viewed as one's freedom to act. These two categories of face are present in any social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that there should be a cooperation between the participants in order to maintain each other's' faces, as Goffman (1967) also suggested.

Based on the sensitivity of face, Brown and Levinson (1987) propose the notion of face-threatening acts (FTAs). By acting in opposition to the desires of the person, FTAs can damage the face of the speaker or the hearer depending on the interaction. FTAs are also categorized into two by the type of face they act against. Positive face threatening acts occur when the speaker or the hearer creates a controversy with the interlocutor's feelings or wants of approval. This type of FTAs can be exemplified as showing disapproval or disrespect, belittling or boasting, interrupting, self-humiliation and acceptance of a compliment. On the other hand, Negative face-threatening acts occur when the interlocutor's freedom to act is blocked. Some speech acts are defined as negative FTAs, such as requests, offers, expressing thanks, excuses, suggestions, and warnings.

Based on these FTAs, Brown and Levinson (1987) also identified a number of politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Bald on-record strategies do not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. This strategy can be observed in times of emergency when the politeness is dropped during verbal cries for attention, for example Help! Positive politeness is a strategy for minimizing the threat for the hearer's positive face by claiming common ground or avoiding conflict. They are utilized to make the hearer feel good about her or himself. Negative politeness strategies are employed towards the hearer's negative face. These

strategies attempt to avoid imposition on the hearer. Lastly, off-record strategies can be defined as indirectness. So as not to impose anything on the hearer, the speaker chooses an indirect way.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the choice of strategy depends upon three factors: social distance (D), relative power (P), and ranking of impositions (R). Greater social distance between the participants requires more politeness. Also as the relative power gap increases, the degree of politeness increases. The heavier imposition on the hearer calls for more politeness.

These theories about preserving one's face during a conversation provide valuable hints for laughter used in conversations. These theories can indicate that laughter is not a mere response to humor but can also be used to save and protect one's or the other's face.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The paper focuses on laughter in Turkish and how it is used for politeness purposes. Since the literature on politeness focuses on face-to-face interaction, a corpus-based qualitative analysis has been carried out. As data, the Spoken Turkish Corpus publishable version (Ruhi, Eryılmaz & Acar, 2012; STC hereafter) has been examined via EXAKT 1.2.[3] This version of the corpus has 10.1 hours of spoken data corresponding to 71 transcriptions. Domains of interaction are conversational (workplace, family, friends); service encounters; broadcasts (news, entertainment); brief encounters and educational (see Ruhi, this volume for further information). Laughter is annotated in STC as "short laugh", "laughter", and "laughs". For the search procedure, "laugh" was used as a key word. As it can be seen in Table 1, the search provided 729 tokens. In order to limit the tokens, a domain limitation (conversations excluding broadcasts, education,

[3] Permission to use the publishable version of STC has been granted by Prof. Dr. Şükriye Ruhi. The author has also contributed recordings and transcriptions to STC.

service encounters) has been utilized. After the domain limitation, 535 tokens remained. Upon examining these tokens, 26 of them were chosen to be representative examples to be examined in the study. While choosing these examples, the context sufficiency of laughter to be examined was the main criteria. That is to say the context in which the laughter appears is to be meaningful and complete, not cut-off or left unfinished. It should be noted that this study does not present a quantitative analysis of laughter in STC but illustrates its functions in terms of politeness theory.

**Table 1.** Number of laughter tokens examined in the study

| Total Number of Tokens of laughter in STC | Total Number of laughter Tokens in STC | Total Number of Tokens Examined |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 54094 | 729 | 26 |

The study has its limitations as well. As the literature suggests, politeness strategies are employed unconsciously most of the time (Bauer, 2010). There may be some other underlying causes for the laughter used during interaction. As outlined above, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested some criteria (bald-on record, positive and negative politeness, off-record) for choice of politeness strategy. Within the scope of this study these criteria are not evaluated.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the data elimination process the study examined 15 audio-recordings out of 71. The number of excerpts analyzed is 14 which include the 26 laugh tokens examined. The function of laughter in relation to politeness is examined under two titles, namely, positive and negative politeness.

### 4.1. MANAGING THREATS TO POSITIVE FACE THROUGH LAUGHTER

As stated in Section 2.2, this type of strategy is used to mitigate or

manage threats towards one's positive face. There are ten examples of positive politeness. Below, the examples are illustrated and discussed. The summary of this section can be viewed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Summary of managing threats to Positive face through laughter

| Excerpt | Trigger | Face Direction |
|---|---|---|
| Excerpt 1 | Mispronouncing a name | self |
| Excerpt 2 | Receiving a depreciatory look | self |
| Excerpt 3 | Complaining about weight | self |
| Excerpt 4 | Failing to recognize a colleague | other |
| Excerpt 5 | Criticizing others | self |
| Excerpt 6 | Hearing a comment about physical appearance | other |
| Excerpt 7 | Making a criticism | self |
| Excerpt 8 | Making a comment | other |
| Excerpt 9 | Hearing an utterance about physical appearance | other |
| Excerpt 10 | Stating disagreement | other |

Excerpt 1 STC – 052 090819 00016

This conversation takes place between NEC and ESM, who are friends. They are talking about movies.

[22]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ESM000063 [v]** | ((0.6)) Pedro mu? | İspanyol Pedro mu? |
| **NEC000064 [v]** | yönet men. yönetmen. | İspanyol. |
| **NEC000064 [c]** | ((lengthening)) | |

[23]

| | |
|---|---|
| **ESM000063 [v]** | ((0.1)) Almodovar ((0.1)) mı? ((0.2)) Alm... |
| **NEC000064 [v]** | ((0.3)) Alm/ ((0.3)) |

[24]

| | |
|---|---|
| **ESM000063 [v]** | evet. evet (evet). |
| **NEC000064 [v]** | Almadavar. ((0.1)) Almadavo r. _ ((laughs)) ((0.1)) evet. |
| **NEC000064 [c]** | |

[25]

| | |
|---|---|
| **ESM000063 [v]** | hm˙ başrolde kim oynuyor? |
| **ESM000063 [c]** | ((like a short laugh)) |
| **NEC000064 [v]** | söyleyemedim. |
| **NEC000064 [c]** | ((laughing)) |

The excerpt above exemplifies the use of laugh for saving one's face. NEC and ESM are talking about movies and they try to remember the name of a specific director (Almodovar). Afterwards, NEC feels threatened because he cannot say the name of the director properly and in order to save his face he laughs (line 24).

Excerpt 2 STC – 061_090622_00020

In this excerpt, ZEY is ISA's mother and ISA is ZEY's son. ISA is arguing with ZEY about not being open to share troubles and concerns.

[156]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ISA000058 [v]** | e tamam. bi e anlatsam faydanız | |
| **ISA000058 [c]** | | olmıycak |
| **ZEY000073 [v]** | derdini bilmiyoruz. | |

[157]

| | |
|---|---|
| **ISA000058 [v]** | olmayacak ki. _ bu sizinle ilgili bişey değil yani. |
| **ISA000058 [c]** | |
| **ZEY000073 [v]** | e tamam. |

[158]

| ZEY000073 [v] | hani ben de anlatsam sana bi faydan olmayacak. ((inhales)) |
|---|---|
| ZEY000073 [c] | olmıycak |

[159]

| ZEY000073 [v] | ama en azından bu i/ içimde taşıdıklarımı paylaşmış |
|---|---|
| ZEY000073 [c] | olcam |

[160]

| ISA000058 [v] | yok anne. _yok. ((0.7)) e valla          hiç merak |
|---|---|
| ISA000058 [c] | ((yawning))          ((pro as gualla)) |
| ZEY000073 [v] | olacağım yani. |
| ZEY000073 [c] | |

[161]

| ISA000058 [v] | etmiyorum yani öyle. ((0.6)) hiç. • hiç. _sıfır. ((0.8)) |
|---|---|

[162]

| ISA000058 [v] | ((laughs)) ((inhales)) kızım bakma öyle yani. _merak |
|---|---|

[163]

| ISA000058 [v] | etmiyorum. ((1.7)) b/ başka insanlarla ilgili hiçbişeyi merak |
|---|---|

[164]

| ISA000058 [v] | etmiyorum anne. _hiçbişeyi. ((0.2)) yani. |
|---|---|
| ZEY000073 [v] | ((1.8)) ((inhales)) |
| ZEY000073 [c] | ((pros as şim)) |

This excerpt is also an example of managing one's own positive face as Excerpt 1. ZEY talks about her feelings about the sharing the troubles and concerns, saying that one should be open to sharing; and ISA disagrees with her, saying that he does not want to share his problems because he thinks that sharing does not lead him anywhere. It is understood from ISA's utterance that ZEY gives what is probably a depreciatory look at ISA, and he replies to this look by laughing. ISA tries to save his positive face threatened by ZEY's look, utilizing laugh (line 162).

Excerpt 3 STC 112_090217_00001_

In this excerpt TUG and FAT are talking about weight. TUG uses a bathroom scale to see how much she weighs. Afterwards, she starts complaining that she is heavier than her mother, which she highlights twice.

[24]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | ((0.3)) bakayım kaç kilo |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((softly)) |
| **IND000002 [v]** | |
| **IND000002 [c]** | imitating the sound of something)) |
| **[nn]** | ((loud noise)) |

[25]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | olmuşum? |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | ((1.1)) kaç kilo olmuşsun? ((0.2)) |
| **FAT000027 [c]** | olmuşun |
| **[nn]** | ((banging sounds)) |

[26]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | cık˙ ((0.2)) burda normal gösteriyor! |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | zayıflamışsın sen. |
| **FAT000027 [c]** | zayıflamışın |

[27]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | ((sniffs))      ((0.3)) annemin orda elli |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | ((0.3)) ee? ⌐nerde farkettin de? |

[28]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | sekiz gösteriyor.            • evet! ((1.0)) dedim |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | ((0.5)) elli beş. |
| **FAT000027 [c]** | ((softly)) |
| **[nn]** | ((ER's voice in the |

[29]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | anneme o yalancı diye. ((inhales)) ama annemi elli yedi |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((louder)) |
| **[nn]** | background)) |

[30]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | gösteriyor. ben annemden kiloluyum yani. |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((change in tone of voice)) |

[31]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | ((0.1)) ((short laugh))˙ |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | ((0.1)) annen        nereye elli yedi kilo olacak? ((0.2)) |

[32]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | ((0.6)) ne bileyim. |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((humorous tone)) |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | sanki kilo mu almış da?            ((0.4)) anneni de |

[33]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | ((1.5)) ama sonuç olarak ben ondan daha |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((loudly)) |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | çok göstermiş. |

[34]

| | |
|---|---|
| **TUG000026 [v]** | kiloluyum.   ((laughs))  ((0.2)) hadi demek ki kilo almışım |
| **TUG000026 [c]** | ((laughing)) |
| **FAT000027 [v]** | ee? |

At the end of each threat TUG poses to her own positive face, she laughs (line 31 – 34). Laughing after a self-face threatening act may suggest that TUG is trying to manage her own positive face. In this way, TUG softens the threat she poses to herself. Without the laughter, it is possible that TUG could have sounded serious about her utterance comparing her weight and her mother's. This excerpt is similar to Excerpt 6 in that the trigger for laughter in both cases is about body figure and weight.

Excerpt 4 STC – 085_090930_00217

In the following excerpt, XFE and ECE are teachers at an institution. SEV is a new teacher at the same institution.

[30]

| ECE000614 [v] | | rica e | derim! | | İngiliz | ce |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ECE000614 [c] | | ((loudly)) | | | | |
| SEV000329 [v] | teşekkür ederim. | | | | | |
| SEV000329 [c] | | | | | | |
| XFE000615 [v] | | (bu) gencimiz öğretmen mi (ne)? | | | | |
| XFE000615 [c] | | @ECE000614 | | | | |
| [nn] | noise)) | | | | | |

[31]

| ECE000614 [v] | öğretmenimiz. | s… |
|---|---|---|
| ECE000614 [c] | ((lengthening)) | ((lengthening)) |
| SEV000329 [v] | ((laughs)) ̇ | hoş |
| SEV000329 [c] | | ((humorous tone)) |
| XFE000615 [v] | canım hoş geldin. ⌣hayır | |
| XFE000615 [c] | | ((loudly)) |

[32]

| SEV000329 [v] | bulduk. | |
|---|---|---|
| SEV000329 [c] | ((humorous tone, lengthening)) | |
| XFE000615 [v] | lı olsun. | girdiğinde öğrenci zannetti m |
| XFE000615 [c] | | |
| IND000002 [v] | | ((sniffs)) |

[33]

| XFE000615 [v] | seni. ⌣gel öpeyim. ((0.2)) ((kisses)) e şey leri/ ((0.2)) e ((0.2)) |
|---|---|
| XFE000615 [c] | ((change |
| ALL000001 [v] | ((laughter)) ̇ |
| ALL000001 [c] | ((ECE000614 and SEV000329 laugh)) |
| [nn] | ((traffic noise)) |

XFE puts her own positive face in danger by asking ECE and SEV if SEV is a teacher working at the institution because she implies that XFE does not recognize SEV and thus she separates herself from the group. While ECE answers her question, SEV uses laughter to save XFE's positive face (line 31). Later on XFE explains that she mistook SEV for a student and welcomes her to the institution. In line 33 both XFE and SEV laugh to save XFE's positive face. One can also say that XFE laughs because she wants to save SEV's positive face which is threatened by XFE's utterance.

Excerpt 5 STC – 075_090627_00035

In this example HUL and ESR are siblings, NEV is their mother and ZOH is NEV's mother. ZOH offers mulberries to her daughter and grandchildren.

[35]

| ZOH000084 [v] | ((2.9)) hm˙ ((XXX)) ((1.0)) dut da yer misiniz? ((XXX)) |
| --- | --- |
| ZOH000084 [c] | yir |
| NEV000033 [v] | ı-ıh˙ |

[36]

| ESR000043 [v] | • ı-ıh˙ |
| --- | --- |
| ZOH000084 [v] | onlar da gel sonra taşıyalım. ((0.6)) |
| HUL000097 [v] | ((XXX)) ((XXX)) (hayır). |
| [nn] | (beeps, |

[37]

| ESR000043 [v] | (kim)? |
| --- | --- |
| ZOH000084 [v] | dutu ben seviyorum. ‿ bunlar sevmiyor. ((0.4)) baban |
| ZOH000084 [c] | tuti sevirem sevmir |
| [nn] | zipping)) |

[38]

| ESR000043 [v] | ((0.5)) ((short laugh)) |
| --- | --- |
| ESR000043 [c] | ((softly)) |
| ZOH000084 [v] | bile sevmiyor. ((0.5)) olsun yıkayacağım. ‿yiyin. |
| ZOH000084 [c] | sevmir yıkıyacam |
| [nn] | ((beeps)) |

[39]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ESR000043 [v]** | · ((laughs))˙ | ((laughs)) | bi tek sen seviyorsun. |
| **ESR000043 [c]** | ((softly)) | | |
| **ZOH000084 [v]** | | ((XXX)) | hah! ⌐bi |
| **[nn]** | | ((noise)) | |

[40]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ESR000043 [v]** | ((laughs))˙ (hayır)! | |
| **ZOH000084 [v]** | ben seviyorum Esra. | ((laughs))˙ |
| **ZOH000084 [c]** | sevirim | |
| **IND000002 [v]** | | ((0.2)) ((XXX)) |
| **[nn]** | | ((clatter of tableware)) |

Since they are not enthusiastic about eating mulberries, ZOH starts criticizing her children. Therefore, ZOH puts their face and possibly ESR's positive face in danger for not eating mulberries. To save her own face, ESR uses laughter (line 39) accompanying the comment that only ZOH likes mulberries. As a response to ESR's effort for trying to save her face, ZOH approves the comment made by ESR (ZOH is the only one who likes eating mulberries) and laughs (line 40). ZOH's laughter can be interpreted as giving face to ESR as well. ZOH does not want to be in debt for saving her face, hence gives a token to ESR to guarantee relational equilibrium.

Excerpt 6 STC – 072_090820_00022

The context of the interaction is as follows: All of the speakers are women and they are all relatives. RAM is the oldest one and GUL is the youngest. PER is RAM's daughter, SER is RAM's brother's wife and GUL is SER's daughter-in-law. After visiting RAM and PER, SER and GUL are leaving. The previous topic of interaction was pregnancy and giving birth.

[21]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PER000040 [v]** | inşallah. | |
| **RAM000080 [v]** | olur. ⌐(iyi oluruz). | sen e e kendin |
| **SER000081 [v]** | gidebilecek misin? | |
| **SER000081 [c]** | gidebilen | |
| **GUL000082 [v]** | amin. hadi gidelim. | |

[22]

| RAM000080 [v] | geniş sin ya. |
|---|---|
| GUL000082 [v] | ha˙ ((inhales)) hah! ((inhales)) ((short laugh)) |

[23]

| RAM000080 [v] | var mı? |
|---|---|
| RAM000080 [c] | |
| GUL000082 [v] | teessüf ederim. ‿bana şişman mı demek istedin? |
| GUL000082 [c] | ((laughing)) |

[24]

| PER000040 [v] | yok. ‿o şekilde demedi herhalde. ‿e |
|---|---|
| RAM000080 [v] | (Yusuf)! |
| RAM000080 [c] | ((first name, male)) |
| SER000081 [v] | ((laughs))˙ |
| GUL000082 [v] | ‿((short laugh)) ((laughs))˙ |
| GUL000082 [c] | |

[25]

| PER000040 [v] | e • ne denir böyle? ‿((XXX)) değil anlamında. o anlamda |
|---|---|
| RAM000080 [v] | Vüc ut. |
| GUL000082 [v] | haa˙ yok. ‿şaka |
| GUL000082 [c] | ((lengthening)) |

RAM says to GUL that she has a wide figure (lines 21-22), implying that GUL can give birth easily because she has a wide figure, but she chooses a bald on-record strategy to say that. For this reason, although no offense is apparently intended, GUL asks RAM by laughing if she meant she was overweight, implying that she is offended by this utterance (see the use of *teessüf ederim* (I deplore this) in line 23). PER tries to explain that no offense was intended and RAM also joins PER in the explanation. Although GUL said she is offended, she did it along with laughter, which can be considered a positive politeness strategy since it adds a jocular tone to her utterance. For this reason, after PER's explanations, GUL feels that she threatened RAM's positive face and therefore she tries to explain that she made a joke (see line 25 *şaka*). Without the laughter in GUL's utterance, RAM might have felt more threatened than she is in this interaction.

Excerpt 7 STC – 024_091113_00031

This is an excerpt from a conversation among family members. ONU is HAL's husband. They are making plans about seeing a movie.

[27]

| HAL000098 [v] | | vermişler. | | o aslında Su | luboya'ya gitmek |
| HAL000098 [c] | notu | | | ((fast)) | |
| ONU000099 [v] | | | ((1.4)) iyi miymiş yani? | | |

[28]

| HAL000098 [v] | istiyordu. | | ((0.4)) Suluboya diye bi |
| HAL000098 [c] | | ((laughing)) | |
| ONU000099 [v] | | ((0.6)) Suluboya ne ya? | |

[29]

| HAL000098 [v] | film var. _güzel bi film ((0.6)) miş o da! ((0.6)) ondan |
| HAL000098 [c] | = filmmiş ((loudly)) |
| ONU000099 [v] | siz |

[30]

| HAL000098 [v] | sonra da Suluboya... | ((1.4)) hehehe ((1.2)) |
| HAL000098 [c] | | ((imitating laughter)) |
| ONU000099 [v] | ona ikiniz gidersiniz olmazsa. | |

[31]

| HAL000098 [v] | ((inhales)) ((short laugh))˙ ((inhales)) ((0.2)) nasıl |
| ONU000099 [v] | ((short laugh))˙ |
| ONU000099 [c] | ((softly)) |

[32]

| HAL000098 [v] | biliyorum malımı. _ben de öyle demiştim ona zaten. ((0.3)) |

[33]

| HAL000098 [v] | oğlanlar gene maç izlediklerinde işte seninle bi gün dedim |
| HAL000098 [c] | senle |

[34]

| HAL000098 [v] | ((1.3)) ona gidelim. ((0.1)) yani Suluboya'ya biz gidelim. |
| ONU000099 [v] | ha˙ ((0.2)) siz de sul |

HAL is talking about going to the movies with her husband ONU. HAL talks about seeing a movie called "Suluboya" (Eng. Watercolor). She suggests that this movie is a good movie as well and ONU says that she and her friend can see the movie together, excluding himself from the event. HAL after imitating a laugh and producing a "real" one, comments on ONU's utterance. The imitation part somewhat strengthens the criticism that follows. However, HAL manages to soften the criticism by producing a laugh before her utterance saying that that is what she was expecting from him. This utterance threatens

ONU's face since HAL is trying to make ONU come to the movie with them. HAL uses laughter before her utterance (line 31-32), hence the criticism or better to say the utterance is softened.

Excerpt 8 STC – 023_100304_00181

This excerpt is from the workplace domain. SEN, DID, HUM, NIL and MUS are colleagues, and MUS is the only male in the conversation.

| [17] | | |
|---|---|---|
| **MUS000518 [v]** | | pe ki sadece kızlar var |
| **SEN000519 [v]** | Yüce Koleji'nde buluşun işte! | |
| **SEN000519 [c]** | ((loudly)) | |
| **DID000521 [v]** | (önce burdan) birbirimizi ((XXX)) ((XXX)) | |
| **DID000521 [c]** | ((loudly)) | |

| [18] | | |
|---|---|---|
| **MUS000518 [v]** | di mi bunda? | haa˙ |
| **DID000521 [v]** | ((0.1)) kız (işler) var ((XXX)) ((0.4)) ((laughs)) | |

| [19] | | |
|---|---|---|
| **HUM000467 [v]** | ((laughs))˙ | |
| **NIL000520 [v]** | işte mağdur male 'ler. | ((laughs)) |
| **NIL000520 [c]** | eng: erkek | |
| **DID000521 [v]** | ((laughs))˙ | (bence • Çankaya'ya) |

| [20] | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SEN000519 [v]** | ((1.7)) nasıl? ((0.4)) biz | |
| **NIL000520 [v]** | ((laughs)) | ((XXX)) |
| **DID000521 [v]** | falan mı gitsek? | |

All the other speakers except MUS are making plans for meeting and MUS asks if it is a girls only meeting (line 17-18). The others confirm this, and NIL tries to save MUS's face by saying "aggrieved males" and laughing. Since MUS is excluded from their plans, NIL wants to manage his face by using a positive politeness strategy. Laughing plays an important role in this example, because without NIL's laugh, the comment she made can be taken seriously. She not only saves MUS's face but also preserves her face as well. NIL loses face because she and her friends did not include MUS in their plans and in a way by using laughter (line 19) NIL tries to preserve her face

as well.

Excerpt 9 STC – 073_091109_00128

This excerpt is from workplace domain. MUR and HAR are colleagues. MUR starts talking about his son.

[286]

| HAR000339 [v] | | ((0.3)) tam bonus mu oldu? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| MUR000340 [v] | nus oldu ya. | | ((0.1)) tam |
| MUR000340 [c] | television commercial)) | | ((change in tone of |

[287]

| HAR000339 [v] | | ((laughs)) | ((eats)) | ((0.2)) getirmiyorsun buraya |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HAR000339 [c] | | | | getirmiyon |
| MUR000340 [v] | bonus. | | kıvır kıvır. | |
| MUR000340 [c] | voice)) | | | |

[284]

| MUR000340 [v] | saçlarını kestireceğim. ya bi fotoğraf |
|---|---|
| MUR000340 [c] | kestirecem |
| [nn] | ((noise, eating)) |

[285]

| HAR000339 [v] | ((0.1)) niye? |
|---|---|
| MUR000340 [v] | çektireyim de. ((0.1)) çünkü bo |
| MUR000340 [c] | ((bonus refers to the frizzy wigs of actors in a credit card |

This excerpt, too, is in line with giving positive face to friends. MUR is talking about his little son and that MUR is planning to have his son's photograph taken. MUR likens his son to the characters in a bank commercial who have frizzy hair and thus he says that his son needs a haircut. HAR, in line 287, laughs to show that he shares MUR's feelings too. By likening his son to an undesirable image[4], MUR puts his positive face in danger. The laugh on line 287 manages HAR's positive face.

---

[4] At the time of the recording in Turkey, people often made fun of frizzy hair with the same expression *bonus kafa* 'head bonus, i.e. frizzy hair'.

Excerpt 10 STC – 091_091021_00089

The example below is an excerpt from a recording among friends at university, who are arguing about the content of a workshop on designing and they now reach to a dead end position.

[377]

| KOR000248 [v] | | | evet. | ((laughs)) | |
| OZA000249 [v] | | | | | ta |
| MEL000250 [v] | ((inhales)) her seferinde buraya dönüyoruz. | | | | |
| MEL000250 [c] | | | | | |

[378]

| KOR000248 [v] | ben anlamadım. ⌐anlaşamadığınız noktayı ben |
| KOR000248 [c] | ((humorous tone)) |
| OZA000249 [v] | mam. |

[379]

| KOR000248 [v] | anlamıyorum hala yani. ⌐((laughs)) | ((1.0)) sen diyorsun |
| KOR000248 [c] | ((laughing)) | |
| MEL000250 [v] | | ilk/ • ilk |

[380]

| KOR000248 [v] | geri dönüşüm üzerine bişeyler yapalım. | | |
| MEL000250 [v] | dersten sonra… | (ne olur) | ⌐ilk dersten sonra |
| MEL000250 [c] | | noolu, ((fast)) | |

[381]

| KOR000248 [v] | | e ben   ce de • yani. | |
| KOR000248 [c] | | ((change in tone of voice)) | |
| OZA000249 [v] | | e tamam. | |
| MEL000250 [v] | bunu konuşalım. | | ikinci derste |
| XFE000652 [v] | | ben… | |

In order to make everything clear KOR says to MEL that he does not understand why they cannot reach a consensus (line 379). Since he laughs after this serious statement, he does not seem to pose a threat to MEL's positive face.

## 4.2. LAUGHTER AS A STRATEGY TO NEGATIVE FACE THREAT

Negative politeness strategies are directed to hearer's or speaker's negative face, which is the want to act free from impositions. There are four excerpts for negative politeness in the data. The summary of this part can be viewed in Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Summary of laughter as a strategy to negative face threat

| Excerpt | Trigger | Face Direction |
|---------|---------|----------------|
| Excerpt 1 | Hearing a complaint | self |
| Excerpt 2 | Suggesting others to do something | other |
| Excerpt 3 | Giving a present | other |
| Excerpt 4 | Hearing a comment about physical appearance | self |

Excerpt 1 STC – 012 090128 00002

This is an example from the family and friends domain. RUK is on holiday and has returned to her hometown. In this interaction she is paying a visit to her friend BUR.

[42]

| RUK000029 [v] | | ((0.4)) ha-ha˙ |
|---------------|---|-----------------|
| BUR000030 [v] | evdeyken dedim. ⌐hep beraber dedi | gidelim. |

[43]

| BUR000030 [v] | ⌐şey yapalım/ görelim. ((inhales)) ((exhales)) Rukiye de gel |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

[44]

| RUK000029 [v] | | ˙(short laugh)˙ ˙ | |
|---------------|---|-------------------|---|
| BUR000030 [v] | miş dedi. | | ((inhales)) o anda |
| BUR000030 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) | | |

[45]

| RUK000029 [v] | | ((laughs))˙ ((inhales)) |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| BUR000030 [v] | sinirlendim. bu geldiyse dedim hani nerde? | |

[46]

| RUK000029 [v] | | anca geldim. dün de yengemgil vardı. ((0.1)) hani |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------------------------|
| IND000002 [v] | hm˙ | |
| IND000002 [c] | ((softly)) | |

BUR is reproaching RUK for not visiting her. BUR says that when she found out that RUK was back, she got angry and thought "if she is already home then why does she not come to see me" (line 45). BUR uses a bald on-record (without redressive) strategy by imposing on RUK, and therefore RUK's negative face is threatened. RUK attempts to save her face by laughing before further explanation (line 45). RUK can save her face without laughing as well. However, by laughing she

also saves BUR's face since laughing is used as a hedging device. RUK wants to show that she is not offended by the imposition BUR has created. In order to maintain her own negative face RUK utilizes laughter. The similar kind of situation can also be found in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2 STC – 023_100304_00181

The interaction takes place between co-workers, and it is from the workplace domain. The speakers are making plans to visit SEN.

[59]

| HUM000467 [v] | | ((1.6)) ((short laugh)) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SEN000519 [v] | tamam. | on dör | t Nisan da olabilir. | ((1.0)) iyi. ⌐on dört |
| SEN000519 [c] | ((lengthening)) | | | |
| [nn] | | ((voices in the background)) | | |

[60]

| MUS000518 [v] | | | you know. |
|---|---|---|---|
| MUS000518 [c] | | | eng: siz bilirsiniz |
| SEN000519 [v] | Nisan olsun. ((0.6)) çok mu şey? ((1.9)) ya | | ni on dört • bence |
| [nn] | | ((voices in the background)) | |

[61]

| HUM000467 [v] | | | ((0.2)) hadi takvim lerimize |
|---|---|---|---|
| SEN000519 [v] | gayet iyi. | herkes planını yapsın o zaman. | on dört |
| SEN000519 [c] | | ((loudly)) | |
| IND000002 [v] | evet. | | |
| IND000002 [c] | ((softly )) | | |

[62]

| HUM000467 [v] | yazalım ((XXX)). ((short laugh)) | |
|---|---|---|
| SEN000519 [v] | Nisan'da | vallahi hepinize şey yaparım/ küserim. |

After making plans, the speakers decide on a date (April 14) on line 60 and HUM suggests that they all mark this date on their personal calendars. Since HUM threatens her colleagues' negative face, she laughs at the end of her utterance on line 62 to soften this threat. This laughter can also be interpreted as HUM' responding in a jocular manner to SEN's rather insistent tone that they make their plans accordingly for the visit. With the jocular tone HUM can be signaling that she does not take SEN's directive as an imposition.

Excerpt 3 STC – 021_081223_00180

This example is also from workplace domain. SUK and CIL are colleagues. SUK visits CIL in her office in order to give a small present to her.

[5]

| SUK000057 [v] | görüşmenin sonunda • şey vardı/ ((inhales)) çekiliş vardı! |
|---|---|

[6]

| SUK000057 [v] | ((inhales)) bu da ((0.2)) sana düşen. ((inhales)) ((laughs))˙ |
|---|---|
| CIL000517 [v] | ((0.2)) a-a (bu bu)… |
| CIL000517 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) |

[7]

| SUK000057 [v] | çekilişten. | ((laughs))˙ | küçü | cük bişey. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SUK000057 [c] | ((laughing, lengthening)) | | ((change in tone of voice)) | |
| CIL000517 [v] | _inanmıyorum! | çok merak ettim şimdi. | | |
| CIL000517 [c] | ((lengthening)) | ((unwrapping the present)) | | |

[8]

| SUK000057 [v] | _ ((laughs))˙ |
|---|---|
| SUK000057 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) |
| CIL000517 [v] | çok merak ettim ben |
| CIL000517 [c] | ((lengthening, humorous tone)) ((unwrapping the |

The laugh on line 6 can be interpreted as SUK's intention to manage CIL's negative face. Since CIL will be in debt to her, SUK laughs to indicate that her action is not an FTA. SUK says in line 7 that the gift is nothing big, which supports that the interpretation of the laugh in line 6 as an attempt to save CIL's negative face.

Excerpt 4 STC – 112_090201_00086

This excerpt is from the family and friends domain. TUG is HAM and DER's daughter. HAM is DER's husband, and MER is their family friend. They are talking about TUG's weight loss.

[186]

| HAM000240 [v] | • iletişim vergisi var. | bi daha |
|---|---|---|
| HAM000240 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) | ((fast)) |
| DER000241 [v] | bu sefer iyi bakmamışsın kendine iyi (tam). | |

[187]

| HAM000240 [v] | bişey ne var (ya)? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HAM000240 [c] | | | |
| TUG000026 [v] | | ((laughs))˙ | ha-ha˙ |
| TUG000026 [c] | | | ((pro as a-ha)) |
| MER000244 [v] | | (ben) zorladım da ((short laugh)) Tuğçe. | |
| MER000244 [c] | | ((humorous tone)) | ((humorous |

[188]

| HAM000240 [v] | ((0.3)) onları demiyor hiç. | |
|---|---|---|
| TUG000026 [v] | ((inhales))˙ | yani finallerden herhalde. |
| MER000244 [v] | | |
| MER000244 [c] | tone)) | |

[189]

| TUG000026 [v] | ((1.4)) bi de diyet yapıyor arkadaşlarım. |
|---|---|
| TUG000026 [c] | ((change in tone |
| DER000241 [v] | hmm˙ |
| DER000241 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) |

[190]

| HAM000240 [v] | ((0.8)) ne? | | ((0.3)) |
|---|---|---|---|
| HAM000240 [c] | ((change in tone of voice)) | | |
| TUG000026 [v] | | ((0.1)) ((short laugh)) | |
| TUG000026 [c] | of voice)) | ((exhaling)) | |

[191]

| HAM000240 [v] | diyet mi? | |
|---|---|---|
| TUG000026 [v] | | ((0.5)) e |
| DER000241 [v] | e sen ne yapacaksın onları? | |
| DER000241 [c] | napıcan | ((change in tone of voice)) |

[192]

| HAM000240 [v] | ((XXX)) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TUG000026 [v] | onlar yemeyin ((0.1)) ce • diyetlik şeyler yiyince ben de onl | | |
| TUG000026 [c] | = yemeyince | ((humorous tone)) | ((laughing)) |

[193]

| HAM000240 [v] | | arkadaşların | kimdi |
|---|---|---|---|
| TUG000026 [v] | ardan yiyorum. _((laughs))˙ | | |
| TUG000026 [c] | | | |
| MER000244 [v] | hmm˙ | hadi | ya ni!     (yalnız) ((exhales)) |
| MER000244 [c] | | ((change in tone of voice)) | ((humorous tone)) |
| IND000002 [v] | ((laughs)) | | |

Lastly, this example shows how laughter can be used to save negative face. The laughter in this context is different from other weight related contexts (Excerpt 3 and 6 in part 4.1) in that the laughter here is utilized to save one's negative face. DER says to TUG that TUG has

not taken good care of herself. MER says that she is forcing her to eat but that TUG is not eating. In order to overcome this threat to her negative face TUG laughs on line 187. Afterwards, she starts explaining why she is not eating. She says that since her friends are also on a diet, she eats the light products that her friends are eating and implies that this is probably why she looks slimmer. She uses laughter several times to save her negative face without posing a threat to others' faces (lines 190 and 193).

## 5. CONCLUSION

By reviewing a spoken corpus, the study examined 15 out of 71 recordings from Spoken Turkish Corpus. The study found that laughter is used as a mitigating device for threats to face and that it thereby saves face. Laughter is used both for saving one's own face and for managing the face of others. Although the numbers of male and female examples are not equal in the data, it is observed that laughter is used by both genders for face-work.

Further research needs to be conducted focusing on these criteria. Furthermore, laughter and face-work should be studied in languages other than English. Cross-cultural research would also be fruitful. Another research study could focus on the statistical relationship between positive face cases and negative face cases. Nevertheless, the study yields significant results from STC in regard to laughter and politeness. The study aimed to address the literature gap on the use of laughter in relation to Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in Turkish. As it can be deduced from the excerpts discussed above, laughter is not a mere response to humor as argued by Patington (2006). The study also supports the research conducted by Priego-Valverde (2009); laughter can function as a "face-manager" during interactions.

## REFERENCES

Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Bauer, S. (2010). *Can humor and politeness be combined? Analysis of the series "Friends".* München: GRIN Verlag.

Bergson, H. (1900) *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic.*

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glenn, P. J. (2003). *Laughter in interaction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior.* New York: Doubleday Anchor.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holt, E. (2010). The last laugh: Shared laughter and topic termination. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42, 1513-1525.

Jefferson, G. (1984). On the organization of laughter in talk about troubles. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 346–369). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jefferson, G. (1985). An Exercise in the Transcription and Analysis of Laughter. In T. A. van Dijk (eds.) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, vol 3, Discourse and Dialogue*, (25-34). London: Academic.

Jefferson, G., Sacks, H. & Schegloff, E. A. (1987). Notes on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy. In G. Button & John R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation* (pp. 152-205). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Norrick, N. R. & Spitz, A. (2008). Humor as a resource for mitigating conflict in interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40, 1661-1686.

Partington, A. (2006). *The linguistics of laughter: A corpus-assisted study of laughter talk.* New York: Routledge.

Priego-Valverde, B. (2009). Failed humor in conversation: A double voicing analysis. In Neal, R. N., Delia C. (Eds.), *Humor in interaction* (pp. 165-184). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Provine, R. (2000). *Laughter: A scientific investigation.* New York: Viking.

Ruhi, Ş., Eryılmaz, K., & Acar, M. G. C. (2012, May) A platform for creating multimodal and multilingual spoken corpora for Turkic languages: Insights from the Turkish Speoken Corpus. Paper presented at the First Workshop on Language Resources and Technologies for Turkic Languages, LREC 2012. İstanbul, 57-63.

Retrieved from http://www.lrec-conf.org/preceedings/lrec2012/workshops/02.Turkic%20Languages%20Proceedings.pdf

Spoken Turkish Corpus. http://stc.org.tr