

**HUMOUR STRATEGIES AND ACTS IN NIGERIAN STAND-UP
COMEDY**

BY

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Dedication

To Aralewa, for making melodious music in silent seasons, and
for coming at his time– may you find your time while there is still time;

and

Oreofe, a pretty princess, for choosing me.

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Abstract

Humour, which is associated with amusement and laughter, is produced in comic performances, particularly stand-up comedy; and Nigerian stand-up comedians (NSCs) use language to evoke humour and correct social vices. Existing studies have conceptualised humour, its use and sub-genres but have not given adequate attention to intentionality in Nigerian stand-up joking contexts. This study, therefore, investigated humour strategies and context in Nigerian stand-up comedy, in order to identify NSCs' intentions and how they are realised in their performances.

Humour acts, a model, which combined insights from general theory of verbal humour, multimodal theory, pragmatic acts, relevance, and contextual beliefs, was adopted as the theoretical framework. Data were purposively collected from video compact disc recordings of 28 routines of 16 male and three female NSCs in editions of *Nite of a thousand laughs* and *thecomedyberlusconi*, which were produced between 2009 and 2013. This is to reflect the gender composition of NSCs, focus on popular practising professional NSCs and avoid analysing their repeated joking stories. The data were subjected to pragmatic analysis.

Humour strategies adopted by NSCs involved manipulating cultural assumptions, stereotypes, representations, corresponding concepts and projecting personal beliefs. The humour strategies included jokes, voicing, verbal and nonverbal cues. NSCs' jokes were categorised into two: the physical appearance class and the socio-political and cultural situations class. NSCs presented jokes with comic and participants-in-the-joke voices. While comic voice was used to articulate comic image, comedians used participants-in-the-joke voice to dissociate themselves from the activity-in-the-joke. They articulated voicing differently through code-switching, reported speech, mimicry and change in pitch. Female NSCs favoured English as the matrix language of their narration, but male comedians primarily used Nigerian Pidgin. Verbal cues in their jokes included joke utterance, participants-in-the-joke, especially the targets of jokes, and activity-in-the-joke. Two kinds of nonverbal cues, physical and prosodic, were found in NSCs' performances. The physical cues included gestures, which were categorised into iconic, deictic and metaphoric; posture, which was primarily open, praising, which connoted professionalism, costume or affiliation with the audience; layout/space, which denoted NSCs' superior conversational role; dance, which mirrored participants-in-the-joke actions; and pauses, which could be a transition-relevance place pause or a non-transition-relevance place pause. Prosody was used to articulate comedians' attitudes and indicate different performance functions: a change in pitch signalled a change in voice, accents were used for emphasising comedians' focus, whereas intonation enhanced the textuality and musicality of narrations. The NSCs operationalized two contexts: context-in-the-joke and context-of-the-joke. The context-of-the-joke consisted in assumptions shared with the audience like shared knowledge of code, shared situational knowledge, and shared cultural knowledge. By making mutually manifest context-in-the-joke in the context-of-the-joke, they instantiated humour acts like commencement, teasing, eliciting, reinforcement, appraisal and informing, which bifurcated into self-praising and self-denigrating.

Nigerian stand-up comedians consciously design their humour strategies towards building a positive society. There is, therefore, the need to harness the views projected in the jokes of Nigerian stand-up comedians for national development.

Keywords: Nigerian stand-up comedy, Humour acts, Humour strategies, Jokes

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I.O. Filani,

March, 2016.

Certification

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. I.O Filani in the Department of English,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Certification	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Transcription Conventions	xi
List of Tables and Figures	xii
List of Plates	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	3
1.3 Aim and objectives of the study	4
1.4 Significance of the study	5
1.5 An overview of stand-up comedy	5
1.6 The Nigerian stand-up comedy	9
1.7 Summary	16
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE	17
2.0 Introduction	17
2.1 Classification of humour	17
2.2 Taxonomy of humour theories	17
2.2.1 The incongruity theory	18
2.2.2 The superiority theory	20
2.2.3 The relief theory	21
2.3 Linguistic theories of humour	22
2.3.1 Semantic script theory of humour (SSTH)	22
2.3.1.1 The pragmatic aspect of SSTH	25
2.3.1.2 Criticisms of SSTH	26
2.3.2 General theory of verbal humour (GTVH)	27
2.3.2.1 Criticisms of the GTVH	28
2.4 Jokes	29
2.5 Functional studies on jokes	31

2.6 Conversation joke-telling and stand-up joke-telling	32
2.6 Joke performance in stand-up comedy	33
2.8 Timing in joke performance	36
2.9 Studies on Nigerian stand-up comedy	37
2.10 Theoretical orientations	40
2.10.1 Relevance theory (RT)	40
2.10.1.1 RT approaches to humour	41
2.10.2 Mey's pragmatic acts theory	45
2.10.3 Context	45
2.11 Theoretical model: humour acts	47
2.12 Aspects of humour acts	50
2.12.1 Layer A: Context-in-the-joke	50
2.12.1.1 The joke utterance	51
2.12.1.2 The participants-in-the-joke	51
2.12.1.3 The activity-in-the-joke	53
2.12.1.4 Conversational acts	53
2.12.1.5 Prosodic cues	54
2.12.1.6 Physical acts	54
2.12.1.7 Voice	55
2.12.2 Layer B: Context-of-the-joke	56
2.12.2.1 The shared cultural knowledge	56
2.12.2.2 The shared situational knowledge	57
2.12.2.3 The shared knowledge of code	57
2.12.3 Layer C: Encyclopaedic knowledge	58
2.13 Summary	59
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	60
3.0 Introduction	60
3.1 Research design	60
3.2 Data collection	60
3.3 Sampling size and technique	61
3.4 Method of data analysis	63

CHAPTER FOUR: NARRATIVE ASPECTS OF THE SAMPLED NIGERIAN STAND-UP PERFORMANCES	64
4.0 Introduction	64
4.1 The use of voicing	64
4.1.1 Code selection and code switching in Nigerian stand-up Performances	66
4.1.2 The use of mimicry	71
4.1.3 The use of reported speech	75
4.2 Conversational acts	79
4.2.1 The use of pauses	80
4.2.2 Prosodic cues	83
4.2.2.1 The use of pitch	83
4.2.2.2 The use of accent	85
4.2.2.3 The use of intonation	86
4.3 Nonverbal cues	88
4.3.1 The comedians' attires	89
4.3.2 Layout and space utilisation	95
4.3.3 Adoption of dancing	105
4.3.4 Posture: comedian's body position on stage	115
4.3.5 Gaze	118
4.3.6 Gestures	122
4.4 Towards a classification of jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy	127
4.5 Summary	129
CHAPTER FIVE: HUMOUR STRATEGIES IN THE SELECTED NIGERIAN STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES	130
5.0 Introduction	130
5.1 Predicting interpretive steps	130
5.2 Employing conflicting assumptions in joke performances	131
5.3 Comparing, contrasting and extending corresponding concepts and referring expressions	137
5.4 Referring to assumptions from previous discourse(s)	145
5.5 Joking with shared cultural beliefs	150
5.5.1 Manipulating shared cultural representations	152

5.5.2 Distorting collective knowledge of people, social events and situations	154
5.5.3 Strengthening and/or contradicting stereotypes	158
5.5.4 Projecting personal beliefs	160
5.6 Summary	162
CHAPTER SIX: HUMOUR ACTS IN THE SELECTED NIGERIAN STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES	163
6.0 Introduction	163
6.2 Analysis of humour acts	163
6.2.1 Commencement acts in stand-up comedy performance	163
6.2.2 Informing acts in stand-up comedy performances	166
6.2.2.1 Denigrating acts in stand-up comedy performances	168
6.2.2.2 Self-praising acts in stand-up comedy performances	172
6.2.3 Eliciting acts in stand-up comedy performances	175
6.2.4 Teasing acts in stand-up comedy performances	180
6.2.5 Appraisal acts in stand-up comedy performances	183
6.2.6 Reinforcement acts in stand-up comedy performances	187
6.3 Summary	190
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	191
7.0 Introduction	191
7.1 Summary of the study	191
7.2 Findings and contributions knowledge	191
7.3 Suggestions for future studies	193
References	194
Discography	203

Transcription conventions

- ↗ Prominent raising intonation
- ↘ Prominent falling intonation
- < Higher Pitch
- > Lower Pitch
- (p) Non-transition-relevance place pause
- (P) Transition-relevance-place pause
- “ ” Denotes utterances adduced to participants-in-the-joke
- , Pause less than a second
- ! Accent or emphasis. When there is more than one, it signifies the degree of the emphasis
- [Overlaps
- : Length
- (AL) Audience laugh
- (AC) Audience clap
- (CL) Comedian laughs
- (AS) Audience shout
- (AR) Audience reply
- ... false attempt at the utterance
- ? Interrogative utterance
- . Declarative utterance
- {.} unclear and unable to transcribe
- / line boundary in the translations

Source: The researcher

List of tables and figures

Table 1: Attardo's classification of humour theories	18
Table 2: Presentation of comedians' appearances	62
Figure 1: Humour acts model	50
Figure 2: Classification of jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy	122

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

List of plates

Plate 4.1	AY portraying D’banj	74
Plate 4.2	AY portraying D’banj II	74
Plate 4.3	AY portraying Chris Oyakilome	75
Plate 4.4	AY portraying Chris Oyakilome II	75
Plate 4.5	Comedian’s manner of dressing	90
Plate 4.6	Comedian’s manner of dressing II	90
Plate 4.7	Costume in I Go Dye’s performance	91
Plate 4.8	I Go Dye removing his sunglasses	91
Plate 4.9	I Go Dye using his necklace as a prop	92
Plate 4.10	Princess appearance on stage	94
Plate 4.11	Bovi’s appearance on stage	94
Plate 4.12	Performance layout	96
Plate 4.13	Performance layout II	96
Plate 4.14	The use of spotlight	98
Plate 4.14	The use of coloured light	98
Plate 4.15	The use of spotlight II	99
Plate 4.16	The use of borderlights	99
Plate 4.18	Funnybones’ use of stage layout	101
Plate 4.19	Funnybones’ use of stage layout II	102
Plate 4.20	Funnybones’ use of stage layout III	102
Plate 4.21	Funnybones’ use of stage layout IV	103
Plate 4.22	Gordons’ use of performance layout	103
Plate 4.23	Gordons’ use of performance layout II	104
Plate 4.24	Gordons’ use of performance layout III	104
Plate 4.25	Princess dancing into the stage	106
Plate 4.26	Princess focusing on her dance	106
Plate 4.27	Princess facing the audience while dancing	107
Plate 4.28	Princess adoption of Alanta dance	107
Plate 4.29	Princess intensifying her Alanta dance	108
Plate 4.30	Princess focusing on the audience while performing Alanta dance	108
Plate 4.31	Basketmouth mimicking the dance steps of his target	109
Plate 4.32	Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target	109
Plate 4.33	Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target II	110
Plate 4.34	Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target III	110
Plate 4.35	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Raskimono	112
Plate 4.36	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Raskimono II	113
Plate 4.37	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Chris Okotie	113
Plate 4.38	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Chris Okotie II	114

Plate 4.39	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Alex O	114
Plate 4.40	AY mimicking the dancing steps of Alex O II	115
Plate 4.41	Open posture adopted by Bovi	116
Plate 4.42	Open posture adopted by Seyilaw	116
Plate 4.43	Gordons mirroring the postural stance of a participant-in-the-joke	117
Plate 4.44	Gordons mirroring the postural stance of a participant-in-the-joke II	117
Plate 4.45	Funnybones with inviting posture	118
Plate 4.46	Basketmouth focusing his gaze on the stage	119
Plate 4.47	Basketmouth focusing his gaze on his gesticulations	119
Plate 4.48	Basketmouth focusing his gaze on his audience	120
Plate 4.49	Bovi gazing at the audience to his left	121
Plate 4.50	Bovi gazing at the audience opposite him	121
Plate 4.51	Bovi gazing at the audience to his right	122
Plate 4.52	Iconic gesture	123
Plate 4.53	Concrete pointing in Princewill's performance	124
Plate 4.54	Concrete pointing in Basketmouth's performance	124
Plate 4.55	Metaphoric gesture in Gordons' performance	126
Plate 4.56	Metaphoric gesture in Gordons' performance II	126
Plate 4.57	Bovi gawking	127
Plate 4.58	Basketmouth gawking	127
Plate 5.1	Youngest Landlord's dressing	135
Plate 5.2	Helen Paul's appearance on stage	140
Plate 5.3	Helen Paul's appearance on stage II	140
Plate 5.4	Helen Paul removing her "packaging"	141
Plate 5.5	Helen Paul without her wig	141

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Humour is part of human cultural universals and it is a condition for humanity (Oring, 2003). Schwarz (2010: 8) asserts that humour “represents a central aspect of our everyday conversations and it is a general fact that all humans naturally participate in humorous speech and behaviour”. Bilig (2005) notes that humour is an infinitely intricate phenomenon that plays a central and necessary part in social life.

Scholars usually associate humour with laughter, gaiety, mirth, and feelings of happiness (Berger 1995). To Roventa-Frumusani (1986), as noted in Attardo (1994), a text is humorous if its perlocutionary effect is laughter. Moreover, Attardo (2011:135) opines that “the term humour has emerged as technical term to be intended as covering anything that is (or maybe) perceived as funny, amusing or laughable.”

Some scholars have argued against using laughter as a determining factor for humour because it is difficult to always pin down laughter to humour (Attardo, 1994). Laughter may signify different meanings depending on the culture. Attardo (1994) calls for a cautious use of laughter as a prerequisite for humour and following Raskin (1985), he advocates the use of humour competence (Raskin adopted the Generative Linguistics’ notion of competence) as a criterion for defining humour. To Attardo and Raskin, what is humorous is what the native speakers of a language take as humorous.

Using the generative notion of competence to define humour limits the application of such definition to only monolingual and mono-cultural societies, since the term competence in Generative Linguistics denotes the intuitive knowledge of a native speaker. It implies that humour takes place only in native speakers’ contexts, and also, in order to define it, we must look into only what native speakers take as humorous. However, humour occurs in cross cultural and multilingual societies, where interlocutors have different cultures, languages and might even be multilingual. Thus, the use of only Generative Linguistics’ notion of competence may not cater for humorous texts that are generated in a multicultural society like Nigeria. Besides, humour is not just intuitive, as Lin and Tan (2010) have noted, it is socially generated. It can thus be found in a situation where interlocutors may not actually share the same first language competence.

The concept of humour has been reviewed in the preceding paragraphs because the goal of this study is to examine the use of humour in Nigerian stand-up comedy. Stand-up comedy is a genre of popular culture, where humour is produced by stand-up comedians and consumed by the audience. For the purpose of this study, Attardo's (2011) concept of humour will be adopted. Thus, a humorous text will be taken as a text which is seen as humorous in the context of its production.

The study of humour cuts across different disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, literature and anthropology (Dyrel, 2009). In language studies, scholars have approached humour from the linguistic perspective. Schwarz (2010) opines that the study of humour occupies an important place in research in English linguistics, and as Attardo (1994) has shown, linguistic theories and approaches have been applied to the phenomenon of humour. In addition, the use of humour in human interactions has been examined in several aspects of linguistics studies such as cognitive linguistics (Berger and Binsted, 2003), and applied linguistics, especially conversational analysis (Sacks, 1972 and 1978; Tannen, 2005; Andrew, 2012; Pan, 2012; Matsumoto, 2009; and Knight, 2008), language learning (Lovorn, 2008), gender (Holmes, 2006; Seiler and Unger, 1997), and translation studies (Vandaele, 2010; Jabbar and Ravizi, 2012). The main focus in these linguistic studies is to examine how humour is derived from language and most especially, from jokes. These studies also examine the social functions of jokes in conversations, for instance, gender dimensions in the use of jokes, significance of jokes in communication exchanges and relevance of jokes to language teaching.

Raskin (1985), drawing from cognitive notion of scripts and generative grammar, presents a new approach to the semantics of humour (Attardo, 2011). Raskin (1985) proposes that a linguistic approach to humour is an instance of applied linguistics. Raskin's argument, according to Attardo (1994: 16) is that the "problems to be solved should come from the field of humour, whereas the methodology and evaluation should come from linguistics." Linguists are interested in humour because it is primarily expressed through language, and just like language, it is embedded with meaning. Also, since humans engage in conversations which often include the use of humour, it is necessary for linguists who are interested in conversational analysis to investigate how humour is used and the purposes it serves in conversations. Besides, users of humorous utterances do have implicit and/or explicit intentions for their use of humorous utterances, hence, there is need to investigate the pragmatic force of such

language use. This study attempts to carry out a linguistic approach to the study of humour, which is generated from Nigerian stand-up comedy. The genre of Nigerian stand-up comedy was chosen because it readily provided humorous texts for analysis and a situation where an interaction between participants, the stand-up comedians and the audiences, was taking place.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Previous linguistic studies of humour have focused on canned jokes and conversational joking, leaving out instances humour performance like stand-up comedy. Günther (2003:1) observes that “linguistic analyses of humour have generally been based on prepared material (texts, canned jokes) and introspection”. According to Günther (2003), several linguistic studies on humour are subjective since they are based on eclectic collections of anecdotal data and corpora focused on narrow selections of conversational contexts. Günther (2003) also notes that these linguistic studies are carried out within the structuralist framework and are scarcely discussed from the perspective of actual use.

Schwarz (2010:9) corroborates Günther’s assertions by noting that, though “various researchers have dealt with specific categories of humour and have either developed humour theories or modified existing theories... only scant attention has been paid to research on stand-up comedy.” The observations that stand-up comedy has not been given a proper attention in linguistic approaches to humour is true, because even in Attardo’s (1994) *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, stand-up comedy is not mentioned as one of the genres of humour nor is any academic study on stand-up comedy reviewed. Besides, linguistic studies on humour have concentrated on only ambiguity-based jokes (for example, Giora, 1991; Raskin, 1985; and Lew, 1997).

In addition, most linguistic studies of jokes do not view jokes as having particular pragmatic functions or performing specific acts; perhaps, because scholars have concentrated on investigating only the structure of jokes and have formulated their theories without considering the context and content of the jokes. For instance, Richie (2004) does not involve the consideration of joking contexts in the analysis of jokes, even though the study recognises that jokes are culturally oriented. Jokes certainly have messages which they convey whenever they are used. Participants adopt jokes to indicate their intentions in any communication exchange.

Moreover, linguistic studies on humour have focused only on jokes generated from native speakers' contexts leaving out humorous texts which are generated in multilingual contexts like Nigeria. Adetunji (2013) observes that linguistic investigation of stand-up comedy performances have been limited to only native English contexts. Although there are studies that compare humour across cultures (for instance, Katamaya 2008), most of the linguistic scholarships on stand-up comedy are based on analysis of performances from America and the UK.

From the preceding paragraphs, it can be deduced that the genre of stand-up comedy, most especially Nigerian stand-up comedy, has been neglected in linguistic studies. The observations identified above serve as impetus for this study. Since the previous studies have not examined stand-up comedians' intentions in their joking contexts, this study describes stand-up comedians' intentions in their performances and the strategies that are used to actualise such intentions.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to identify and explain how Nigerian stand-up comedians actualise their intentions in the contexts of their joke performance. All humans use language but how language is used and what it is used for differ from one context to another. In similar way, language use in Nigerian stand-up comedy performance differs from language use in any other context. Nigerian stand-up comedians play with language and use it to portray the prevailing socio-cultural situations in the country while amusing their audience. The following were the specific objectives of the study:

- i. to describe the humour acts in the performances of jokes by Nigerian stand-up comedians;
- ii. to explore the humour strategies employed by Nigerian stand-up comedians in their performances;
- iii. to examine how Nigerian stand-up comedians employ nonverbal cues like gesture, posture, dance and costume for the purpose of their performances;
- iv. to investigate how Nigerian stand-up comedians articulate voicing for the narration of jokes;
- v. to describe the contexts deployed by Nigerian stand-up comedians in the performance of their jokes.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study will help readers to understand how Nigerian stand-up comedians realise their intentions in the context of their performances. The study investigates, primarily, the humour acts and strategies, in the performances of jokes by Nigerian stand-up comedians. Thus, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on how humour is instantiated in stand-up comedy performances. Specifically, it will help readers to know how Nigerian stand-up comedians use language and other semiotic means to elicit laughter in their performances. The study will also provide information to other researchers who are interested in studies related to this.

The study will be relevant to stand-up comedians and individuals who desire to become stand-up comedians. This study will help stand-up comedians to see how their trade is conceptualised theoretically from the linguistic perspective. For those who desire to be stand-up comedians, it will provide illustration of how they could perform jokes since it presents analysis of samples of performances.

Besides, by adopting pragmatic principles to analyse humour in Nigerian stand-up comedy performances, this study underscores how Nigerian comedians reflect in their joking stories the realities of their country. Therefore, it pinpoints the social relevance of stand-up comedy in Nigeria.

1.5 An overview of stand-up comedy

The term stand-up comedy refers to a genre of entertainment in which a performer stands in front of an audience, presents to them funny utterances and also behaves in a funny way. The performer is also known as a comic, stand-up comic, stand-up comedian or stand-up (Ayakoroma, 2013). Schwarz (2010:17) describes stand-up comedians as

individual performers who plant themselves in front of their listeners with their microphones and start telling a succession of funny stories, one-liners or short jokes, and anecdotes, which are often called 'bits', in order to make their audience laugh. The humourists' personalities, their interaction with the audience and their ability to spontaneously react to heckling are crucial aspects for successful stand-up comedy.

Mintz (1985:71) defines stand-up comedy performance as "an encounter between a single standing performer behaving comically and/or saying funny things to

an audience.” Mintz (1985) argues that it is the purest form of public communication that performs the same social and cultural roles in every known society. He also argues that stand-up comedy is the oldest, most universal, basic and deeply significant form of humorous expression, apart from spontaneous joking. Mintz notes that its roots are intertwined with rites, rituals and dramatic experience; and argue that the scope of stand-up comedy performance includes seated storytellers, other comic characterisations that employ costume, sitcoms and motifs with dramatic vehicles. In the same way, McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio (1993:239) assert that stand-up comedy performance is “a live comedy show” that “can be best described as consisting of a rich interaction between a comedian and audience, in which the comedian’s talk and the variety of audience responses are intricately interwoven.”

To Greenbaum (1999), stand-up comedy is a rhetorical discourse which strives not only to entertain but also to persuade people. The comedians are successful when they persuade the audience to see the world through their comic vision. Also, McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio (1993:225) describe stand-up comedy as “a rather strange and precarious line of work in which to succeed one must routinely win the attention, approval and laughter of a large assembly of people.”

These descriptions and definitions of stand-up comedy performance point to it as a genre of humour, as a form of entertainment, and as an instance of cultural rhetoric and symbolism. Limon (2000) alludes to the socio-cultural significance of stand-up comedy and gives a cultural analysis of the genre. Limon sees stand-up comedy performance as rarely abjection. He adopts the term abjection to mean “abasement”, “grovelling prostration” and “a psychic worrying of those aspects of oneself that one cannot be rid of, that seem, but are not quite, alienable, for example, blood, urine, faces, nails and the corpse” (p. 4). His notion of abjection is taken as what cannot be subjected to one and at the same time, what one cannot object to. By this, Limon (2000) draws attention to the contents of stand-up comedy performances as containing those things the society has taken as debasing, dirty or profane and should not be the subject of public discourse. Such topics are usually due to cultural stereotypes and social beliefs, but they form the basis of humour in stand-up comedy performances.

On the etymology of the word, Limon (2000) notes that the term stand-up comedy came into existence in 1966. Scholars have however traced its origin to several years before 1966. Ayakoroma (2013) observes that stand-up comedy genre

can be traced to 1800s. A common suggestion for the origin of stand-up performance is that it is an offshoot of theatrical performances like burlesque, vaudeville, and other jesting or comic performances.

Double (2005) observes that the work of jesters, *commedia dell'arte*, Shakespearean clowns, British music hall comedians and American vaudeville entertainers instigate the development of stand-up comedy. Mintz (1985) emphasizes the connection of stand-up comedy with the *commedia dell'arte* troupes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He notes that these entertainers make use of characters that employ spontaneous, uncomplicated performances and simple stories, such that even uneducated audiences could follow them.

Likewise, Schwarz (2010:18) asserts that “in America, the earliest form of stand-up comedy had its roots in vaudeville, which first started as a minstrel or variety show. White comedians painting their faces black and started to perform by speaking and singing in black dialects.” Schwarz (2010) further notes that the minstrel show developed into American vaudeville towards the end of the nineteenth century. At the start of the twentieth century, American humorists performed popular genres of American entertainment before turning their attention to stand-up comedy. The adoption of radio shows caused a decline in the vaudeville theatre, because people could listen to performances on the radio without paying for them in the theatres. Because the vaudeville performers focused on every day matters in their personal lives, they were able to attract and sustain the audience interest. They also offered privileges to stand-up comedians to achieve popularity. At this early stage, stand-up was informal and permeated with dark humour, sarcasm and satire. Further still, Schwarz (2010) observes that Lenny Bruce, a stand-up comedian notorious for his bristly manner of speaking, foul language and engaging of taboo areas, largely influence the genre. Because of him, it is normal in stand-up comedy to overtly engage taboo topics during performances. Because of Lenny Bruce, obscene and vulgar subjects like drugs, sex, violence and racism are very common in stand-up comedy practices.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a turnaround in the development of stand-up comedy (Double, 2005; Schwarz, 2010; Ayakoroma, 2013). During this period, a number of comedy clubs were opened and the number of stand-up comedians increased. According to Schwarz (2010:20), “the first comedy club worldwide was opened in Sheepshead Bay, New York, in 1962.” The comedy clubs were avenues where the comedians practise their arts, and through which they became so popular to

the extent that attendance of performances outgrew the capacity of the clubs. The comedians, therefore, began to perform in stadia and amphitheatres, and more people became interested in the genre. Comedians like Richard Pryor, George Carlin, Steve Martin, Bill Cosby, Robert Klein, Jerry Seinfeld, Richard Lewis, Larry David, David Letterman and some others became famous through the art of stand-up practice (Schwarz, 2010; and Ayakoroma, 2013).

Ayakoroma (2013) remarks that the new stand-up comedians were faster and looser while performing. Some of them, like Robert Klein and Jerry Seinfeld, ushered in a fresh style of observational comedy. Their observational comedy was made up of materials based on everyday life and which were assessable to the audiences. He further states that the proliferation of comedy clubs exposed audiences to new comedians and provided new opportunities for the upcoming comedians.

Both Schwarz (2010) and Double (2005) report that in Great Britain, the development of stand-up comedy is similar to what is obtainable in the USA. It was carried out in huge music halls where music performers entertained working class audiences. The music performances were characterised by songs which were often comic. With time, the performance evolved into the contemporary stand-up comedy style in which performers presented a series of jokes. From the 1960s, famous clubs were established. The entertainment in these clubs began to boom and more clubs were established, for instance, the Baitly Variety Club was established in Yorkshire in 1967. More stand-up comedians came from the British folk music clubs, where stand-up comedy was becoming more conversational. In 1979, Peter Rosengard opened the first American-style stand-up comedy club in London, the Comedy Store, in which the most successful comedians of the country in the 1980s began their careers. With the club, British stand-up comedy spread all over the country, and predominantly political humour dominated this geographic genre of stand-up comedy (Schwarz, 2010).

Another contributing factor to the development of stand-up comedy is the employment of the broadcast media to popularise the art. According to Ayakoroma (2013), the television played a vital role in sustaining the genre. Similarly, Schwarz (2010:20-21) asserts that “television had developed into a real comedy market place and increased the popularity of numerous stand-up comedians.” For instance, Saturday Night Live which premiered in 1975 gave many stand-up comedians like Carlin, Pryor and Martin a ninety minute national showcase. Also, in the 1980s, sitcoms and other television shows made a number of comedians like George Carlin, Dennis Miller,

Robin Williams, Eddie Murphy, Jerry Seinfeld and Billy Crystal very popular. An example of such sitcom is *The Cosby Show* by Bill Cosby which aired in the 1980s (Schwarz, 2010; Ayakoroma, 2013). Similarly, in Great Britain, stand-up comedians adopted the television and radio to popularise their acts. Bernard Manning, Stan Boardman, Frank Carson and Bobby Thomas became prominent through television shows like *The Wheeltappers* and *Shunters Social Club* (Schwarz, 2010).

1.6 The Nigerian stand-up comedy

As stated by Ayakoroma (2013), the commencement of stand-up comedy performance in Nigeria can be traced to late 1980s when Ali Baba (Allegia Atunyota Akporobomeeriere) performed jokes as a student of and in Benue State University, Ekpoma (now Ambrose Ali University, Edo State). His first performance was in 1988 at the pavilion of the institution (Ayakoroma, 2013). As shown in Ayakoroma (2013) and other studies like Haynes (1994), Adeleke (2005; 2006; 2007), there were genres of entertainment in Nigeria which acted as precursors to the development of stand-up comedy. If Mintz' (1985) broad definition of stand-up comedy is considered, these genres will be regarded as stand-up performances.

Ayakoroma (2013) argues that stand-up comedy began prior to Ali Baba's performance, since traditional cultures in the country identified the roles of village spokesmen who functioned as masters of ceremonies and entertained their audiences with jokes and other humorous short stories. Apart from the local ceremonies where masters of ceremonies functioned, the radio, television, theatre troupes and films also contributed to the development of stand-up comedy in Nigeria. Ayakoroma (2013) cites the Mazi Mperempe programme on Radio Nigeria and the old Anambra State Television, Enugu, in the 1970s and 1980s as one of the precursors of the stand-up genre in Nigeria. In the radio and television show, the character of Mazi Mperempe tells several rib-cracking jokes, starting with his call-and-response slogan "Oluo m'omume... onye agbana oso," which translates to "the time of action has arrived... nobody should run away!".

Apart from the Mazi Mperempe programme, there were several sitcoms which were broadcast on the radio and television across Nigeria before the advent of stand-up comedy. Some of these shows are *The New Masquerade*, *Hotel De Jordan* and *Samanja*. *The New Masquerade* was a sitcom on Nigerian Television Authority

(NTA) network in the 1980s. The sitcom featured the characters Giringory, Chief Zebrudaya, Jegede Shokoya, Zakky, Ovuleria, Clarus and Natty. All of the characters in *The New Masquerade* acted comic roles; however, Zebrudaya was the most famous. He was notorious for deliberately violating English grammar rules in his utterances.

Samanja was a sitcom which started in the northern Nigeria in the mid-1970s on NTA Kaduna (Muhammed, 2014). The sitcom was later aired on the NTA network in the 1980s. In an interview granted by the main character, *Samanja*, to *Daily Trust* Newspaper, *Samanja* noted that he started acting comedy when he joined the Northern Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) Kaduna. In NBC, he acted in a radio show titled “Mallam Jatau Na Albarkawa”, which mirrored a university and in which weak and brilliant students were satirised (Muhammed, 2014). His sitcom on television, *Samanja*, was meant to mock the regimentation of the military. The major character’s real name is Mallam Usuman Baba Pategi. Another popular comedian from the northern part of Nigeria was Shehu Jibril whose screen name was Golobo. Golobo acted comic roles in weekly series on the NTA in the mid 1980s.

Hotel De Jordan started in 1973 in *Southwest Television*. The TV station was later changed to NTA. *Hotel De Jordan* was produced by Joe Ihonde and it featured funny characters like Lord Mayor, Casino Manager, Chief Ukatabribri and Okhue (Usman, 2015). Another sitcom is *Icheoku*. *Icheoku* is a series on the NTA Enugu and Lagos (Teilanyo, 2003). *Icheoku* means parrot. The sitcom was set in an Igbo community which was being colonised by the British. It featured a Court Clerk, the main character, translating the utterances of the district commissioner for the indigenes of the community and vice versa. The Court Clerk was reknowned for being bombastic (Teilanyo, 2003).

In the western part of the country, the radio personality, Fúnwontán (Gbénga Adégbóyè) presented a number of humorous radio and television shows in Ogun, Lagos and Ondo States. Gbénga Adégbóyè gave himself several stage names like ‘King of Oduology’, ‘Alaayé mi Gbèngúlò’ ‘Alhaji Pastor Olúwo Adégbóyè’, Ọkanlọmọ of Europe, Amúlùúdùn of London and Alábẹfẹ to enhance his humorous personality and comic character. As an entertainer, Gbénga Adeboye recorded a number of songs and tagged his music style Fúnwontán. He also recorded a number of talk shows for

instance London Yabis and *Ọ̀rọ̀ Sùnùkùn*, which were well received as humorous narratives because they satirised the socio-cultural and socio-political situations of Nigeria. These recordings were renowned for mocking the political class of the country. In addition to the content of Gbenga Adeboye's performances, his style of delivery which entails manipulation of linguistic structures and twisting translations together with the presentation of anecdotes, endeared him to the audience.

Furthermore, Adeleke (2005; 2006; 2007) chronicle the use of laughter, humour and humorous personalities in Yorùbá land, southwest Nigeria. It is important to note that the geographical location, where Adeleke's studies are situated is where stand-up comedy is dominant in the country. Nigerian stand-up comedy is primarily domiciled in Lagos, a major city in southwest Nigeria. Thus, the traditional use of humour which Adeleke explores must have influenced positively the development of Nigerian stand-up comedy since according to Adeleke, in Yorùbá culture and towns, humour is pervasive.

Adeleke (2005) observes that laughter is part of the social activities of Yorùbá. It is highly important that it is embodied in a *Ọ̀lọ́* verse which states the mythology of laughter in the culture. Laughter is evoked in the performances of *Egúngún* (masquerade) dramaturgy. The masks worn by these masquerades bear iconographies of the targets that are being satirised and lampooned. Some masquerades, like *gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀*, adopt satirical songs, *Efẹ̀*, which is rendered with mocking tones and which employs traditional tools of comedy like exaggeration and grotesqueness. There is also *Efíyẹrí*, which "employs verbal humour to give information about scandalous events within its environs" (p. 47). Oral artists in the culture also adopt humour to excite and entertain their audiences. In addition, there are festivals in which scornful or satiric laughter is evoked. The use of humour in these contexts is described by Adeleke (2005) as institutionalised laughter.

There are also instances of individualistic laughter in which interlocutors adopt forms of humour in their interaction. Adeleke (2005) cites two joking relationships where this is found: between a woman and her in-laws and between participants in a traditional game, *Ayò*. In the first instance, a woman requires much competence in the culture so as not to incur the wrath of her in-laws whenever she humorously targets

them. Likewise, within the frame of Ayò game, social status is not recognised, such that players could easily humorously target each other. Thus, the royalty and wealthy are not excluded from the banter the game permits.

In another study, Adeleke (2006) investigates the use of fools (jesters) at the micro-discourse level in Yorùbá culture. Specifically, he identifies the use of court fools, who are found in palaces across Yorùbá cities and towns; mythological fool, which “covers the fool figures in Yorùbá sacred myth and folktales” (2006:50) and the fool role in modern Yorùbá theatre and movies, which has been championed by Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala). According to Adeleke (2006: 63), “the fool in court focused on pure entertainment and rhetoric; while the mythological fool... challenges the status quo of the society.” Baba Sala and his followers, as fools, combine “the diverse personality traits of the court fool in reality with those in mythology” (p. 63). Baba Sala belonged to the theatre movements which were championed by Herbert Ogunde. Baba Sala championed the comic roles and performances in these movements.

Baba Sala produced his first comic movies in the 1980s- Orun Mooru and Mosebolatan. To Haynes (1994), these movies represent high-water-mark of Nigerian film comedy. He produced two other movies, Agba Man and Return Match, in 1992 and 1993 respectively. He also had comic television shows on the NTA station in Ibadan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Baba Sala was so successful that he acquired his own theatre in Ibadan- Cinema de Baba Sala. Haynes (1994) notes that Baba Sala’s personality and excellent acting were at the centre of things in his movies, which were set in various rich and well-structured comic worlds. His costumes, both traditional and English, were caricatures of the accepted models. Haynes (1994) further describes his comedies as nasty because they satirize the prevailing business class.

Also in the 1980s, the likes of Aḍerupòkò, Ajimajasan, Jacob and Papalolo whose real names are Sabitu Tijani, Òlā Òmònitán, Tajudeen Gbadamosi and Ayo Ogunsina respectively, came into the limelight by presenting comedies. They appeared in the programme, Awada, which was broadcast on the Western Nigerian Television, now NTA Ibadan. They also formed the group- The Jesters International, which produced comic plays on stage and TV stations like NTA Ibadan, Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State and Ogun State Television. There were also female actors

who acted comic roles in conjunction with the male comedians. Examples of these female actors are Iya Sala, Iya Mero and Moladun.

Baba Sala's comic roles are duplicated in today's Nollywood by Baba Aluwe, Mr Latin, Baba Suwe, Aki, Pawpaw and others. At the start, these comedians depended so much on costume and absurd roles to create humour, but today, they rely less on costumes and work more on distorting words or fixed utterances like idioms and proverbs. For instance, Baba Suwe is noted for manipulating and distorting proverbs, and thereby creating his own versions of Yoruba proverbs. By whetting people's appetite for comedy, Baba Sala prepared the ground for stand-up comedy performances and other television sitcoms. The influence of these theatre comedians and media personalities on Nigerian stand-up comedy cannot be overemphasized. For instance, Sam Loco Efe, renowned for comic roles in the Nollywood, has featured in the most popular brand of Nigerian stand-up comedy, as one of the stand-up comedy performers.

Ali Baba is regarded as the progenitor of contemporary Nigerian stand-up comedy (Adetunji, 2013 and Gabriel, 2012). Ali Baba started the trade and refined his acts as an undergraduate. After school, he moved to Lagos in 1990 in search for a greener pasture. He got a job in an advertising agency where he worked for a while. During this period, he performed in a number of social gatherings and his primary audience were students of higher institutions in Lagos State (Gabriel, 2012). When Ali Baba started performing stand-up jokes, there were little or no financial gains since it was negatively perceived and received by Nigerians (Ayakoroma, 2013). However, because of his doggedness, he continued. In 1998 he registered his comedy company, Ali Baba Hiccupurthird. In the same year, he erected three billboards to advertise his trade in strategic locations in Lagos State: Victoria Island, Ikoyi and Marina. The billboard carried the message: 'Ali Baba- Being Funny is Serious Business'. Ali Baba brought so much dexterity to stand-up comedy performance. In 2010, he achieved a landmark by performing for six hours without a break for a Lagos audience. It was his acts, promotions and subsequent popularity that attracted several other people to stand-up comedy, most of whom were university graduates seeking employment. It can thus be said that Ali Baba opened up the stand-up comedy genre in Nigeria. He inspired other stand-up comics like Julius Agwu, Basketmouth, AY, and TEE A (Ayakoroma, 2013, Adetunji, 2013 and Gabriel, 2012).

It is important to mention the contribution of Opa Williams, a movie producer, who popularised Nigerian stand-up comedy by producing and sponsoring “Nite of a thousand laughs” (NTL), a comedy road show in which numerous stand-up comedians are given the opportunity to express their acts (Ayakoroma, 2013). Adetunji (2013:3) describes NTL as

a national road show...staged at unspecified intervals in the country's major cities. In any instance of NTL, a comedian is given 10-15 minutes to make a seated audience laugh, in monologues interspersed with musical performances, mines, and pantomimes. Apart from the institutionalized NTL, specific national and international events or holidays- National Democracy Day (May 29), Independence Day (October 1), Valentine's Day (February 14), Christmas (December 25) - provide opportunities for stand-up comic shows.

Opa Williams started out as a movie producer but ventured into producing NTL when he realised the power of comedy. The first edition of NTL was organised on October 1, 1995, at the University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State. The event was artistically successful. He started with the likes of Mohammed Danjuma, Okey Bakassi, Sam Loco Efe, Boma Erokosima and Sammy Needle but has produced many more contemporary stand-up comedians like AY, Basketmouth, Klint de Drunk, Holly Mallam and Elenu (Ayakoroma, 2013). Ayakoroma (2013) identifies the landmark contribution of Opa Williams to Nigerian Stand-up comedy by noting that he made comedy a veritable business. Through NTL, stand-up comedy in Nigeria has become an industry. Today apart from the NTL, there are other sources of Nigerian stand-up comedy. Many stand-up comedians now have their own comedy show. Gordon produces Comedy Berlusconi, Basketmouth produces Basketmouth uncensored and Lauffs in Lagos; and AY's comedy show is tagged AY Live. Also, with the success of NTL, other individuals ventured into the production of comedy shows, examples are Bunmi Davies' Stand Up Nigeria and Richard Mofe Damijo's Made in Warri.

Apart from comedy shows, night clubs are avenues where people encounter stand-up comedy performances. Before he became popular, Ali Baba performed regularly in a Lagos nightclub (Adetunji, 2013). Ayakoroma (2013) pointed out that some comedians established their own clubs where people could meet and interact with the comedians as well as watch their performance. One of such comedians is

Basketmouth, who owns EmBARssy Lounge, an upscale ultra-modern discotheque, bar and lounge (Ayakoroma, 2013).

In addition to live performances, Nigerian stand-up comedians also adopt the television and other media like Facebook and You Tube to enlarge their audience base. Ali Baba has featured on Charly Boy Show, Friday Night Live and Night Train with Bisi Olatilo, all on the network service of the NTA (Ayakoroma, 2013). These programmes made him popular with the audience. Some of the comedians have their own television shows, for instance, AY has three shows: AY Live- a comedy and music concert; Ay Show- a television programme; and the Open Mic Challenge- a talent-hunt programme which identifies promising entrants into the genre. Bovi, has his own sitcoms- Extended Family and Bovi Ugboma Show, both of which enjoy large followership on Africa Magic, an African movie channel (Ayakoroma, 2013).

The patterns of the performances of these comedians are very diverse; however, they initiate humour primarily through language. Due to the multilingual nature of Nigeria, these comedians use Nigerian Pidgin (NP) as the lingual franca of their performances (Adetunji, 2013 and Ayakoroma, 2013). Often time, NP is alternated with English, the country's official language, and some other indigenous languages. The way comedians use language is different from the way language is used in everyday talk. Nigerian comedians play with language by manipulating the propositional contents of their utterances and the background knowledge they share with their audience. Their choice of NP is not unconnected to the fact it is spoken by almost every Nigerian, therefore through this language, the comedians reach a wide audience across Nigeria's multilingual society. As observed by Ayakoroma (2013), it should be noted that a majority of these comedians are university graduates, thus they can speak the educated variety of Nigerian English.

Nigerian stand-up comedians adopt diverse styles. Apart from language, some of these comedians wear costumes or dress in an absurd way, for instance, Klint the Drunk do perform without his shoes on. Some of them do sing, dance and mime; for example, Julius Agwu termed his comedy performance as Musicomedy. The comedians also use exaggerated gesticulations. In sum, these comedians use any available resource at their disposal to achieve their aim of making people laugh.

Besides its performance aspects, Nigerian stand-up comedy contributes significantly to the Nigerian economy. Ayakoroma (2013) describes Nigerian stand-up comedy as a veritable business venture, an industry and a factory that feeds people.

Nigerian stand-up comedians engage in business partnership with multinational and indigenous companies in the country. These companies sponsor and partner with them in their shows while the comedians are hired as brand ambassadors. To set up any comedy show, a large number of professionals like photographers, make-up artists, cameramen, event ushers and stage managers are employed. The comedy shows attract high profile fees. The comedians also are highly paid for making the audience laugh.

1.7 Summary

This chapter serves as the background to this study. The next chapter presents the review of relevant literature and theoretical model adopted for analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to appraise the studies that have been carried out on humour. The chapter also presents the theories which form the basis of the model adopted for analysis. Reviewing previous studies on humour is germane because it provides necessary background for discussing the theoretical model for this study. It will also help to position the present study in the context of linguistic approaches to humour and the broader context of humour research.

2.1 Classification of humour

Humour, as a concept, is very broad and it has diverse genres. It has been described as an extensive phenomenon with multifarious manifestations (Dynel, 2009; Ritchie 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to narrow down the investigation of humour to one of its specific manifestations (Dynel, 2009). Studies on humour make a distinction between humour conveyed by the means of language and humour which is conveyed by other semiotic channels. Humour expressed through language is termed verbalised or verbally expressed humour while humour expressed through other semiotic means like picture, music, dance or body language is termed nonverbal humour (Attardo, 1994; Ritchie, 2004; Dynel, 2009).

As a genre of humour, stand-up comedy employs, primarily, verbal humour, which may or may not be augmented with nonverbal humour. The main type of nonverbal humour adopted in stand-up comedy is expressed through body language.

2.2 Taxonomy of humour theories

Regardless of the different manifestations of humour and the diverse disciplinary approaches for analysing humour, humour theories are traditionally grouped into three major categories: incongruity/cognitive, relief/release, superiority/aggression (Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994; Ritchie, 2004; Krikmann, 2006). Attardo (1994: 47) presents the classes of humour theories in a tabular form as follows:

Table 1: Attardo's Classification of humour theories

Cognitive	Social	Psychoanalytical
Incongruity	Hostility	Release
Contrast	Aggression	Sublimation
	Superiority	Liberation
	Triumph	Economy
	Derision	
	Disparagement	

The different approaches result from investigating different humorous data with different goals under different disciplinary lenses. Ritchie (2004) opines that several of these approaches could be simultaneously true. It seems that the motivating factors for choosing an approach are the humour manifestations to be analysed and the disciplinary orientation of the analyst. Thus, a researcher, whose orientation is sociology, when faced with any manifestation of humour like jokes, riddles or pun, may investigate the aggressive mechanism in the jokes; while a researcher in linguistics may be more concerned with the linguistic devices like ambiguity in such humour manifestations. For instance, Servaite (2005) and Lew (1997) look at the linguistic structure of jokes while Davies (1982) whose goal is to investigate "hostility" in ethnic jokes is more concerned with social issues.

Two approaches are found relevant to the present study. Incongruity is used to account for how the humour strategies employed by Nigerian comedians leads to humour while the superiority theory is used to account for the social relevance of the joking stories.

2.2.1 The incongruity theory

The incongruity theorists hold that the essential element in humour is the incongruous. Incongruity is seen as some sorts of unusual or unexpected juxtaposition of events, objects, or ideas (Bardon, 2005). The linguists who have defined humour from incongruity perspective suggest that humour is created from conflicting or opposing meanings. In line with this, Krikmann (2006) observes that in humorous text, there are two different planes of content which are also called frames, schemas, scripts or isotopies. Although, these two planes of content are mutually incompatible,

they include a common part which makes the shift from one to another possible. The recipient processes the textual and contextual information of the humorous utterance, reducing them to the most accessible plane of content, and proceeds until interpretation bounces over a semantic obstacle and fails. The theorists propose that when the interpretation fails, some instantaneous cognitive work will be done to overcome the contradiction and another interpretation which has so far been hidden will be found. It is the renewal of understanding, attended by the emotion of surprise and satisfaction, which causes laughter.

Koestler (1964) and Apter (1982) are important contributors to the incongruity approach. Koestler coined the term bisociation to describe the mental process involved in perceiving humorous incongruity. To Koestler, bisociation occurs when a situation, an event or idea is simultaneously observed from the perspective of two self-consistent but normally unrelated and even incompatible frames of reference; for instance, in puns, two different meanings of a word are brought together simultaneously. Apter (1982) uses the concept of synergy to explain the cognitive exercise in which two conflicting images or notions of the same object are held at the same time in one's mind. Furthermore, Apter (1991) distinguishes between two states of human mind. The first is the paratelic mode which is a playful and non-serious mode while the second is telic which is a more serious and goal oriented mode. Apter noted that humans switch from one mode to another in the course of daily activities and it is in the paratelic mode that humorous activities take place.

On the shortcomings of incongruity approach, Ritchie (2004) points out that the key terms in the theory, like incongruity, are not given a common definition. Also, what Krikmann (2006:27) terms "planes of contents" have been given different terms and definitions in literatures: isotopies (Attardo, 1994), scripts (Raskin, 1979 and 1985), frames of reference (Koestler, 1964), informativeness (Giora, 1991) and schemas (Krikmann, 2006). According to Ritchie (2004:54), the definitions given for this term are "disappointingly vague".

Another weak point of the approach is that the proponents argue that for anything to be humorous, it must be incongruous. Incongruity, however, may be an essential feature of humour, it is not an exclusive feature of humour as there are several incongruous situations and utterances that are not humorous. Bardon (2005) argues that humans laugh at situations that are not incongruous and that not all incongruous situations or utterances create humour. Some incongruous utterances may

warn, alert or create fear or awe in the recipients; for instance, the maxim-wolf in sheep's clothing will not elicit laughter, rather, it cautions its recipients.

Furthermore, Attardo (2009) observes that incongruities do not necessarily generate humour, because finding things funny can be affected by external factors like tiredness, distress and availability of the relevant schematic knowledge to be able to appreciate the incongruity in question. Regardless of these weak points, scholars have argued that incongruity is vital to humour. Martin (2007) opines that incongruity seems to characterise all forms of humour. Krikmann (2006) argues that incongruity has to be perceived and resolved in humorous texts. It is the resolution of the incongruity that is attended by an emotion of surprise and satisfaction. Takona and Popa (2011) observe that it is the enjoyment of incongruity that leads to humour. Attardo (2009) notes that the following features are important for incongruity to lead to humour:

- a. The incongruity must be non-threatening
- b. The incongruity must not be too complex or too simple
- c. Available scripts/knowledge: The recipients must have sufficient knowledge to be able to process the scripts and identify the incongruity
- d. The incongruity must be unexpected and surprising
- e. The participants should be in a playful mode: the situation must be framed or keyed as humour. It should reflect suspension of disbelief.
- f. Co-presence of the opposed scripts: two scripts should be available and accessible at the same time, and/or be activated closely.

2.2.2 The superiority theory

The superiority approach is a social approach to humour because it draws from the social relationship between the users of humour and the butts of the humour. The proponents of superiority perspective hold that humans laugh at the misfortunes of others. According to Krikmann (2006:27), studies which adopt superiority theory “accentuate the negative attitude of the producer and/or user of humour towards its target and often alleged aggressive character of laughter... humour is said to be pointed against some person or group, typically on political, ethnic, or gender grounds.”

The inherent concept in the superiority theory is that jokes make their users powerful, especially when they are directed towards a person or group. Although superiority theory accentuates negative use of humour, it presents elements of positive use of humour in that it emphasises the social corrective roles of humour. It is the social corrective function of humour that Bergson (1956) refers to when he notes that the purpose of laughter is to promote free and well-adapted behaviour through humiliation (Attardo, 1994). To Bergson (1956), humour is used to correct people's behaviour which is incongruous with social norms, especially when such people are made the butt of a joke (Schwarz, 2010).

The superiority theory is not without limitations. Humans witness many instances where they are made superior, and such instances do not necessarily lead to humour; for instance, witnessing someone in pain is not amusing (Bardon, 2005 and Morreall, 2009). Another weak point of the approach is that humans need not to compare themselves with each other in order to laugh. If comparison is the basis of amusement, then humans will only laugh after they discover that they are better than others. In addition, it seems that the concern of the theorists is laughter and not humour. In several studies where superiority theory is applied to humour, the focus is usually on laughter and not humour. Such studies present the use of laughter in social interactions, which may not necessarily be connected with humour. Superiority thesis is not sufficient for explaining humour as there are jokes which do not have targets. However, the approach is very important in contemporary humour research because of its emphasis on the interpersonal and social aspects of laughter which results from humour.

2.2.3 The relief theory

The relief theory postulates that humour relieves its users from tensions, psychic energy, inhibitions and social conventions (Attardo, 1994). Humour is seen as a psychological or psycho-physiological device through which humans relieve themselves from both social and physical tensions. The relief theorists hold that in everyday living, humans are faced with lots of social inhibitions which lead to storing up of psychic energy, which is then released (or expressed) through laughter when things that are related to such inhibitions are mentioned. The proponents see "humour as one of the so-called substitution mechanisms which enables one to convert one's

socially tabooed aggressive impulses to acceptable ones and thus avoid wasting additional mental energy to suppress them” (Krikmann, 2006:34).

Freud, who formulates the psychoanalysis, is referred to as the most influential amongst the proponents of relief theory (Attardo 1994; Krikmann, 2006). Freud (2002) proposes that laughter releases tension and psychic energy. Freud argues that psychic energy in human body is built as a means for suppressing feelings in areas like sex or death. Humans laugh when psychic energy is released not only because of the release but also because these taboo thoughts are being entertained. Freud (2002) identifies three situations in which psychic energy can be released, jokes or wit, the comic and humorous situations. To Freud, a joke is made up of features like human thoughts, playful judgement, combination of opposing ideas and sense in nonsense.

A major weakness of Freud’s theory is that his focus is on laughter and not humour. He directly links laughter to humour; however, studies after his work have shown that not all laughter results from humour, and laughter and humour are two different things. Freud thesis is more of a theory of laughter since he did not say what constitutes humour.

2.3 Linguistic theories of humour

Since the present study adopts linguistic theories to analyse humorous texts generated from Nigerian stand-up comedy performances, it is important to examine how humour has been viewed in linguistic studies. In this section, therefore, how the question “what is humour?” has been answered in semantics and pragmatics will be reviewed. It should be noted that most linguistic approaches to humour fit into the incongruity class because they hold that humour results from antonymous relationship between two meanings juxtaposed into a text.

2.3.1 Semantic script theory of humour (SSTH)

The SSTH is fully explicated in the monograph *Semantic Mechanism of Humour*, published in 1985 by Victor Raskin. It is motivated by the need to formalise the grammar of jokes and define what linguistically makes up a joke. Raskin grounds his theory in Transformational Generative Grammar of Noam Chomsky and attempts to describe the notion of humour competence, which he fashioned after Chomsky’s

theory of competence. SSTH, therefore, adopts an idealised homogenous speaker-hearer joking exchange. According to Attardo (1994:197), “the SSTH models the humorous competence of an idealized speaker/hearer who is unaffected by racial or gender biases, undisturbed by scatological, obscene or disgusting materials, not subject to boredom, and, most importantly, who has never ‘heard it before’ when presented with a joke.”

The term humour acts in the present study is adopted from Raskin (1985), although the analysis of humour acts in this study is not in consonance with what Raskin (1985) described as humour acts. The author treats the phenomenon in a decontextualized manner. The concept of acts in linguistic studies is usually investigated from functional perspectives, and as shown in some studies like Austin (1962) and Mey (2001), acts are the communicative imports of utterances recognised when the intentions of interactants are examined in the contexts of utterances. For Raskin (1985:3), humour act means “an individual occurrence of a funny stimulus” which is based upon the hearer’s discovery of incongruity. According to Raskin (1985), a humour act is recognisable when hearers recognise speakers’ intention to participate in humorous discourse, when the hearers resolve the incongruity and lastly, when the hearers laugh at the joke. For Raskin, humour act is only a concept which indicates amusement in interactions and which has no further communicative import. Apart from deriving mirth, humour could be used to indicate other intentions such as projecting socio-cultural meanings like gender, age and occupation (Holmes, 2006; Schmidt 2011; Matsumoto, 2009). Humorous stimuli could have other discourse and pragmatic functions apart from eliciting laughter which Raskin has described as a precondition for humour act. As argued in Chapter One, laughter may not necessarily be a marker for humour. In addition, grounding humour act in the discovery of incongruity is not sufficient since incongruity does not always lead to humour (Bardon, 2005; Attardo, 2009) and the social significance of humour does not end with generating laughter; humour could be a means of mediating culture and social beliefs (Mintz, 1985; Mesropova, 2003).

Raskin (1979:326) argues that in studies on joke performance, “no formal analysis of the linguistics aspect has ever been undertaken.” Attardo (2011) affirms that his theory advocates a new approach to the semantics of humour. The ultimate aim of SSTH is to show that “a linguistic theory of humour should determine and formulate the necessary and sufficient linguistic conditions for the text to be funny”

(Raskin 1985:47). In sum, SSTH linguistically formalises and explains the why and how of humour in human language.

Raskin founds his theory on script-based semantics. According to Raskin (1979:325), scripts

are thought to represent the common sense cognitive structures stored in the mind of the native speaker... scripts are motivated and justified in terms of grammaticality-cum-meaningfulness-cum-appropriateness. The scripts are designed to describe certain standard routines, processes, the way the native speaker views them and thus to provide semantic theory with a restricted and prestructured outlook into the extra-linguistic world.

In another study, the author redefines script as “a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it” (Raskin, 1985:81). According to Attardo (1994:198) a script in its broadest sense can be defined as an “organised chunk of information about something. It is a cognitive structure internalised by the speaker which provides the speaker with information of how things are done, organised...” A script, therefore, is an innate cognitive structure which provides language users information on how things are carried out or structured. For instance, the word “book” evokes series of information and related words such as library, author, subject, reader(s), publisher, reading, learning, studying and chapters.

The main thesis of SSTH is presented thus:

A text can be characterised as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the (following) conditions are satisfied:

- i. The text is compatible, fully or in part with two different scripts
- ii. The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite... The two scripts with which the text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text (Raskin 1985:99)

The first condition of the thesis presupposes that a joke text must be capable of two different overlapping scripts. Put differently, the text must have two semantic interpretations. The recipient must be able to read two distinct scripts to the sentences of the joke until the punchline is delivered. The first of the interpretations must be more conspicuous than the second (must be overt). The second interpretation must not be easily identifiable (it must be covert). The punchline of the joke brings the second interpretation to the hearer’s awareness. The two meanings in the joke may be due to an ambiguous word in the joke or ambiguous structure of the joke text.

The second condition presupposes that the meanings or scripts which are found in the text must, in some sense, be opposite. This condition indicates that contrast between the scripts is vital and this oppositeness can be realised through situational, contextual or lexical antonyms. Raskin (1985) classifies this scriptic opposition into three broad types of real and unreal situations: actual versus non-actual situations, normal versus abnormal states of affairs, and possible versus impossible situations. In addition, he introduces what he calls the semantic script-switch trigger which prompts the change from one script to the other. This trigger is a contradiction or an ambiguity which is implicitly or explicitly present in the text.

The joke below, from Raskin (1985:25) illustrates the thesis:

Who was that gentleman I saw you with last night?
That was no gentleman. That was a senator.

The text activates two opposing scripts: senators are gentlemen and senators are not gentlemen. The oppositeness in these scripts contrasts normal state of affairs with abnormal state of affairs since senators are expected to be upstanding members of the society in that they are expected to behave gentlemanly. It is therefore abnormal not to consider them as gentlemen. It is the two meanings in the word gentlemen (when it occurs in the second instance) which triggers the switch from the script of man of honour or quality to just a man of contempt since the word gentleman can refer to just any man or to a man of honour.

2.3.1.1 The pragmatic aspect of SSTH

Perhaps because Raskin realises that humour is not just semantic and cannot be fully explained using a linguistic approach that does not consider contextual variables, he attempts to incorporate pragmatic aspects into his theory. In doing this, Raskin (1985) distinguishes between two modes of communication: the bona-fide (BF) and non-bona-fide (NBF) modes. In BF mode, communication is genuine and speakers are committed to the sincerity of their propositions while in NBF mode, speakers are not committed to the genuineness of what they say. Jokes belong to NBF mode though they may convey BF information (Attardo, 1994). Raskin notes that speakers, during conversations, normally switch from the BF mode to the NBF mode whenever they want to say a joke and this switch is signalled by certain linguistic

devices. It should be noted that Raskin's distinction of BF from NBF is similar to Apter's distinction of paratelic mode from telic mode.

To emphasize the differences, Raskin (1985) notes that jokes do not only seem to violate Grice maxims but also they seem to follow different cooperative principles/maxims. He argues that Grice's maxims account for the BF mode of communication in which speakers are sincere to the truth of their proposition. Since in the joking mode, speakers are not committed to the sincerity of their propositions, there is a need for a different set of maxims to account for jokes and other humorous utterances. Raskin (1985: 103), therefore, proposes maxims that are peculiar to joking exchanges and that cater for the NBF mode of communication. These maxims are as follows:

1. Maxim of Quantity: Give exactly as much information as necessary for the joke
2. Maxim of Quality: Say only what is compatible with the world of the joke
3. Maxim of Relation: Say only what is relevant to the joke
4. Maxim of Manner: Tell the joke efficiently

Raskin (1985) strengthens his argument for the NBF mode maxims by noting that speakers can easily back out from the truth of their propositions by saying, for instance, I was only joking, it was just a joke, or by using any other linguistic marker that indicates an utterance is a joke.

2.3.1.2 Criticisms of SSTH

SSTH has been well received among researchers since it is a formal theory which makes predictions, gives the grammar of jokes, distinguishes between bad and good jokes and which can be falsified. However, a major weakness of SSTH is that it assumes that script opposition is the main and only factor which elicits humour. It does not include contextual variables in explaining humour and it is limited to only instances where interlocutors share the same linguistic competence.

The SSTH also fails in one of its claims in that it accounts for a joking situation where the speaker has "never heard it before" (Attardo 1994:197). This claim presupposes that when jokes are repeated, the recipients will not find it funny. However, language users do repeat jokes severally, and do find repeated jokes funny and enjoyable. In addition, Raskin and his followers could not agree on the definitions of the technical terms like script, script overlapping and script opposition (Attardo, 1994; Ritchie, 2004; Krikimann, 2006).

The pragmatic aspect of SSTH, the NBF maxims, presupposes that interlocutors have a language interpreting mechanism which is used solely during humorous exchanges and which is different from the one used for non-humorous exchanges. In other words, his distinction of BF from NBF postulates two different cognitive-pragmatic apparatuses, the first for the generation and interpretation of humorous stimuli and the second, for the generation and interpretation of non-humorous stimuli. The implication of this is that human cognitive ability for humour is different from the one for non-humorous utterances, and this is not so. In Grice (1975), maxims are also used to account for humorous utterances and this shows that Raskin's distinction of BF from NBF may not be necessary. Yas (2002) and (2004) show that the same cognitive mechanism is used to interpret both jokes and non-joke texts.

Another weakness of the theory is that it evolved from using only short canned jokes as the primary source of data. It is limited in its application to humorous narratives which are not short jokes and which do not depend on delivery of punchline for their humour. On this, Krikmann (2006: 31) asserts that "Raskin's script-based semantic theory of humour does not aim to cover humour in general, but only verbal humour (or in practice, only punchline jokes)."

2.3.2 General theory of verbal humour (GTVH)

GTVH is a further pragmatic specification of the SSTH by Attardo and Raskin (1991). Because they included aspects of pragmatics and textual linguistics in their rework of SSTH, Attardo and Raskin (1991) claim that the GTVH accounts for any type of humorous text. GTVH is a mesh of SSTH and Attardo's (1988) five level joke representation model, which identifies five levels for analysing a joke: surface, language, target and situation, template and basic. Attardo (1994:222) describes the GTVH as "broadening" the "scope" of SSTH and including other areas of linguistics such as "textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity, and pragmatics."

In broadening the scope of SSTH, Attardo and Raskin (1991) introduce Knowledge Resources (KRs), which interlocutors may employ when they want to generate and interpret a joke. The KRs are made up of the following parameters:

- i. Language (LA): language refers to the linguistic choices made by the joke teller.

- ii. Narrative Strategy (NS): the NS deals with how a joke is presented to an audience, specifically, the narrative genre adopted by the teller.
- iii. Target (TA): this KR selects the butt of the joke. It contains the name of groups or individuals who are the butts of a joke and the stereotypes attached to them.
- iv. Situation (SI): the situation of a joke is what the joke is about or centered on. Attardo (1994: 225) opines that “the situation of a joke can be thought of as the props of the joke: the objects, participants, instruments, activities and so on. There is no joke without this parameter.”
- v. Logical Mechanism (LM): the LM deals with the cognitive aspect of jokes. It is the faulty logic that is found in jokes. LMs include simple juxtapositions, false analogies, garden-path phenomena and figure ground reversal (Attardo, 1994).
- vi. Script Opposition (SO): just as it is in SSTH, SO demands that a joke must have two scripts and these scripts must be in a contrasting relationship.

GTVH defines a joke as containing all the KRs: {LA, SI, NS, TA, SO, LM}. With the definition, the GTVH can generate an infinite number of jokes by combining different values of each parameter (Attardo, 1994). An important aspect of the GTVH is hierarchical organisation of the KRS. The foundational principle is that a certain KR will be determined by another KR, such that a high ranking KR determines a lower KR. Attardo (1994) presents GTVH hierarchical ordering as follows: SO-LM-SI-TA-NS-LA. According to Attardo (1994:227), “parameters determine the parameters below themselves and are determined by those above themselves. Determination is to be intended as limiting or reducing the options available for the instantiation of the parameter.”

2.5.2.1 Criticisms of the GTVH

As a theory of humour, it is expected that the KRs of GTHV should discuss the peculiarities of humorous texts. However, the KRs highlight general textual characteristics. The contents of the GTVH are not exclusive to humorous texts and it can be argued that they identify what is found in non-humorous texts. For instance, the SI is made up of features that can be found in any other non-humorous text. Also, NS and LA are characteristic of non-humorous text and any text can be classified using

these parameters, for example political speeches or manifestoes, sermons, and classroom discourse. In addition, the SO and LM, which seem to be the cardinal parameters of the theory, are also features of figurative as well as rhetorical language use, which may not evoke any humorous effect. This is why Ritchie (2004) and Krikmann (2006) observe that the KR parameters lack conceptual definiteness.

Like the SSTH, the GTVH does not draw on contextual variables too, which a pragmatic account of joke should do. For instance, there are different cultural demands which influence jokes and joking across different social groups. A theory of joke, which offshoot is pragmatics, should be able to say who can say a joke, to whom, under what circumstances and how it can be appropriately said. Although Attardo (1994) claims that the GTVH include pragmatics, the theory does not show how a joke can be pragmatically used. It does not show that jokes could be covertly or overtly used to disguise the intention of its users. It does not account for other communicative and pragmatic significance of jokes in conversations.

Although GTVH is meant to cover for the weaknesses of SSTH, it also falls short in some areas where SSTH is weak. First it is limited in its concept of humour. Like the SSTH, for its development, the proponents examined only short canned or punchline jokes. It leaves out other genres of humour, like conversational humour in its theoretical expositions.

To cater for conversational humour, the SI parameter, which is limited to situation in the joke, has to be expanded to include the situation of the joke. The difference between situation in the joke and situation of the joke is that the first is about the circumstances, events, happenings or exchanges given in the joke while the second accentuates the circumstances, events, happenings or exchanges that produce the joke. The situation of the joke deals with the interlocutors, their utterances before and after the joke, their location and activity when the joke is said. When this is done, conversational humour genres such as witticisms and retorts may be accounted for.

2.4 Jokes

Jokes are the commonest genre of humour. A joke could take the form of a story, one-liner, anecdote, riddle, pun, banter, witticism or any figurative device like metaphor and simile (Attardo, 1994; Dymel, 2009). To Schmidt Schmidt (2011:615), a joke is “a discrete unit” which functions as “a piece of oral art and as a speech act.” Ritchie (2004:15) conceptualises a joke as:

a relatively short text which, for a given cultural group, is recognizable as having, as its primary purpose, the production of an amused reaction in its reader/hearer, and which is typically repeatable in a wide range of contexts... a text is a joke if it appears in a published form explicitly labelled as being a joke (e.g. a joke book, a website of jokes, examples in academic paper on jokes), or if we have experienced it being delivered in circumstances which imply that others regard it as a joke.

In linguistics, two types of jokes are identified: canned and conversational/situational jokes. Canned jokes are commonly considered as "the prototypical form of verbal humour, produced orally in conversations or published in collection" while conversational/situational jokes "are spontaneous or pre-constructed interactional humour, different from canned jokes" (Dyner, 2009: 1284-1285). Several of the linguistic studies on humour focus on explicating the structure, content and use of canned jokes, with very few examining conversational jokes (Attardo, 1994; Ritchie, 2004; Lew 1997).

Based on the mechanism of humour in jokes, scholars have also identified two basic types of jokes: referential and verbal jokes, both of which are forms of verbal humour (Attardo 1994; Ritchie 2004). Referential jokes are based on the meaning of the text and do not depend on the linguistic form while verbal jokes depend on the linguistic forms of their text (Attardo, 1994).

A joke has two parts: the set-up and punchline (Hockett, 1977; Sherzer, 1985). Attardo and Chabanne (1992) observe that set-ups of jokes may contain a narrative, a dialogue or a narrative and dialogue. The punchline is the final part of the joke text which creates a surprise effect (Giora, 1991) and/or which depicts an incongruity with the set-up (Sells, 1972). The joke below illustrates the structure of jokes:

Teacher: George not only chopped down his father's cherry tree but also admitted doing it. Now, Akpos, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

Akpos: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

Set-up: Teacher: George not only chopped down his father's cherry tree but also admitted doing it. Now, Akpos, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

Punchline: Akpos: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

Lew (1997) identifies different types of verbal jokes. Some of the types of jokes identified are lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic, phonological and orthographic.

In another study, Dynel (2009) categorises different types of conversational jokes, some of which are retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns and anecdotes. Other studies like Sacks (1974), (1978), (Günther, 2003), Tannen (2005), Holmes (2006), Knight, (2008) and Schmidt (2011) investigate the use of jokes in conversations. Of particular interest is Sacks (1974), which notes that the occurrence of a joke in interactions has three parts: the preface, the telling and the response phase. Two phases identified by Sacks (1974) are relevant to stand-up comedy performance. Just like conversational joking, the telling of jokes in stand-up performances involves only one speaker (i.e. the stand-up comedians'. Any form of speaking from the audience interrupts the joke telling. The response phase in stand-up comedy is also similar to the response phase in conversational joking. There could be spontaneous laughter or protest. Spontaneous laughter indicates that the audience get the joke immediately while protest indicates that the comedians fail to tell a funny joke or the comedians do not tell the joke effectively. Protest is marked by hecklings and other disaffiliative responses.

The other studies note that the use of jokes in conversation transcends the inducement of amusement in the recipients. A joke may mark speakers' style, social identities and other social meanings. The next section examines some linguistic studies which have highlighted how jokes have achieved other perlocutionary goals apart from eliciting laughter.

2.5 Functional studies on jokes

Studies like Mintz (1985), Moreall (1987), Holmes and Marra (2002), Csaszi (2003), Holmes (2006), Knight (2008), He (2008), Matsumoto (2009), and, Lin and Tan (2016), have underscored the social dimensions of jokes and humour in conversations. Moreall (1987) notes that humour is used as a strategy for well-adapted behaviour since no one will want to be the target of humour. Likewise Mintz (1985) sees joking as a public affirmation of cultural beliefs and re-examination of such beliefs since jokes subvert social stance.

Knight (2008) shows that jokes are used for strengthening social bonds among participants who use jokes in their conversations. In another study, Matsumoto (2009), working on painful self-disclosure, demonstrates that humour is used as a strategy for coping with negative life changes among the elderly. In similar vein, Csaszi (2003) observes that humour, especially jokes centred on catastrophes like the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, is used as a means of coping with disaster. While

analysing humour in a Chinese film, He (2008) remarks that humour results from the interaction between linguistic process and contextualised reality. Similarly, Lin and Tan (2010) note that culture shapes the trajectory of humour in a society. Therefore, one of the ways to identify the prevailing ideologies of a society is by investigating the use of humour and laughter in the society (Lin and Tan, 2010).

Homes (2006) investigates the use of humour in the workplace. She argues that speakers use humorous comments to construct and affirm their professional identities. For Holmes, humour is easily jointly constructed among people who are familiar with each other's sense of humour. On the other hand, Holmes and Marra (2002) opine that humour serves as a discursive boundary marker in social interactions. Holmes and Marra (2002) note that humour makes salient some aspects of social identity as it signals awareness of ethnic and gender boundaries.

2.6 Conversation joke-telling and stand-up joke-telling

Following Schwarz (2010), a distinction between stand-up monologue and conversational dialogue can be drawn on the one hand and joke telling in stand-up comedy and conversational joke-telling on the other. In the first instance, the difference lies in the number of person(s) that holds the floor during a joking exchange. In stand-up monologue, a single comedian performs in monologues of successions of short joking stories and one-liners, without the audience interrupting by way of turn taking. While in conversations, participants take turns to speak. Stand-up joke-telling is a monologue while conversational joking is a dialogue. The differences that exist between these two joking genres result from the fact that only one speaker turn, which is for the stand-up comedians, exists in stand-up monologue.

However, Attardo and Chabanne (1992) accentuate that comic monologues are often difficult to distinguish from jokes from a textual point of view. They note that stand-up monologues are chains of punchlines and that stand-up comedians do not rely on the audience to contribute clear cut back channel utterances in the joke telling. Since they have the exact jokes in mind, a script for their performance, the stand-up comedians could narrate their jokes without audience clear cut contributions, unlike the joke teller in conversational joking. In conversational joking, the hearers could respond in a number of ways, for instance, they could join the joke teller in saying the punchline or ask the joke teller to say another joke.

Furthermore, on conversational joking, Norrick (1993) notes that laughter often overlaps with the speech of the joke teller. According to Schwarz (2010), laughter overlapping can also be applied to stand-up comedy performance. When a comedian presents his/her jokes, the audience could anticipate the humorous peaks in the comic narration, thus they might begin laughing before the comedians relinquish the floor. Other similarities of conversational joking and stand-up joking include use of repetitive and formulaic structures, use of discourse markers (Schwarz, 2010), the use of both set-up and punchline in a joke structure, and the elicitation of the same perlocutionary effect- laughter.

Furthermore, in emphasizing the areas of differences and similarities in stand-up joke telling and conversational joking, Schwarz (2010:88) asserts:

The stand-up comedians try to involve their audience in a different way. They address them directly and try to keep their attention and earn their appreciation, but they do not wait for their response. As soon as they realize that the audience is not reacting, they have to change their way of performing so as not to lose their attention. They do not have the time to pay attention to individual persons, so they cannot rely on back channelling in the same way that a joke teller in a small group does.

In addition, it is possible to differentiate joking in stand-up comedy from conversational joking based on the number of participants, particularly, the recipients. In this view, stand-up comedy is seen as a public joking genre because the number of the addressees is not fixed and because there is no previous social relationship between the participants. Conversational joking, on the other hand, is a private joking genre in that the number of hearers is fixed and closed; in addition there is usually a previous social relationship between the participants. However, stand-up comedy is also personal and unmediated just like conversational joking, in that the comedian is present, face-to-face with the hearers, since it is not mediated like other genres of media humour like newspapers cartoons and broadcast sitcoms.

2.7 Joke performance in stand-up comedy

Mintz (1985), McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio, (1993), Greenbaum (1999), Roberts (2000), Rutter (2000), Mesropova (2003), Glick (2007), Katayama (2009), Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) Schwarz (2010), Morris (2011), and Adetunji (2013) represent a number of scholars who have worked on stand-up comedy performances.

These scholars examine stand-up comedy from different perspectives like arts, rhetoric, semiotics and linguistics.

To start with, Roberts (2000) argues that stand-up comedy is a prerogative art. She places stand-up performances on the same plain with other art genres like music, paintings and drawing. Greenbaum (1999), Glicks (2007) and Morris (2011) are studies which draw from rhetorics and semiotics in analysing stand-up performances. Greenbaum (1999) maintains that stand-up narratives are rhetorical and are designed to persuade the audience to adopt certain ideological positions. The stand-up comedians persuade their audience by adopting different discourse strategies like ethos and kairos. For Morris (2011), the performance space of stand-up comedy is a contact zone where a comedian may “successfully challenge deeply held beliefs” of the audience members. Comedians use “concrete and personal stories, active voice, and repetition of ideas, bodily and facial gestures” in the performance space to achieve their rhetorical goal (p. 38). Glick (2007) explains stand-up performance as a semiotic process in which the comedians use different voices to foreground incongruity in their joke performances. In this semiotic process, the comedians set up relevant background information.

Rutter (2000) identifies the functions of comperes in stand-up comedy. The author observes that the introduction by comperes frames a series of comedy sets into a single performance. In another study, Katayama (2009) compares the Japanese version of stand-up comedy (Manzai) with the American stand-up comedy. Katayama observes that humour in American stand-up comedy occurs from the common ground between the comedian and the audience while in Japanese, it occurs from the performance instance that exists between the stand-up and their audience. Mesropova (2003) brings up gender issues in stand-up performances. The author notes that Russian female stand-up comedians’ routines are pervasively marked by highly negative men-denigrating motifs, even though the female comedians perform routines that are written by men.

Both McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio, (1993) and Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) adopt conversational analysis methods in analysing stand-up performances. They identify different conversational devices like laughtraps, listing, membership category, fillers, surveys and pags in their studies. Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) view stand-up comedy as an interaction. They also describe it as an institutional form of talk-in-interaction in which series of joking stories are presented to the audience.

Giving the following reasons, Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009: 5-6) assert that stand-up performances are instances of institutional form of talk-in-interaction:

- i. They have specific goals tied to the participants' institution relevant identities: the comedian and audience gather together to have fun by laughing at the performer's punchlines (Glick, 2007; Schwarz, 2010 and Mintz, 1985). Roberts (2000) observes that whatever "kills" laughter in a performance is noted by the comedian and it is not repeated.
- ii. There are constraints on what can be considered as permitted contribution. As a social practice, stand-up comedy permits only the comedian to hold the floor through-out the time of the performance. The audience can contribute only by producing affiliative or disaffiliative responses, but cannot reciprocate the performers' jokes as it would have occurred in ordinary conversations (Schwarz, 2010; McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio, 1993). Affiliative responses are positive in that they encourage the comedians to continue their acts while disaffiliative responses are negative in that they tell the comedians that their acts are not humorous and unacceptable. Schwarz (2010), Mintz (1985) as well as McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio (1993) recognise that the audience do not just only participate by listening and watching the comics performing but also react to what the comics say or how the comics act by giving feedbacks through their responses.
- iii. The response formants can readily be done together. Cases when individuals make themselves audible are often remarked upon by the comedians. McIlvenny, Mettovaara and Tapio (1993) observe that the response formants in stand-up comedy performances are similar to what is obtainable in political oratory.
- iv. The interactions in stand-up comedy performance are carried out and made recognisable through specific practices which show coherence, orderliness and meaningful succession of sequences of acts or move. The stand-up practice also allows on-going progression of the performance such that it indicates the kind of activity the participants are jointly engaged in. Scholars agree that stand-up comedy performance has become a social practice which has its own peculiar features.

2.8 Timing in joke performance

The notion of timing in the performance of jokes is very significant. Joke tellers, and in this case stand-up comedians, must determine how to effectively manage time during the performance of their jokes. Attardo and Pickering (2011:233) observe that “in humour, timing is everything.” Similarly, Audrieth (1998) comments that timing can make the difference between a joke that is extremely effective and one that fails. To Audrieth, timing relates to the delivery of the punchline. Timing is concerned with the amount of time delayed between the end of the setup of a joke and the delivery of its punchline. When the time is too short or too long, the impact of the punchline is lessened. Too short a time makes the joke to end abruptly and this does not give adequate time for the recipient to process the joke. On the other hand, too long a time may make the recipients to lose interest in the joke.

The idea of timing in joke delivery entails apportioning the right rhythm, speed and pause to each part of the joke. Attardo and Pickering (2011), having reviewed different definitions of timing in humour, recapitulate timing as distribution of pauses, distribution of the elements of the joke text (the build-up and the punchline) and as interaction with other speakers. Attardo and Pickering imply that timing involves not only apportioning the right speed or seconds to each part of the joke, but also observing the recipients of the joke and allowing them the necessary time they need to get the joke. This is why Suls (1983:54) emphasizes that in the presentation of a joke, “the joke premise must be told in such a way that the listener has enough time to generate an expectation and therefore be surprised by the punchline.” Suls (1983) further notes that when recipients of jokes are provided with too much time, they will be able to predict the punchline of the joke, and when they are provided with too little time they will have no expectation at all and the joke will lose its surprise effect.

In stand-up comedy performance, timing begins the moment the comedians step into the stage. The audience, who would have been awaiting their presence, normally give a loud affiliative response at the sight of the stand-up comedians. A professional stand-up comedian allows the audience to calm down before beginning her/his routine. S/he also measures effectively the time when to start the performance and when to move to a new joke. At each joke interval, professional comedians allow their audience to fully express their reactions to their jokes and then calm down before moving to the next joke. Professional comedians also determine the speed at which

they render their jokes, when to use a pause and the length of pauses and the kind of speed with which to render each joke. Schwarz (2010) identifies the use of repetitive structures, formulaic expressions, hesitation markers, hedges and planned pauses as timing issues during stand-up performances. If these language cues are to be used, the comedian must determine the time to use them during performance.

Apart from forming an intrinsic part of a performance, timing is also used as an interactional strategy by the comedians. Comedians usually pause to observe the reception of their jokes. Adetunji (2013) observes that pausing has been found useful in humour performance for activating shared co-textual and contextual backgrounds.

2.9 Studies on Nigerian stand-up comedy

Adetunji (2013), Ayakoroma (2013), Adekunle (2014) and Nwankwo (2014) are studies which have investigated Nigerian stand-up comedy. Adetunji (2013) views Nigerian stand-up comedy as a realisation of and use of the English language as a second language phenomenon. He asserts that his study “explores the situation of English in a ‘peripheral’ (non-native speaking), ‘Outer Circle’ (ESL) environment, by examining aspects of the pragmatics of Nigerian humour, specifically the interactional context of its stand-up comedy” (Adetunji 2013: 1).

Adetunji (2013) investigates the performance of four male comedians- Ali Baba, I Go Dye, Basketmouth and Gordons, and one female comedian- Lepacious Bose. He observes that his choice of one female comedian as against four male comedians is to reflect the gender disparity in the number of professional stand-up comedians. Adetunji (2013:5) asserts that the female comedians “are not up to one-fifth of the total number of Nigerian stand-up comedians”. Ayakoroma (2013), which chronicles the history of stand-up comedy in Nigeria, corroborates Adetunji’s assertion in that in his list of about thirty artistes who have performed as stand-up comedians in Nigeria, only two female comedians are mentioned.

As findings, Adetunji (2013) identifies linguistic coding, stereotyping, call and response, formulaic expressions, self-deprecation and shared experiences as strategies adopted by Nigerian stand-up comedians in their performances to initiate humour. However, he fails to relate these strategies to the concept and theories of humour. For instance, he fails to show how stereotyping makes people laugh. Also, under linguistic coding, he asserts that Nigerian stand-up comedians alternate codes, but he fails to

show what humour lies in code alternation and how code alternation makes the audiences in the stand-up performances laugh. It is not only in joke performances that interlocutors stereotype people in the society. Stereotyping also occurs in other genres of communication such as news broadcast, dance and music. Also, in everyday conversations, interlocutors alternate codes. These instances do not however lead to humour. These observations strengthen the fact that there is need to re-examine the strategies employed by Nigerian stand-up comedians and relate them to the purposes for which they are used, joke performance in the Nigerian context.

In a different study, Ayakoroma (2013) presents the historical development of Nigerian stand-up comedy. The study observes that stand-up comedy genre which began in the country in the 1990s is not totally new to the country as there had been some forms of entertainment in the broadcast media which are similar to stand-up performances. For instance, the author observes that traditional court performers are actually stand-up performers in that they also aim at eliciting humorous responses from their listeners. Ayakoroma (2013) does not touch on the linguistics aspects of Nigerian of stand-up comedy.

Another study on Nigerian stand-up comedy is Adekunle (2014), which examines the stand-up performances of three Nigerian stand-up comedians, Gordons, Basketmouth and I Go By. Adekunle (2014) adopts a literary approach in investigating the satiric devices and the performativity techniques of these the comedians. Adopting psychoanalysis and performance theory as his theoretical orientation for analysis, the author concludes that the comedians orient three types of satire in their performances - political, social and religious. He also notes that the comedians use symbolism, caricature, subtle irony and humour to present serious national issues while their performances are characterised by vocal dexterity, mimesis, blazer costume, subject-constrained facial and bodily gestures, audience-dependent improvisation and interactivity.

Although Adekunle (2014) identifies the satiric import of stand-up comedy performance, his analysis presents a marginal contribution to humour research in that the study does not include any literature on humour and like Adetunji (2013), does not include humour analysis. The author selects psychoanalysis and performance theory as the theoretical frameworks, which seem appropriate, but because there is no reference to Freud's (2002) seminal work on humour in Adetunji's review of

psychoanalysis, there is no analysis of humour in the study. Adekunle (2014) does not account for humour in Nigerian stand-up comedy.

Unlike Adekunle (2014), Nwankwo (2014) commences his study of Nigerian stand-up performance from the angle of the discipline of humour, thus he relates his analysis to the approaches to humour studies. In his comparative analysis of four Nigerian stand-up comedians, AY, Klint-da-Drunk, I Go Dye and Basketmouth, he observes that all the comedians elicit performance-audience-interaction using adjacency pairs, deploy embodied action and narrative dexterity through the manipulative use of NP. He however observes that the stage presence, entrance, appearance and delivery of the comedians differ. On their delivery, he observes that Basketmouth, I Go Dye and Klint-de-Drunk denigrate their personalities while AY imitates the elitist mannerism of the pastors he satirises. He also explores the use of embodied processes like mimesis, movement, gestures, facial expressions and speech. On their embodied actions, Nwankwo (2014) remarks that Klint-de-Drunk adopts the role of a drunkard while others play multiple snapshot roles, for instance, AY dresses flamboyantly, uses different costumes, and uses the stage space extensively to dramatize the actions of the butts he caricatures.

Although Nwankwo (2014) presents a thorough comparative study of the performances of the selected comedians, his study is not without some short-comings. Since the focus of his study is theatrical, the linguistics aspects of stand-up performances are left out in his analysis. Even though he refers to the choice of language and the mannerism of narration of each of the comedians, the study does not include a linguistic analysis of the performances. Also, Nwankwo (2014) claims to investigate all aspects of the stage presence of the comedians; however, given that the sources of his data are recorded versions of the performances, one wonders how the investigation of the entrance and exit patterns of the comedians in their shows will be possible since the recorded versions of their performances are always edited and are usually without the moment of entrance and exit of the comedians.

Another shortcoming of Nwankwo (2014) and Adekunle (2014) is that they are gender biased in that the two studies do not include any female comedian's routine in their analyses. Even though there are more male comedians than female comedians, the studies ought to have included, at least, a routine of a female comedian.

Apart from the observations made above, it is important to also note that these studies on Nigerian stand-up comedy neglect investigating intentions in stand-up

joking contexts. The previous studies do not also consider the humour strategies employed by Nigerian comedians. In this study, the joking contexts found in Nigerian stand-up comedy are identified and the stand-up comedians' intentions in these joking contexts are also described.

2.10 Theoretical orientations

This section presents the basic tenets of the linguistic theories that inform the analysis. These theories are relevance theory, pragmatic acts theory and contextual belief theory. The basic principles of these theories are combined to form the theoretical model developed for the purpose of this study.

2.10.1 Relevance theory (RT)

RT views communication as a cognitive process which involves human ability to entertain representations of other people's thoughts, desires and ideas on the basis of concrete stimuli like utterances and gestures. RT was developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986). Studies like Blakemore (1992) (2002), Wilson and Sperber (2004), Yus (2006) and (2011) have explicated the basic tenets of RT. Wilson and Sperber (2004) describe communication exchanges as ostensive-inferential communications, which involve the use of ostensive stimuli designed to attract the audience's attention and focus it on the initiator's intention. Only ostensive stimuli create expectations of relevance. For ostensive stimulus to become relevant, it must be mutually manifested to the communicators. RT is a theory of inference and it views inference as a mental operation which is used to assess communicators' intentions. Inference is affected by contextual factors like assumptions (from experience, about the world and those derived from situation of exchange), socio-cultural factors and preceding utterances. Inference entails identifying the logical forms of utterances, constructing their propositional content and generating hypothesis about intended explicit and implicated interpretation (explicature and implicature respectively) (Blakemore 1992; Wilson and Sperber 2004; Yus 2006 and 2011).

To sum up RT, Wilson and Sperber (2004:256) present two basic principles:

- i. Communicative principle of relevance: every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

- ii. Optimal relevance: an ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience if and only if:
 - a. It is relevant enough to worth the audience's processing effort;
 - b. It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences.

With the first principle, it is noted that the degree of relevance of an utterance is variable and context dependent. The principle implies that only utterances in which their speakers make manifest their intentions to the addressee are relevant. With the principle of relevance, the authors view "both the speaker and the hearer as actively participating in the verbal exchange, with the former devising his utterances with the view of achieving optimal relevance, and the latter formulating an interpretation of what he has heard, relying in this enterprise on the assumption that optimal relevance has been aimed at, if not achieved" (Jodłowiec 1991:242).

2.10.1.1 RT approaches to humour

Studies that have applied RT to humour are incongruity approaches (Attardo, 2011). These studies present humorous utterances having a pragmatic component. The pragmatic component is cognitively accessed in terms of implicit and explicit assumptions, and it is directed by the principles of relevance.

Yus (2003) formalises the application of RT to humorous utterances. Yus (2003:1300) notes that "humorous discourses involve specific interpretive paths favoured by the retrieval from the context of assumptions related to the communicator's communicative strategies." Yus (2003) opines that, following the principle of relevance, hearers may have to carry out supplementary mental efforts if an utterance is not informative enough, irrelevant or untrue. He suggests that humorous exchanges demand such an extra processing effort. Extra processing efforts may be needed because joke-tellers might withhold relevant information, choose to be obscure, ambiguous, or irrelevant so as to create incongruity. Thus, in RT, humorous utterances "are explained in terms of favouring certain relevance-seeking interpretive steps, with the aid of mutually manifest assumptions such as the speaker's attempt to create humorous effects" (Yus, 2003:1301).

Yus (2003) notes that interpretive stages like decoding, inferencing, extraction of logical form, ambiguity resolution, reference assignment, enrichment and the

recovery of implicatures and explicatures are exploited by humourists so as to derive humorous effects. Yus (2003) proposes that there are two interpretations which could be got from a joke: the first accessible interpretation is got from the build-up of the joke, while the second interpretation is got from the punchline. Yus (2003) suggests that the first interpretation (the overt one) selected by the addressee is one of the several interpretations that could be derived from the joke, and it is the most accessible to the hearer given the mutually manifested assumptions and interpretive steps. Yus (2003) tagged all the possible interpretations from the first part of the joke as Multiple-Graded-Interpretations part of the joke (MGI) while he labelled the reading from the latter part of the joke text, which is hidden until the punchline is given, Single-Covert-Interpretation part of the joke (SCI). Since the hearer has already got the overt MGI of the joke, the realisation of the SCI surprises and amuses him/her. With the SCI, the hearer identifies that (s)he has been led up the garden-path by the teller.

Other studies that have applied RT to jokes describe realisation of humour in line with the MGI/SCI dichotomy; for instance, Jodłowiec (1991) and Curcó (1996; 1998). Jodłowiec (1991) proposes that a joke possesses two hypotheses. The first is specific hypothesis (H1), which is got from the activation of context(s) in the set-up of the joke. The second is an unexpected interpretation (H2), which is got after the punchline of the joke has been given. Jodłowiec opines that both H1 and H2 are in line with the principle of relevance and are explicatures got from the joke utterance. In addition, Jodłowiec identifies two assumptions in jokes: the immediately available assumptions (C1), what Sperber and Wilson (1986) call initial context; and the assumptions made accessible when the punchline of the joke is given- (C2). The C1 directs the hearer towards the intended interpretation of the H1 while the C2 directs the hearer towards the interpretation of the punchline (H2).

On her part, Curcó (1996) analyses how a joke-teller leads the hearer to entertain two opposing assumptions: the Key Assumption (KA) which is a proposition consistent with the first interpretation of the joke, and, the Target Assumption (TA) which is a proposition consistent with the second interpretation of the joke. Curcó's KA is a strongly implicated premise while her TA is an accessible, though initially unaccessed, assumption in the context of interpretation (Yus, 2003).

However, Yus (2003) notes that it is not in all instances humorous texts fit into the MGI/SCI dichotomy. Some instances of humour realisation rely on hearers' ability to extract contextual assumptions and use them to yield appropriate contextual implications. It is in line with this that Galinanes (2000) argues that in humorous novels, apart from creating external and internal incongruities, writers create strong implicatures within the context of the novels. Galinanes (2000) observed that humorous discourses are based on presuppositions and moral, social, cultural and genetic assumptions shared by the narrator and reader. These assumptions and presuppositions are manipulated playfully by the writer and are readily available to the reader. Humour is, thus, created by writers when they keep juxtaposing events, speech and actions of characters, which are opposing to the assumptions they set up in the plot and assumptions the readers derived from their encyclopaedic knowledge.

A major short coming of the RT applications to humour is that the proponents have to contend with the fact that the principle of relevance cannot be violated (Attardo, 2011). Several scholars working within the parlance of humour have shown that speakers deliberately violate Grice's maxims, especially the maxims of relation and manner, so as to initiate humour (Attardo, 1994; Lin and Tan, 2012). Yus (2003) argues that the violation of maxims do not fit the RT approach and that in RT, Grice's view of cooperation as basis for successful communication is not regarded as necessary, since optimal relevance can be achieved without needing any underlying principle in force.

2.10.2 Mey's pragmatic acts theory (PAT)

The concept of pragmatic acts presupposes that language is being actively utilized to achieve certain purposes which may not be overtly stated in the use of language. However, for the action to which language is put, there is need for a "situational setting up in which the context of the acting carries more weight than the spoken act itself" (Mey 2001: 210).

Two concepts are important in PAT, common scenes and affordances. Mey (2001:218) describes common scene as "more than just a context, understood as a common background, or platform of communication." It is about "the underlying presuppositions making this context very possible". It is the understanding of the common scene that ultimately influence the actions performed in communication

exchanges. Common scene is akin to Levinson's (1979) activity type theory in that the concept of common scene is used to accentuate the social limitations as well as lack of restrictions that a speech situation offers language users. Mey (2001) uses the term affordances to denote what participants can achieve in the common scene. The affordances in a common scene create a platform for the participants to interact.

Pragmatic acts do not necessarily involve the use of speech acts since as much as situated speech acts constitute pragmatic acts, gestures and other nonverbal cues when situated, could be pointers to intended pragmatic acts. As a theory of intention, PAT considers the verbal and nonverbal cues that could be used to perform specific pragmatic acts, and the verbal and nonverbal cues that could create the conditions for performing such pragmatic acts. Mey (2001) emphasizes that PAT, as a theory of action, appeals to the underlying orientation among participants in discourse, which manifests itself in their interactional goals.

Mey (2001:227) describes pragmatic acting as "contextualised adaptive behaviour" and pragmatic act as "an instance of adapting oneself to context as well as (on the basis of past situations and looking ahead to future situations) adapting the context to oneself." Mey argues that an instance of communication becomes an act when it is situated in contexts and such situated communications are actions in that they are adaptive behaviours through which interlocutors influence each other and their environments. PAT does not explain language from the "sovereign speaker-hearer" angle, but focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said" (Mey 2001:221).

PAT explains the way pragmemes are presented in speech situations. Pragmemes are prototypes of situated language use and are realised through individual pragmatic acts (ipras or practs and allopracts) whenever language users adapt themselves to context and whenever they adapt contexts to themselves. A pragmeme is "a generalized pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances" (Odebunmi 2008:76). Mey (2006:751) describes practs as individual pragmatic acts which realise a particular pragmeme and an alloprat as "a different realisation of a particular pragmeme".

With PAT, there is no need for conditions and rules for actualising individual speech acts or the rules of grammaticalness or correctness (Mey, 2001; 2006; Kecskes, 2010). PAT resolves the problem of differentiating illocutionary force from

perlocutionary force, which is associated with speech act theory. Speech acts are viewed as occurring and interacting with other acts in order to enhance the realisation of participants' intentions. Mey (2001) indicates that there are two parts to a pragmeme: the activity part and textual part. The activity part is made up of language and paralanguage which interlocutors draw upon to communicate. The activity part "lists the various choices that the language user has at his or her disposal in communicating.... The language user may choose one or several of the available options" (Mey 2001:222). These include speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational acts, psychological acts, prosody, and physical acts. The activity part functions as the contextualisation cues. According to Grumper (1992), contextualisation cues are meant to guide the hearers to the speaker's intentions.

The textual part refers to the context in which any pragmatic act is situated and it includes inference, reference, relevance, voice, shared situational knowledge, metaphor and metapragmatic joker. The metapragmatic joker is very important in that it directs attention to something happening on the metapragmatic level (Mey, 2006). According to Odeunmi (2008), it is the interaction between the activity and textual parts that results in pragmatics and allopragmatics. It is also in the context that the activity part is situated.

2.10.3 Context

According to Leech (1983), context is made up of any background knowledge assumed to be shared by participants of a discourse. Such background knowledge contributes to how hearers interpret speakers' meanings. Hanks (2006) notes that language and verbal exchanges are informed and shaped by social and interpersonal contexts in which speech occurs.

Odeunmi (2006) views context as the spine of meaning, without which, speakers' intentions and meaning of a communicative event cannot be identified. To him, context consists in beliefs or assumptions about temporal, spatial, social, physical and cultural settings and actions. Odeunmi (2006) presents a model of context that identifies two levels of beliefs: language and situational. The language level accentuates that meaning and identification of intentions is possible if interlocutors have access to the same language while the second level amplifies the need for common code and experience for the processing of meaning and intentions. Collective

assumptions about code and experience secure the uptake for meaning and identification of intention in any interaction.

Odebunmi (2006:26-33) further specifies and explicates three aspects of situational level beliefs and these are presented as follows:

- i. Shared knowledge of subject topic: with this aspect of situational level belief, Odebunmi (2006) emphasizes the need for interlocutors to have adequate knowledge of the discourse topic or subject.
- ii. Shared knowledge of word choices, referents and references: this aspect of situational level belief underscores the relevance of language competence, both linguistic and communicative competence of the interlocutors, for successful communication. Odebunmi (2006) stresses that interlocutors must have same knowledge of lexical items, referents, references and collocational rules.
- iii. Shared socio-cultural and situational experiences, previous or immediate: with this aspect of situational level belief, Odebunmi (2006) gives prominence to both cultural and situational aspects of language. He states that “interactions move on smoothly when participants have common socio-cultural and situational experiences” (Odebunmi, 2006: 30).

Odebunmi's (2006) opinion is that these beliefs or assumptions held prior to or during the communicative event come into and facilitate the communicative event. Similarly, as exemplified in Mey (2001), the shared situational knowledge empowers the participants to find affordances, identify what can be said and interpret what is actually said.

In Mey (2001) and (2006), context is specified as the textual part of the pragmatic model. It includes co-text and the interactional situation. It is in the context that the processes of inference, reference assignment and the search for optimal relevance are carried out. Mey also uses the term common scene, to describe what is meant by context in PAT. Mey (2006:749) asserts that common scene is typical of social situation, which is “a situation whose participants are on some kind of shared footing.” Common scene entails the notion of common ground and what participants in a conversation understand as common ground.

2.11 Theoretical model: humour acts

The theoretical model adopted for this study is termed humour acts. One of the reasons for using ideas from RT and PAT as the foundation of the model for analysing the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians is that these two theories of meaning are theories of intention. Both of them recognise that for meaning to be inferred, hearers must identify the intentions of the speakers. Mey (2001) subsumes this under the communicative principle by noting that it is impossible not to communicate in any communicative exchange. The communicative principle helps to accentuate that although stand-up comedy is geared towards making the participants laugh, the stand-up comedians' utterances communicate other meanings to the audience.

Both theories recognise the need for contextualisation cues to be situated in a communal context, which is specified by Odebummi (2009), for intentions to be identified. In RT, contextualisation cues are termed stimuli while in PAT, they make up the activity part. In RT, context refers to informative sources from which interactants gather assumptions in any communicative exchange while in PAT context refers to common scenes where interactants find their affordances and instantiate their acts. In RT terms, context is cognitive while in PAT, it is social and situational. Adopting these views will enable a dialectical movement in the analysis of the stand-up comedy performance. It will help in noting that the situational use of language in stand-up comedy licences stand-up comedians' humour acts. It will also help in identifying how the comedians, with each joke, create different contexts that are used in interpreting their joking stories. A joking story indicates comedians' intention for different humour acts. In addition, it will help to identify the cognitive (pragmatic) strategies employed by the comedians in constructing their jokes.

The notion of common scene is vital here. There is the need to define the common scene of the stand-up comedy narration which gives the comedians and their audiences their affordances. Common scene refers to the presuppositions underlying stand-up comedy performances (these have been discussed in Sections 2.6 and 2.7). In the Nigerian stand-up context, these presuppositions also include the multilingual/multicultural nature of Nigeria, Nigeria's troubled political and social life and the emerging national culture.

In Humour acts, common scene and assumptions underlie both the use of verbal and nonverbal cues in the humorous narrations of the stand-up comedians. Both

the assumptions and the common scene of the performance influence the comedians' narrations as well as the audience interpretation of the narrations. For instance, from the situational level of stand-up comedy performance, both comedians and audiences derive their institutional identities from the collective assumption on how they should behave in the performance. It also informs the kind of affordances they experience in the interaction: only the stand-up comedians should say the joke while the audience should laugh at the joke.

Even though the participants draw assumptions from the same situational context, there is need for communal manifestness. Communal manifestness denotes that mutual attention must be established and reciprocal presence must be acknowledged between stand-up comedians and their audiences before any humour acts can be instantiated. It should be noted that in the Nigerian stand-up comedy, where the stand-up comedians and audiences may not have the same informative sources in terms of first language and culture, there is need for the comedian to make communally manifest, all aspects of their identities that are vital to the humour acts being performed. Stand-up comedians make such information communally manifest through their use of verbal and nonverbal cues.

The concept humour acts presupposes that apart from instantiating humour in their audiences, stand-up comedians use their joking stories to achieve certain goals. They could indicate their intentions to start a joke, talk about themselves, the audience or report a social act to the audience, so as through shared laughter, they will accentuate what is socially acceptable or unacceptable.

Humour acts also take into cognisance a number of conceptual orientations in humour research, which are explained below:

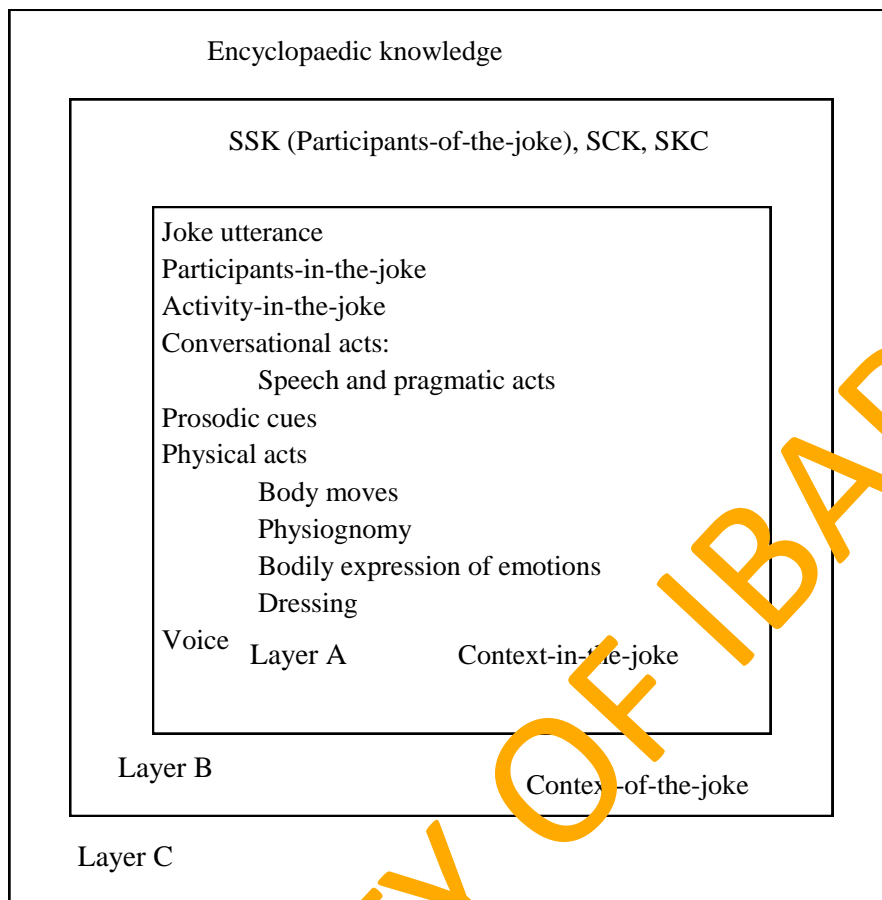
- i. Jokes are products of human interactions: Attardo (1994), Yus (2003) and Martin (2007) see joking as a successful interpersonal and/or communicative exchange. Studies on stand-up comedy have presented stand-up comedy joke narrations as successful communicative exchanges between the stand-up comedians and the audiences. Humour acts take place as a result of the communicative exchanges between stand-up comedians and their audiences.
- ii. Jokes convey some information. Attardo (1994) opines that there is no joke without a specific message in it since a joke must be about something. In essence, a joke says something about someone or a group, or comments

on an action or an event. Stand-up comedians might use their jokes to talk about themselves, their experiences, other individuals or their societies.

- iii. Because jokes convey information, their uses have pragmatic import. Language users present jokes to recipients to make known their intentions. It is in view of speakers' intentionality, that Schmidt (2011) describes a joke as a discrete speech act.
- iv. A joke narration, regardless of its length and structure, is a discrete language unit and as such, should be analysed as a unit of discourse. It is in this sense that Jodłowiec (1991) defines a joke as an ordered sequence of utterances which are planned as a unit and Schmidt (2011) describes a joke as an independent unit of language that functions as an independent utterance.
- v. As an utterance, the joke depends on the context(s) of its performance for its meaning. For any joke-exchange to take place there must be a Speaker-S (comedian), Hearer-H (audience), and Intention-I (act) that S wants to convey to H. The audience receive the joke within the contexts of its performance, and infer the acts transmitted via the joke. The audience understand the joke far above the literal meaning of the words and sentences that make up the joke utterance. The comprehension of the joke by the audience is signalled by their responses.
- vi. To convey their humour acts, speakers make use of certain strategies, which may be covert or overt.

Humour act model is presented in Figure 1 below:

Fig. 1: Humour acts model



Source: Researcher

2.12 Aspects of humour acts

The humour acts model is three layered. It shows that jokes in stand-up performances are embodiments of three levels of contexts, all of which interact as the stand up comedians present their narrations to their audiences. The comedians draw assumptions, issues, actors and events from the shared encyclopaedic knowledge and context-of-the-joke and situate them in the context-in-the-joke. The layers are explained in the following sections.

2.12.1 Layer A: Context-in-the-joke

Layer A, the innermost layer of the model, is the core of the model. It is the part that provides the elements which function as contextualisation cues for deriving the stand-up comedians' humour acts. These cues also suggest the kind of assumptions that the comedians make manifest in their interaction with the audience. The

participants of the interaction, stand-up comedians and audience, make use of these verbal and nonverbal signs to relate the joke to their background knowledge (Layers B and C) in order to retrieve the needed assumptions to construct and interpret each joke. It is from Layer A that the comedians' communicative intentions are identified.

The comedians use the features of Layer A to initiate and execute their humour acts. The features in this layer represent the various choices comedians have at their disposal in communicating their acts and adopting their strategies. The comedian may select one or several of the existing options or may decide to do away with them totally.

As verbal and nonverbal cues, their pragmatic significance is to attract the audience's attention and focus it on the comedians' humour acts. In RT terms, they function as ostensive stimuli; therefore, they create precise and predictable expectations of relevance in the contexts of stand-up comedy performance. Whenever they are made manifest to the audiences, they are capable of altering the audiences' assumptions about the world or their collective culture.

2.12.1.1 The joke utterance

The term joke utterance is used here to refer to the exact linguistic code and wordings used by the comedians to convey their jokes to the audience. This contextualisation cue is adopted from GTVH. It presupposes the concept of language in joking exchanges, which according to Attardo (1994), contains all the information necessary for the verbalisation of a joke. It entails the lexical and structural choices made by stand-up comedians while saying or performing their jokes. The task in the analysis is not just to examine the propositional contents of the jokes, their implied premises, but also to see how these are juxtaposed with the joking contexts.

2.12.1.2 The participants-in-the-joke

The participants-in-the-joke are the people or characters in the joking stories of stand-up comedians. In any joke narration, there is need to pick-out the referring expressions and assign the proper referents to them. Jokes usually come with participants who represent real life characters. These participants-in-the-joke are reflective of social actors or groups in the society. How they are presented in the joke, the actions and statements assigned to them are pointers to the participants-of-the-joke (the comedian and the audience) attitudes to them and ultimately humour acts of the

comedian. The comedian might choose to present certain participant in his joke as wise and smart or foolish and stupid; such presentation would be used to justify the comedian's act of criticising, justifying or praising such a participant in the joke.

In this model, participants-in-the-joke include all the individuals (especially the targets) who are mentioned in a joking story. GTVH only recognises targets in jokes, however, when stand-up joking stories are examined, it will be realised that there are usually more than one character in their narrations. When comedians mention individuals as parts of the participants-in-the-joke, the audience will activate background assumptions like stereotypes and attitudes about such individuals while interpreting the jokes. The kinds of actions and speech alluded to the target are suggestive of how such a person or group of persons is perceived by the participants-of-the-joke. The target may be presented as stupid, foolish, wise, cunning, gentle, weak or strong.

Identifying the participants-in-the-joke helps to separate them from the interlocutors, the participants-of-the-joke, who are involved in the joking exchange. With such categorisation, the model accentuates that stand-up comedy narration falls within the realms of secondary speech situations. Secondary speech situations are made-up of utterances in "which the speaker reports to the hearer on somebody else's linguistic behaviour" (Jodłowiec 1991:244). In stand-up comedy narrations, comedians engage in an activity through which they report another activity to their audience, such that two different activity types are taking place correspondingly. Jodłowiec (1991:244) captures this by noting that in jokes, "two sets of speakers and hearers are involved: on one hand, the joke teller and his audience, on the other, the characters in the joke and the overall joke production/comprehension, one embedded in the other".

Differentiating participants-in-the-joke from the participants-of-the-joke is significant for conceptualising the interpersonal relationship in the stand-up joking exchange. By this distinction, a joking relationship, which exists between the stand-up comedians and their audience, is established. By convention, the stand-up comedians and their audiences are brought into what Radcliffe-Brown (1940) terms joking relationship, a situation in which two individuals can make fun of each other. According to Radcliffe-Brown, a joking relationship maybe symmetrical- one in which "each of two persons teases or makes fun of the other"; or asymmetrical- one in

which “A jokes at the expense of B and B accepts the teasing good humouredly but without retaliating” (1940:195). The interpersonal relationship between the stand-up comedians and audience falls within the purview of asymmetrical joking relationship since the comedians are permitted to poke fun at the audience, with the audience not taking offence at the comedians joke on them.

However, given that in stand-up joking relationship, the participants-of-the-joke gather together to laugh at the participants-in-the-joke, the joking relationship of stand-up performance can be described as tangential. Tangential joking relationship refers to joking instances where two parties laugh at another individual, who is not part of the on-going interaction.

2.12.1.3 The activity-in-the-joke

The activity-in-the-joke has to do with the actions or events reported in the joke. The activity in the joke is what the joke is all about or the activity type reported in the joke. There is need to juxtapose how the event or action reported in the joke is carried out in the world of the joke with how it is normally carried out in reality. This element, thus, draws from the assumptions derived from the encyclopaedic knowledge as well as the culture of the participants-of-the-joke. The way the activity in the joke is reported may not be in consonance with how such activity is carried out given the encyclopaedic knowledge or the collective culture of both the comedians and their audience. There may be some sort of incongruity between the event or action reported in the joke and how the event or action should have been reported given the background knowledge.

Examining how the activity-in-the-joke is presented is very important because it denotes the crux of the action given in the joke. The comedian may use the activity-in-the-joke to suggest certain stereotypes, especially when the butt of the joke is associated with specific social groups.

2.12.1.4 Conversational acts

Conversational acts refer to the linguistic strategies and conversational devices that the comedians employ to engage their audiences. Conversational acts include expressions like interrogative utterances and nonverbal cues like pauses which the comedians employ to elicit audience participation in their performances. They also include expressions that foreground direct reference to audience and the nonverbal

devices that are used to indicate that the participants-of-the-joke are also included in the participants-in-the-joke, for instance, pointing.

Parts of the conversational acts are the speech acts and pragmatic act instantiated in the comedians' routines. When these are considered within the affordances of the context-of-the-joke, their pragmatic force would include the humorous effects they have on the audience.

2.12.1.5 Prosodic cues

Prosodic cues refer to aspects of speech such as intonation, volume, tone, stress, pitch, rhythm, pause, voice quality and length. Baker and Preece (2011) describe them as suprasegmental features of connected speech and note that they can reveal something about the speaker or their intentions. For instance, volume may indicate emotional state while intonation can be used to distinguish a declarative statement from an interrogative one.

Grumperz (1982) notes that prosody is used by speakers to signal what activity they are engaged in. It is also used by speakers to indicate "the metacommunicative frame they are operating within" (Tannen, 2005: 33). Thus, these prosodic cues are contextualisation cues. Grumperz (1982; 1992) suggest that these elements of speech can be employed in different ways and be used to convey certain meanings which may be different from the linguistic meanings of the words on which they are assigned. Since these cues are conventions for signalling speakers' intention, it is important to consider them in the analysis to see how they have been used by the comedians to enhance the performance of their joking acts.

2.12.1.6 Physical acts (nonverbal cues)

Physical acts include body moves, physiognomy, bodily expressions of emotions and the manner of dressing. They are nonverbal cues that are used in communication and they include body languages like hand gesture, posture, touch, pointing, stage movement and facial expression. Communication cues like styling choice, such as, hair or clothing style are also subsumed under physical acts. These nonverbal cues, usually, become meaningful when considered with utterances in the context of their use. They enhance the meaning of linguistic expression as well as speakers intended meaning (Tannen, 2005). According Grumperz (1992), these

nonverbal acts are parts of contextualisation cues. Grumperz argues that they play an important role in affecting participants' perception of discourse-level coherence, and thus, they influence the interpretation of discourse in which they are used.

Gestures and other nonverbal cues are parts of the semiotic resources that the comedians draw from to enhance the performance of jokes. They are also used in conveying the intended humour acts of the comedians. Thus, in the analysis, these will be examined. The physical acts will be examined using ideas from multimodality theory, a methodological framework which draws from discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, semiotics and mediated discourse analysis (Kress, 2010; Norris 2004). Norris (2004) version of multimodality is adopted in the analysis because it is a model of multimodal theory that is based on both semiotic and interactional sociolinguistics.

2.12.1.7 Voice

Voice, according to Mey (2011) and Bal (2006), has to do with “who speaks” in a narration: is it the narrator, the author of the story or one of the characters in the story. Voice is a basic strategy employed in enhancing the effects of a narration on the recipient of the narrative text. Voice is cardinal to storytelling because it is through it that stories are told. With voice, storytellers create characters, keep the characters alive and apart and even create their points of view (Mey, 2011). Comedians may present their narrations in different voices by creating different participants-in-the-joke, allotting different voices to the participants-in-the-joke using different strategies, and, allowing these participants to speak to the audience with their individual voices.

The concepts of dialogism and monologism are important in analysing voicing. A text is dialogic when it is made up of several voices. A text is thus seen as an interaction of multiple voices and several modes of discourse. The voices in the text are not blended into a single perspective and they are not overshadowed by the voice of the author or narrator. With the dialogic voice, a text expresses plurality of consciousness which is held together in the narration. Monologic voice on the other hand, is directly oriented to its topic or purpose. It is thus made up of a single voice, which speakers use to project themselves. Monologism is made up of a single consciousness and it presents views or beliefs from a single perspective- the dominant perspective (Bal, 2006; Morson, 2006; Waghmare, 2011).

2.12.2 Layer B: Context-of-the-joke

This layer denotes the communicative situation of stand-up comedy performance; it is the locus of stand-up comedy interaction. It is here the goals of stand-up comedy interactions are initiated, achieved and sustained. It is the context of humour performance. The context of the joke licences the use of the joke, without it, there is no performance of jokes. As the situation of language use, it dictates the roles of the participants-of-the-joke. It is from this layer that the participants-of-the-joke derive what to do and how to do it, and, what to say and how to say it.

As the common scene, it specifies the social context in which stand-up performances take place. The context-of-the-joke has as its foundation the background knowledge of the participants-of-the-joke. It underlines the fundamental assumptions that enhance the success of stand-up comedy interactional goals. These assumptions are shared situational knowledge (SSK), shared cultural knowledge (SCK) and shared knowledge of code (SKC). Mintz (1985) suggests that background knowledge in terms of language, culture and situation must be shared for successful stand-up comedy performance. To conceptualise the context-of-the-joke in the humour acts model, Odeunmi (2006) contextual belief theory is adopted.

2.12.2.1 The shared cultural knowledge (SCK)

Culture sums up the beliefs, history, events, actions, attitude and behaviour of a group of people. According to Martin and Ringham (2000: 46), “the term culture designates the sum total of knowledge, attitudes and values which inform a society or characterise an individual”. Since culture informs attitude, it influences language use and pragmatic interpretation of utterances. As an embodiment of values and beliefs, culture presents participants with numerous underlying presuppositions which facilitate the success of their interactions. This is why, in any communication exchange, the participants must share the same cultural presuppositions or make them explicit.

Although the mechanism of humour is universal and transcultural, the realisation of humour and the success of its use depend on the cultural presuppositions held by the participants. Studies like Norrick (1986), Staley and Derks (1995) and Holmes and Marra (2002) have pointed out that culture determines what counts as funny and that participants must share the same cultural values for them to enjoy

humour. Likewise, Yus (2003), (2004) and Schwarz (2010) have noted that in stand-up comedy there is need for the participants to have the same cultural beliefs.

It is important to note that the Nigerian stand-up comedy, the source of data for the current study, is an offshoot of a multicultural society. Thus, Nigerian stand-up comedians must find a way of negotiating the possible cultural plurality of their audiences via the resources in Layer A. The comedians make use of the cues in Layer A to explicitly activate cultural assumptions between themselves and their audiences by building their narrations around popular Nigerian political, social and cultural topics and events.

2.12.2.2 The shared situational knowledge (SSK)

Situational knowledge is a fundamental assumption in the interpretation of utterances. The situation of an utterance refers to the kind of activity that causes the utterance. In interactions, participants must draw from the situation to interpret the logical form of utterances and to deduce the speakers' intentions. This calls for mutual knowledge of the situation by the participants. The term shared situational knowledge is used to refer to the mutual awareness about the stand-up performance that both the stand-up comedians and their audience possess.

For stand-up performance, SSK demands that the participants-of-the-joke must be aware of how the stand-up performance is carried out, their roles as well as their institutionalised identities and how they can contribute to the stand-up interaction. SSK also entails that the participants-of-the-joke recognise the constraints on their roles and how they can manipulate such constraints to achieve their goals. For instance, the institutionalised nature of stand-up performance does not permit the audience to speak in the interaction, except when the comedians elicit responses from the audience. However, whenever the comedians are performing and the audience do not find their performance humorous, the audience bypass their institutionalised role as passive participants and give out heckles.

2.12.2.3 The shared knowledge of code (SKC)

Before participants can communicate through a language, they have to have linguistic and communicative competence in the language. Applying this to stand-up comedy performance, SKC demands that the comedian performs their joke with a linguistic code that is well known to the audience. It is the communal knowledge of

linguistic code between stand-up comedians and their audiences that licenses comedians' choices of language, language varieties as well as linguistic expression. Comedians who use inaccessible linguistic code to the audience cannot achieve communication in their performances.

In the Nigerian multilingual context, the SKC becomes a nimble tool for selection of language code. The SKC dictates the language in which the Nigerian stand-up comedians will perform.

2.12.3 Layer C: Encyclopaedic knowledge (EK)

The function of this layer is to show that humorous language use still takes place within the purview of non-humorous language use, since they are uttered with the same linguistic forms. Thus, the same principle that underlines the use of humorous utterances underlines the use of non-humorous utterances. The implication of this is that the same interpretive steps or processes are needed for the interpretation of jokes and non-joke texts. Thus, there is no need for separating bona-fide mode of communication from non-bona-fide mode since interpretation of utterances in both modes undergoes the same inferential process.

The encyclopaedic knowledge layer depicts that the knowledge of language and the experiential knowledge of activities, events, happenings in the society and human society are rudimentary to the knowledge and use of humour. In stand-up comedy narrations, the stand-up comedian extracts issues from Layer C and then situates such issues in Layer B, where in turn they bear their own contexts (what is obtainable in Layer A). It is in Layer B that the assumptions for the interpretation of humorous utterances are activated.

A major function of Layer C is to show that the encyclopaedic knowledge, which represents linguistic competence and experiential knowledge, supplies the needed information to make expressions meaningful and interpretable. Linguistic expressions do have both conventional and contextual values. In the model, the conventional values of the linguistic expressions used by the comedians are supplied in Layer C while the contextual values are supplied in Layer B.

2.13 Summary

This chapter presents the review of relevant literatures to the present study. It also presents the theoretical framework. The next chapter presents the research methodology.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that were adopted for collection of data and investigation of humour acts and strategies in Nigerian stand-up comedy performances.

3.1 Research design

This study adopted qualitative analysis to explain the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians. As a qualitative research, it employed pragmatic principles to describe the intentions of Nigerian stand-up comedians and how such intentions are realised through their narration of jokes in the contexts of their performances.

In order to analyse the routines of Nigerian stand-up comedians, a theoretical model, humour acts, was developed. The model drew from the principles of relevance theory, pragmatic act and general theory of verbal humour. Because these theories did not cater for physical aspects of communication like gestures, layout and dressing, multimodal theory was adopted to describe nonverbal aspects of stand-up performance.

3.2 Data collection

The data used for this study were derived from the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians. The performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians were made available in video-compact-disc (VCD) and audio-compact-disc (CD) recordings. There were also several platforms like social and broadcast media through which Nigerian stand-up comedians made their routines accessible to the public.

As a descriptive research, the study used a large corpus of data collected and transcribed from VCD recordings of the popular Nigerian comedy show, *Nite of a thousand laughs* (NTL) which was produced by Opa Williams. NTL was selected because, according to Ayakoroma (2013), it was the earliest and most popular source of Nigerian stand-up comedy. In addition, it was a platform which featured both

famous and upcoming stand-up comedians. Gordons' *the Comedyberluscon* also provided performances which were analysed in the study.

The VCDs were played with VLC media player, a piece of software for playing videos. VLC was chosen because it enabled measuring the length of time for each of the routines. Also, it enabled the researcher to take pictures of the comedians routines. The snapped pictures were used to illustrate nonverbal cues in the routines.

3.3 Sampling size and technique

The goal of this study was to investigate the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians. The researcher started by watching and listening to the recorded performances of the comedians and those that were broadcast on the media. At the initial stage, different platforms of Nigerian stand-up comedy were observed. These platforms were *Made in Warri*, *Stand-up Nigeria*, *AY Live*, *the ComedyBerlusconi* and the NTL. The source of data was later limited to NTL because it was the most popular and the oldest source of Nigerian stand up comedy. Thus, the performances which were sampled for analysis were those that were found in the NTL.

The data that were selected for analysis were purposively selected. The selection was limited to recent volumes of the NTL, which were produced between 2009 and 2013. This was because Ayakoroma (2013) observed that the earlier versions of the NTL featured people who were not comedians. In addition, while watching the volumes of the NTL, it was discovered that several of the stand-up comedians that appeared in the earlier volumes no longer perform as stand-up comedians, and some comedians repeated their joking stories. Thus, limiting the selection to recent editions of the NTL helped to select only the routines of practising and professional stand-up comedians and avoid analysing the repeated joking stories.

The selection was taken out of the last eight editions of the NTL that were available at the time of data collection, these editions were volumes 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24; out of which four volumes were alternatively selected. The selected volumes were 17, 19, 21 and 23. The number of comedians who performed in each of these volumes ranged from 6 to 8, with some of the comedians featuring thrice in the volumes while the others appeared only once. From NTL, routines of 16 male comedians and one female comedian were used as illustrations in the analysis. The gender disparity in the number of comedians reflected the gender demography of the

professional stand-up comedians, as there were more male stand-up comedians than female. In support of the gender disparity in demography of the stand-up comedians, Adetunji (2013) opined that the female stand-up comedians were not up to one-fifth of the total number of Nigerian stand-up comedians. Also, Ayakoroma (2013), who chronicled the advent and development of Nigerian stand-up comedy, mentioned only two female stand-up comedians.

However, to make-up for lack of adequate female stand-up comedians in the selected volumes, two other female comedians were selected from another platform of Nigerian stand-up comedy which was *the Comedyberlusconi*, produced by stand-up comedian, Gordons. *The Comedyberlusconi* was a comedy show which was actually titled *Island Comedy with Gordons and friends*. The title *the Comedyberlusconi* was chosen for this study because it was the title printed on the VCD and its cover.

The total number of female comedians from whose routines extracts were taken was 3. The male comedians were Gordons, Eneche, I Go Dye, Elenu, Basketmouth, Mc Shakara, Buchi, Youngest Landlord, Princewill, Bovi, Seyilaw, Federation Mallam, Funnybones, Simcar and I Go Save; while the female comedians were Lepacious Bose, Princess and Helen Paul.

Table 2 below shows the volumes of NTL and *the Comedyberlusconi* in which the stand-up comedians appeared.

Table 2: Presentation of comedians' appearances

Comedian	No. of routines	Volumes
Gordons	3	NTL 17, 19 and 21
Eneche	1	NTL 17
Elenu	1	NTL 17
I Go Dye	3	NTL 17, 19, and 21
Lepacious Bose	1	NTL 17
Basket Mouth	2	NTL 17 and 19
MC Shakara	1	NTL 17
Buchi	2	NTL 17 and 23
Princess	1	Thecomedyberlusconi 2
Helen Paul	1	Thecomedyberlusconi 1
AY	1	NTL 19
Bovi	3	NTL 19,21 and 23
I Go Save	1	NTL 19
Youngest Landlord	1	NTL 21

	Princewill	1	NTL 21
	Seyilaw	2	NTL 21 and 23
	Federation Mallam	1	NTL 21
	Funnybones	1	NTL 23
	Simcard	1	NTL 23
Total	19 comedians	28	

3.4 Method of data analysis

The transcribed data were subjected to pragmatic analysis. The transcribed data were first examined vis-à-vis the performances in the VCD. Thus, the researcher was able to make observations about how the comedians carried out their joke performances. The analysis began with identifying the features of the narrative aspects of the performance, after which the humour strategies were identified and analysed. The last part of the analysis catered for the humour acts in the performances.

For illustrations, samples were taken from the transcribed data and were presented in the analysis. The performances were presented in Nigerian Pidgin (NP), which might be alternated with English. An English translation was thus provided for the utterances that were not rendered in English after each excerpt. The excerpts indicated the nonverbal cues of the comedians and also, the audience reactions to the comedians' routines.

CHAPTER FOUR

NARRATIVE ASPECTS OF THE SAMPLED NIGERIAN STAND-UP PERFORMANCES

4.0 Introduction

Since stand-up comedy performance is carried out by the narration of jokes in comedy venues, it is important to examine the pragmatic aspects of the techniques of narration in the performances under study. In addition, since comedians adopt nonverbal cues in their performances, it is important to explore how the nonverbal cues contribute to the success of their performances. This chapter is therefore, dedicated to the analysis of voice and nonverbal communication cues that enhance the narration of jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy performances.

4.1 The use of voicing

In the humour acts model, the concept of voice is used to refer to the person who speaks during the performance. Nigerian stand-up comedians adopt the resources of language to present to their audience multiple voices while performing their jokes. Voice is thus a strategy adopted in the narration of their jokes. Through it, the audience are presented with the participants-in-the-joke voice. As a strategy, voicing enables the audience to hear the characters in the joking stories speak in the narrations. Through voicing, the comedians create an interpretive frame, through which the audience interpret the utterances of the comedians as belonging to either the comedians or the participants-in-the-joke. Voicing is a form of semiotics of sounding in a particular way in order to foreground either the comedians' comic images or participants-in-the-joke as characters in the narrations.

The presentation of different voices by the comedians is achieved by different linguistic strategies, which have the following rhetorical and pragmatic import for the performance of jokes.

- i. The use of voicing enhances the audience perception of comedians as creative performers.
- ii. Voicing strengthens the mechanism of garden-path phenomenon and surprise effect in the narration of the comedians. With different voices in a narration,

the audience are made to see the joking stories as real and representative of real-life situations.

- iii. The adoption of voices presents the comedian as someone who is just telling what s/he has observed. Through it, the comedians distance themselves from the events, actions, and actors in the narrations.

Voicing strengthens and enhances the explicitness of the common ground between the comedian and the audience. A major background belief from the SKK is that the comedian will narrate funny stories to the audience. For those stories to be accepted by the audience, the comedians have to lead them in a garden-path. The audience, however, will not ordinarily accept to be led in a garden-path if the comedians do not use the narrative voice strategy to evoke a feeling in the audience that the jokes are about individuals who speak in their narrations. It is proposed in this study that there are two kinds of voices in the Nigerian stand-up comedy performances: the first is the comic voice and the second is the voice of the participants-in-the-jokes.

The comic voice is the narrative voice adopted by stand-up comedians to perform their jokes. Nigerian stand-up comedians impersonate a comic image through which they speak to their audience. The comic voice is an extension of the comic image that they want to portray. With their comic voice, they present their institutional identity and negotiate shared beliefs in their jokes. The comic image is exhibited when the personality of the comedian is contrasted with the participant-in-the-joke. In a performance, a comedian may present more than one joke, with each joke having its own characters. The comedians may begin their performance with their comic voice. Whenever they want their audience to identify the characters in their jokes, they will switch to participants-in-the-joke voice.

The strategies that Nigerian stand-up comedians employ to articulate voicing are identified and illustrated in the following sections.

4.1.1 Code selection and code switching in Nigerian stand-up performances

The term code is used here to refer to the language or language variety that is employed by the stand-up comedians in their narrations. Code selection is vital to the success of the performance of stand-up comedians because it is a primary contextualisation cue in the performance of jokes. The act of code selection is

informed by the SLK. Nigerian stand-up comedians strategically select NP as the language of their narration NP. NP, therefore, indicates the comic voice. Code selection and switching are illustrated in the Excerpts below

[Excerpt 1, Princewill]

Praise the Lord! do we have Christians in the house?

Praise the Lord!! Praise the Lord

(AR) hallelujah

En-hen Jesus is a Christian

something happen for church for Sunday

I come here to share with you because if una dey there

somebody here for help me beat the pastor (Pointing to the audience)

as the pastor was preaching, he say

“ladies and gentlemen, right about now close your eye

because an angel is passing and if you open it, he will blind it.”

I come dey wonder how he take know because na two two eye we get

I no see angel, pastor dey see angel

He say “ We want to pray!”

everybody close eye, you trust Yoruba people

as pastor dey pray, he dey collect money from offering

as he dey pray, dey draw, and me Warri boy,

I no dey ever close eye, my eye shine bright like thief man torch

I dey look am, he dey collect money (begins to demonstrate picking money from one spot to another)

as he dey look na so his eye just jam my eye (begins to step backward from the centre of the stage)

Na him pastor say “blessed are you that see but do not talk” (AL)

As a sharp warri boy that I am now reply

I say “for they shall receive their share of the money equally” (intensified AL)

[Translation: Line 4: Something happened in church on Sunday/ I am here to share it with you because if you were there/ someone here would have helped me to beat the pastor/Line 10: then I wondered how the pastor was able to see an angel because I have two eyes like him/ I could not see the angel but the pastor could see the angel/ line 14: as the pastor was praying, he was pilfering the offering/ as he was praying, he was pilfering, and I as a Warri boy/I did not close my eyes, my eyes were bright like the torchlight of a thief/ I was looking at him as he was pilfering the offering / as he was looking around, his eyes and mine met/then the pastor said blessed are you that see but do not talk/ as a smart Warri boy, I replied/ for they shall receive their share of the money equally.]

In Excerpt 1, the comedian begins his narration in English. The use of English at the start of the joke narration contradicts the expectation of the audience. The audience would have expected that Princewill would start his narration in NP. The choice of English is strategic for the effectiveness of the joke. In the comedian's script, the major participant-in-the-joke, is a pastor, and the activity-in-the-joke, praying, is a common event in Christian gatherings in Nigeria. In several churches in Nigeria, the English language is adopted as the medium through which the congregation and clergy carry out their religious rituals. The comedian's choice of English at the start of the narration is motivated by this background information from the SCK. His use of English at the start of his narration is to suggest the social status of a participant-in-the-joke. In addition, his code choice reflects the language choice in the activity-in-the-joke, since English is the language of liturgy in mega churches in the country. Thus, his choice of English is meant to activate and strengthen an assumption from the SCK—that English is commonly used in Nigerian churches as language of worship.

In line 4, the comedian switches to NP. The code switch is motivated by context-of-the-joke. It strengthens the assumption that the language of stand-up comedy performances in Nigeria is NP and it indicates the actual point where the joke to be performed begins since the use of NP denotes the comic voice of the comedian. Lines 8 and 9 are rendered in English. The switch of code from NP to English denotes voicing. It indicates a change in the voice that is speaking in the narration, from the comic voice to participant-in-the-joke voice, the pastor's. The narrative significance of this switch is to foreground the pastor as a character in the narration and as a social actor in the activity-in-the-joke. Since collection of offerings in churches and praying "on them" are common rituals in churches, the switch to indicate the pastor's voice makes the audience to view the joke as plausible. Thus, the switch, together with the assumptions from the SCK enhances the garden-path of the build-up of the joke. There is also a switch to NP in lines 10-12, which indicates a switch of voice, from the pastor's to the comic voice. This switch reinforces the consistent use of NP as the language of Nigerian stand-up comedy performance.

Having repeatedly switched from English to NP and NP to English, in line 21, the comedian switched from NP to English to project the voice of another participant-in-the-joke. This time, the participant is the comedian himself. As a participant-in-the-

joke, the comedian could have used NP to convey his own speech; however, in order to keep with the strategic use of voicing, he switches to English. The switch in line 21 reinforces that the stand-up comedian as a performer is different from the stand-up comedian as an individual. The comedian reports his speech as a participant-in-the-joke with English, so as to give voice to all the participants-in-the-joke. By presenting his utterance as a participant-in-the-joke in English, he strengthens the assumption that English is the language used in Christian religion practices in Nigeria.

In Excerpt 1, the types of code switching based on the languages involved are English-NP and NP-English switches. There are also NP-Indigenous Language(s) and NP-sociolect/idiolect switches in other routines. In the switch involving the indigenous language, the comedian switches from NP, the language which indicates the comic voice, to either one of the numerous native languages in Nigeria or a language variety associated with a social group based on ethnic or occupational affiliations. The pragmatic import of this kind of switch, apart from indicating a change of voice in the performance, is to set up background beliefs, from the SCK, like stereotypes associated with such social group (or individual). When the switch involves an idiolect or sociolect, it indicates that it is the voice of a participant-in-the-joke, rather than the comedian, that is speaking in the joke narration. For instance, in the performances of some Nigerian stand-up comedians, the comedians switch to the speech mannerisms of some well-known pastors in Nigeria.

Excerpt 2 illustrates the NP-Yoruba Language and NP-sociolect/idiolect switches.

[Excerpt 2, Seyilay]

My uncle's been in the UK for over 16 years men
 Come dey carry im pikin, last born,
 6 years old pikin dey carry am go school
 Pikin just see where police dey, just dey begin shout "HELP!"
 Na him police say "pull over, your hands to the car please, 5
 Your hands to the wheels. Now put your hands where I can see them.
 Get down from the car put your hands on the car"
 Dem separate my uncle legs, search am
 See say he no hold anything, arrested my uncle for 2 hours
 Dem dey ask the pikin "Do you know him?" 10
 Say "I don't know him" (AL)
 My uncle come dey look "aàh...aàh" (Removes his hat and looked around in shock)

“Aàh...Aàh...èmi mo mà...Ah, I am the ah...ah”

He no even get English accent sef, after 16 years

“I am the father! (AL)

15

Èmi ni èmi ni, I’m the father aàh aàh”

Dem dey ask the pikin, he said

“I don’t know him, you can see his accent, he didn’t speak like us”

Hey! My uncle no talk.

After like three hours dem come release my uncle

The pikin say “well, he’s my dad, I just hate him men,

I told him I don’t want to go to school, he is forcing me”

[Line 2: he was taking his last child/ his 6 year old child to school/ the child saw where policemen were and began to shout for help/ then the police said to him to pull over and place his hands on the wheels/ Line 8: the policeman separated my uncle’s leg, searched his body/ saw that he had no weapon on him, arrested my uncle for 2 hours/ they asked the child “do you know him”/ line 12-13: my uncle was shocked and he began to stammer “I... I... I myself...”/ he did not even have English accent after 16 years/ Line 16: I myself, I myself I am the father/ the police asked the child/ Line 20: my uncle kept quiet/ after about three hours they released my uncle/ the child said...]

Excerpt 2 is from the performance of Seyilaw which is interspersed with the use of English and NP. The continuous alternation of English and NP in the performance is done to reflect the features of the context-in-the-joke. These features include the activity-in-the-joke, the location of the activity and the participants-in-the-joke. With each switch to NP, the comedian changes the voice in the narration to that of the comic voice, while whenever he switches to English, he indicates that the voice in the narration has changed to that of participants-in-the-joke. In line 5, the switch to English, which was sustained till line 7, indicates that it is the British policemen that are speaking. In line 8, the comedian switches back to NP to indicate the comic voice, the comic voice was sustained till line 10 where the comedian allows a participant (the British police) to speak in his narration by using the English language. The same voice strategy is used in line 11. In line 12, there is a switch to Yoruba language which also indicates that it is a participant-in-the-joke that is being heard, this time, the comedian’s uncle whose experience is being narrated. The switch begins from line 12, from NP to Yorùbá, and it is marked by the exclamatory expression “ah”. In line 13, the comedian continues with the Yorùbá emphatic noun phrase structure, “èmi mo mà”, which depicts the comedian’s uncle voice- a character-in-the-joke whose tribal

affiliation is Yorùbá. By using Yorùbá language, the comedian projects to the audience that it is a participant-in-the-joke that is speaking and not the comedian. The comedian, furthermore, to emphasize that it is a participant's voice, switches to a peculiar pronunciation which is associated with Yorùbá speakers, "am" /jcm/ and "father" /fɑ:ðɑ:h/, in lines 13 and 15 and this pronunciation is indicative of the speakers' tribal affiliation.

The switch to the Yoruba language and the use of Yoruba accent to articulate the words "am" and "father" is meant to make explicit from the SCK the stereotypes attached to Yorùbá people. Thus, the comedian stereotyped Yorùbá people as incapable of overcoming phonological interference in their English pronunciation. Also, by poking fun at his uncle and stereotyping Yorùbá people, the comedian achieves a surprise effect in the audience. Part of the cultural beliefs from the SCK is that it is wrong for people to make fun of elders, and given that the comedian is also a Yorùbá person, the audience would not expect him to poke fun at his own ethnolinguistic group. Thus, the joke on his uncle and the stereotyping of his ethnolinguistic group contradicts cultural expectation. The audience will find this incongruous with the SCK and such incongruity gives a surprise effect that is needed for humour.

Code selection subsumes code switching. The language situation in which code selection or switching takes place helps to differentiate the two in this study. Code selection and switching are viewed as being determined and shaped by the humour act context. Code selection is motivated by the dynamics of context-of-the-joke while code switching is shaped by the dynamics of the joke to be performed, the context-in-the-joke. The crux of code selection in context-of-the-joke is to project a comic image through a comic voice. The comedians choose a language that their audience has associated with humour. Thus, they choose NP, which has been associated as the code for comic voice in stand-up performances. In the case of the female comedians, they could start with English language. Conversely, the crux of code switching is to mirror the voice of a participant-in-the-joke, a feature of context-in-the-joke. In code switching, therefore, the code to be chosen is motivated by who the participant-in-the-joke is, her /his social status or roles and ethnolinguistic affiliation. Since stand-up comedians have to assign codes to each of the participants-

in-the-joke in their narrations, they switch codes during their performances. Their code switching, thus, becomes metaphoric and a discourse-related phenomenon, in that a switch signals that the voice in the narration has changed to that of a participant-in-the-joke. For instance, if a stand-up comedian presents a participant-in-the-joke as educated, s/he may assign educated Nigerian English variety to such a character, or if a participant-in-the-joke is presented as belonging to an ethnic or social group, the stand-up comedian may assign to such character the speech pattern that is associated with such a group, for instance, if the character is a Yorùbá man, the comedian may assign to him an English variety that is marked by large-scale transfer from Yoruba language.

Code selection is determined by the institutional constraints of Nigerian stand-up comedy performance. These constraints are motivated by the multilingual nature of the country, which would be reflected in the audience. The audience are usually made up of people from various ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria. Therefore, in code selection, stand-up comedians must take into cognizance the need to reach audiences from different ethnic groups. This need influences the use of languages that cut across the numerous ethnic groups of Nigeria.

4.1.2 The use of mimicry

Mimicry is another strategy which Nigerian stand-up comedians use to articulate voice in their performances. In the deployment of mimicry, the comedians adopt both the linguistic and non-linguistic modes of communication that are peculiar to the butt of their jokes. They imitate the speech mannerisms and gesticulations of the person or the social group they have selected as the butt of their joke and present the caricatures of such to their audience. Mimicry presents the comedian to the audience as a creative and versatile artiste. Some of the acts of mimicry found in the performances are:

- i. Mimicry of the speech patterns and gesticulations of some popular Nigerian music artistes; for instance AY mimics Dbanj and Timaya both of whom are popular contemporary musicians, he also mimics Alex O and Chris Okotie, both of whom are older generation Nigerian musicians.
- ii. Mimicry of the speech mannerisms of the clergy; for instance, Buchi performs his jokes as if he is sermonising in a Christian gathering and AY

deliberately imitates the speech and gesticulating patterns of Chris Okotie and Chris Oyakilome, both of whom are popular Nigerian pastors and television evangelists.

- iii. Mimicry of the disabled, for instance, Youngest Landlord and Seyilaw caricature and poke fun at the walking mannerism of cripples; Elezu mimics the speech pattern and gesticulations of people with low intelligence quotient.
- iv. Mimicry of the English pronunciation patterns of some ethnic groups in Nigeria; for instance, Federation Mallam replicates the stress, intonational pattern and accent of Hausa speakers of English and Seyilaw mimics the English pronunciation pattern of Yorùbá people.
- v. Mimicry of the articulations of a child learning to speak, for instance, Helen Paul presents her jokes with mimicry and depiction of a little child.

The adoption of mimicry has pragmatic import for the technic of voicing. Whenever a comedian mimics, the mimicry becomes a symbol of the person(s) being mimicked. Mimicry thus performs a referential function in that it points to the person that is being mimicked. The comedian adopts this act to dissociate himself from the actions or statements that are made in performance during the period of mimicry. Technically in any mimicry act, the voice that speaks is not the comic voice but the voice of the participant-in-the-joke who is being caricatured, since the mimicry is an iconic sign of the person being mimicked.

Apart from its iconic function for indicating a change in voice in the narrations of comedians, mimicry is also used to signify social solidarity between the comedians and the audiences. Anytime the comedians mimic, and their performances produce affiliation with the audience, there is an indication that both the audience and the comedian share the same ideational experiences in that they both view the action of the participant-in-the-joke who is being mimicked as incongruous. Besides, mimicry presents the action of the target as socially incongruous. The SSK and SCK, which underlie their ideational experience, help them to express similar attitudes which are used to interpret the mimicry of the comedians. However, should the mimicry fail to generate any affiliative response, it would indicate that there is no shared ideational experience between the comedians and the audience. The use of mimicry in the stand-up performances brings about a social resonance of whoever is being mimicked. The

social resonance brings about shared feelings which immediately have effect on collective background assumptions and the joke narration.

In the context-of-the-joke, mimicry has similar significance with echoic irony in conversation. In this sense, mimicry carries the import of an ironic distortion, which presents the act of mimicry as a satire. Any mimicry act actually distorts the original act so that the audience see the actual act as absurd since the mimicry indicates a switch from what is expected (when the speech pattern, gesture or action was initially performed) to what has become unexpected (the repeat of the pattern in the stand-up comedy venues). In other words, it moves from the plane of the expected and congruous to that of unexpected and incongruous. This is why any mimicked cue in the context of humour production enhances and expands the effects of humour.

Excerpt 3 and the Plates below illustrate the use of mimicry in Nigerian stand-up comedy:

[Excerpt 3, AY]

Come imagine somebody like Dbanj as police (bends down to pick a pair of sunglasses and wears it)

The next thing, you go just see Dbanj

For check point (p) (walks on the stage demonstrating Dbanj's movement while performing)

“Ho:l:d!!! it!!! (P) (stretches out his hands pointing and moving on the stage) AL

En hen! (P) (AL) 5

What did you say?

You are talking to me?

Bàbá! e! no run down! (P) (AL)

I'm talking to you, you are still sitting down

If you are still sitting down, you are sitting on a lo::ng (points the microphone to the audience) Thing!” 10

Audience: thing!

“File!”

“Who are you giving 20 Naira? Me ?

Ọlórún májé! Ọlórún májé!”

(moves his hand over his head to indicate his rejection of 20 Naira) (P) (AL)

Or come imagine someone like, like my friend,

Oyakilome as police 15

The next thing, you go just see cars dey come like this

(slower) “pa:rk your: car: (P) (AL)

I say pa::rk your:: car:: (P) (AL)

Step! Out! (faster rate) keep moving, keep moving, keep moving

When I'm through with you, people will say yeah" (AL) (CL)

20

[Translation: Imagine somebody like Dbanj as a policeman/next you will see Dbanj/ at police checkpoint/ Line 5: exclamation/ Line 8: you father will run down/ Line 11: leave it! Line 13: God forbids, God forbids]

Plate 4.1 AY portraying Dbanj



Plate 4.2 AY portraying Dbanj, II



HO:L:D!!! IT!!! En hen! (lines 4-5 of Excerpt 3)

AY intensifying his portrayal of Dbanj by putting on a pair of dark glasses, pointing the index finger to the audience and moving around the stage

Plate 4.3 AY portraying Chris Oyakilome



pa::rk your:: (line 18)

AY without glasses so as to portray another target, Chris Oyakilome

Plate 4.4 AY portraying Chris Oyakilome II



ca::r

As revealed in Plates 4.1-4.4, the comedian makes use of different body moves while mimicking different participants-in-the-joke. The physical acts he adopts for mimicking Dbanj, a popular Nigerian hip-hop artiste, are those that the audience can identify as the performance mannerism of the artiste. Similarly, the gestures he adopts while mimicking Chris Oyakilome, a popular Nigerian Pentecostal pastor, are those

that the audience can identify as the gesticulations of the pastor while he preaches in his television broadcast.

AY does not only mimic the gesticulation of these participants-in-the-joke, he also mimics their speech mannerisms. The butt in the first part of the joke is Dbanj, and to depict Dbanj in his caricature, AY puts on a pair of dark glasses. AY uses a pair of dark glasses because Dbanj always appears in his live performances and in public events with his pair of dark glasses. Also, AY adopts some expressions which are found in the lyrics of Dbanj's music and parodies them: "fi le", "long time", and "hold it". Plate 4.1 coincides with line 1 while Plate 4.2 coincides with lines 4-5, these are got from the performance of the joke on Dbanj. Similarly, Plates 4.3 and 4.4 coincide with Line 18, which forms a part of the performance of the joke on Chris Oyakilome. Just like his use of expressions that are found in the lyrics of Dbanj, AY also makes use of statements which are commonly used by Chris Oyakilome in his popular TV broadcast, Atmosphere of Miracles. Some of these expressions are "keep moving", "when I'm through with you", and "say yeah".

In mimicking the acts of Dbanj and Chris Oyakilome, AY creates iconic references to the people he mimics. These references resonate certain social attitudes in the audiences and these attitudes are used to judge the actions of the butts, who are viewed through the lens of the comedian's performance. In another way, as echoic irony, the mimics distort what has been viewed as perfect, proper and socially acceptable- the actual speech and physical acts of the butts of the jokes. The distortions satirise the speech and physical acts of the butts and it is then reconsidered by the audience and seen as socially incongruous. As iconic images of the butts, the mimicry points to the butts and represents their voices and actions.

4.1.3 The use of reported speech (RS)

Leech (2006) describes reported speech (RS) as the language used by speakers to report the utterances of others. Bublitz and Bednarek (2006) and Hubler (2011) view RS as a metapragmatic act which is used to characterise reported propositions and the actual speakers of reported propositions or to distance oneself from the reported propositions.

In this study, RS is viewed as a metapragmatic act which is indicative of the voice of the source of the RS. In this sense, in its use, the audience in stand-up

performances associate the reported utterance, not to the comedian but to the source. Although, comedians may not necessarily use other strategies to indicate a change in voice, their adoption of RS meta-represents the voice of the source of the utterance. To adopt RS, the comedians usually “frame” the utterance which is being reported with expressions that contain “a verb of saying”. These verbs are absorbed as referential “instruments” for attributing the reported statements, not to the comedian but to the participant-in-the-joke whose speech is being reported, and by extension, the social group s/he represents (Hubler, 2011: 111-112).

RS is a common feature of Nigerian stand-up comedy and its adoption in the performances has the following significance:

- i. RS helps the comedians to adduce utterances to the participants-in-the-joke. By adducing utterance to participants-in-the-joke, the comedians rhetorically distance themselves from the propositions and actions in their RS. The audience too, would attribute the proposition or action in the RS to a participant-in-the-joke. They would view the stand-up comedians as reporting what they have heard the participant-in-the-joke saying.
- ii. By adopting RS, the comedians enhance the textual features of their jokes. RS helps comedians to bring into their narrations previous conversations or action. In the RS, the comedians say to their audiences what has previously been said. With RS, the stand-up comedy performance is an avenue where several other texts are presented. By using RS, the texts of the comedians become rich with intertextuality.
- iii. Reporting the speeches of participants-in-jokes enhances the audience’s perception of the activities-in-the-joke and participants-in-the-joke as realistic. This strengthens or contradicts the audiences’ background assumptions about the activities being narrated by the comedian and the participant-in-the-joke as real social actors.

As a metapragmatic act, RS in the stand-up comedy performance can be divided into two types: the marked and unmarked RS. The marked RS is denoted by a saying verb which indicates that the RS does not only reflect the source of the utterance but also indicates the attitude of the comedian to the source, and the comedians’ view of the RS. On the other hand, the unmarked RS only indicates that

the utterance being reported is another speech situation that has been brought into the stand-up comedy performance. The unmarked RS is denoted by a saying verb which does not suggest attitudes or behaviours.

For the unmarked RS, the comedians use the NP reporting verb *say* which translate to English “say” (or past tense said), depending on the tense of the matrix sentence. In most of the performances, the comedians construct their jokes in a way to show that they are part of the participants-in-the-joke, that is, they are involved in the events or activity reported in the jokes. Whenever the comedian is part of the participants-in-the-joke, s/he begins the matrix sentence of the RS with the first person singular pronoun. To differentiate their speech as a participant-in-the-joke from their speech as a narrator of joke, they frame their RS with the first person singular pronoun plus the reporting verb. For instance, “I come say...; I say... (Bovi); “I provoke give my father say...” (Gordons) and “I say men...” (Sim Card).

To show that the RS belongs to a participant-in-the-joke, apart from the comedians, the comedians use the third person pronoun plus the reporting verb. In some instances, the comedian may decide to use a referring expression like a title, label or the name of the participant-in-the-joke whose speech is being reported. For instance, “na oyinbo people come dey say” (Seyilaw); “God said...” (Basketmouth), “my papa say...” (Mc Shalala); “he say...” (Federation Mallam, Princewill, Bovi); “he go say..., some comedian, then go come stage dey say...” (Youngest Landlord). The marked RS are illustrated with examples below:

[Excerpt 4, Gordons]

I remember when! I wan come marry,
I wan go meet my father-in-law,
When the guy see my outlook
Na him he halla “are you he that is to come or
Should we wait for another” (AL)

5

[Translation: I remember when I wanted to get married/ when I went to meet my father-in-law/ when the man saw my appearance/ he yelled “are you he that is to come or / should we wait for another”]

[Excerpt 5, I Go Save]

Girls, Why e bi say una like to dey frustrate us,
Wetin we do, una boys, wetin boys do una?,
We go say “okay make we just make the women happy”

Una begin call us names “mumusco, múgùn, maga” (AL)

[Translation: Ladies, why is it the you like to frustrate us/ what did we do, we men/ what did men do to you/ we would say we want to make laddies happy/ then you begin to tag us with different names, stupid, foolish, gullible]

[Excerpt 6, Eneche]

If you tell a woman say “good evening mommy”
She would acknowledge you “oh my son thank you”

In Excerpt 4, the comedian uses the reporting verb “halla” which translates to the English reporting verb– yell. In the context where Gordon has used it, “halla” also denotes furiousness, anger, rejection and refusal. The comedian uses “halla” to indicate that he was angry with his father because his prospective father-in-law did not endorse his relationship with his fiancée because his father was poor. In Excerpt 5, the comedian uses two reporting verbs, “say” and “call”. In the use of the first reporting verb, “say”, the comedian does not show any other pragmatic import to the RS. However, when he uses “call”, he indicates that the ladies whose utterances are to be reported, are actually tagging them and being rude by the use of the nomenclature with which they refer to men. In Excerpt 5, Eneche, uses the verb “acknowledge” as the reporting verb to show the woman’s positive attitude to the salutation directed to her.

4.2 Conversational acts

Conversational acts, in the stand-up discourse, are strategies comedians adopt during their narration to involve their audience in the stand-up comedy interactions. These cues range from the use of explicit linguistic expressions to nonverbal acts and phonological cues. Recognising the presence of the audience and their roles as participants in the stand-up comedy performances enhances the realisation of the institutional goals of both the comedians and their audience. The success of any joke performance is judged by the responses of the audience. If the audience give affiliative responses, the joke performance is seen as felicitous. Should the audience give disaffiliative responses, the joke performance is seen as infelicitous. In the following sections, the conversational acts found in Nigerian stand-up comedy are identified.

4.2.1 The use of pauses

Pauses, according to Baker and Ellece (2011:89), “are silences or gaps in a conversation which occur as a result of the current speaker stopping”. Brown and Yule (1983) note that pauses are readily identifiable in discourses since they constitute gaps or silence in interactions.

On the use of pausing in Nigerian stand-up comedy performance, Adetunji (2013) observes that pauses are linguistically coded. Illustrating with a joke performance by Basketmouth, Adetunji (2013) identifies four types of pauses using length of time: significant, emphatic, normal and micro pauses. Adetunji sees a pause as a pragmatic resource for activating shared co-textual and contextual knowledge.

To adopt Adetunji’s (2013) classification of pauses may be awkward in explaining the use of pauses in a study like the current one, because Adetunji analyses the use of pauses in only one performance by a stand-up comedian while in this study, the analysis is focused on describing the performances of nineteen stand-up comedians. Given that the comedians have different personalities, they allot different timing to the pauses they employ in their narrations in different performances. For instance, at the start of I Go Dye’s performances, the pauses employed are usually longer (often more than a second) and as his performances progress, the time allotted to the pauses becomes shorter. Unlike I Go Dye, Buchi allots longer time to pauses. At the start of his performances, his pauses take not less than two seconds and as the performances progress, the pauses may take a longer or shorter timing depending on the joke. Youngest Lordlord uses pauses shorter than a second, unless he deliberately pause to elicit responses from his audience, which may take just a little more than a second.

Excerpts 7 and 8 below are used to illustrate the use of pauses in the sampled performances.

[Excerpt 7, Eneche]

Calabar good evening, \n
I bring you greetings from the political power of the middle belt,
the talent and food basket of this great nation,
the heartbeat of Africa. \n

Calabar una fine, una city fine.!\n
In short, when I enter calabar,
I come dey think say whether I don enter abroad,

5

the city neat, make una clap for una self (P) (AC)

[line 5: Calabar, you are beautiful, your city is beautiful/... When I got into Calabar/ I began to think that I was abroad/ the city is neat/ clap yourselves]

Eneche's pauses in lines 1-7 are less than a second. However, in line 8, he adopts a pause that is longer than a second. A longer pause is adopted in line 8 because the comedian is requesting an affiliative response from the audience in the line, therefore, the longer pause is employed in order to allow the audience to respond to the comedians' request. Another reason for this longer pause is that the line marks the end of the comedian's commencement act. Thus, apart from using the pause to allow the audience to respond, he uses the pause to allow the audience to carry out the needed cognitive switch to process the subsequent joke of the routine.

[Excerpt 8, Elenu]

I can see the Lord is doing somethings here.
There is a girl! here!, you are a student of Unical. ∞ (P) (AL)
First semester, you had 2 carry overs. (P) (Intensified AL)
Second semester, you had 3 carry overs. (P) (AL)
Infact! the just concluded semester, 5
you carried over you department. (P) (Intensified AL)
The Lord is asking me to tell you to withdraw! otherwise,
you carry over the school and carry to the village!! (P) (AL, AC)

In Excerpt 8, Elenu also uses pauses which are shorter than a second (lines 1 and 5). However, he employs longer pauses in the Excerpt (lines 2-4, 6 and 8), much more than Eneche. Elenu uses more pauses than Eneche because his performance receives more affiliative response from the audience. At each point where the audience gives laughter, Elenu has to pause before he continues his script.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the comedians employ pauses differently. What motivate the use of pausing are their performance style and the rate of affiliative response from the audience. Their performance style is dictated by how much they want the audience to be involved in the interaction, how they want to present their joking stories, the nature of their joking stories and the points at which they present the punchlines to the audience.

Regardless of these factors, Nigerian stand-up comedians make use of pauses at certain junctures, usually at points when they need to take a breath and at points

where they present the punchlines. This preponderance can be used to classify their pauses. Therefore, the comedians' pauses are grouped into three. The first pause is the normal pause which may be up to a second or less than a second. It is primarily used by the comedians to take a breath at phrasal or clause boundaries. The other two types of pauses are transition-relevance-place pause (TRPP) or a non-transition-relevance-place pause (NTRPP), both of which are longer than a second.

The NTRPP in the Nigerian stand-up performances have only textual functions. The pauses are used by the comedians just to catch a breath while narrating their jokes. They are adopted for the ease of narration. Like the normal pause, the NTRPPs are found at the end of phrases, clauses and sentences. The NTRPP has the same significance with the normal pause but differs from it in that it takes a longer time than the normal pause.

The TRPPs, on the other hand, are pauses that contribute to the goal of stand-up performance, which is the initiation of humour. In addition to their textual functions, the comedians use the TRPPs strategically at some points in their narration: when the punchlines in the jokes are given, and, when they want to switch from one joke to another. In the first usage, the comedians use the pauses to evaluate the effect of their jokes and see if the jokes elicit affiliative responses. When pauses are used this way, they act as back channel mechanisms. In the second instance, the pauses are used at points when the comedians want to switch from one joke to another. Technically, the comedians use the pauses to afford the audience the needed period to carry out a cognitive switch from one joke to another. The comedians are not consistent with the timing of the pauses, therefore, the timing depends largely on each comedian's style for each joke narration.

The TRPPs serve as a conversational strategy to involve their audiences as they are adopted to allow the audience to respond to the jokes. They function as a technique for building adjacency pairs and back channelling strategy in Nigerian stand-up comedy performance. With the TRPPs, the comedians are able to evaluate the effects of their narrations. Through the TRPPs, the comedians observe if their jokes are well received. Both the TRPP and NTRPP mark the textual structure of the narration. The TRPP takes place when the punchline is given or when the comedian is about to switch from one joke to another. It thus marks the boundaries of the relevant parts of the narration. The NTRPP occurs at the end of grammatical units like phrases, clause and sentences.

4.2.2 Prosodic cues

Nigerian stand-up comedians also employ prosodic elements in the narration of their jokes. The prosodic patterns found in the Nigerian stand-up performances are explained and illustrated in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 The use of pitch

Pitch is primarily viewed as auditory sensation or a perceptual characteristic of speech (Roach, 2009; Baker and Ellece, 2011). Both Brown and Yule (1983) and Tannen (2005) note that pitch is employed to signal discourse structure, emphasis, contrast and attitude.

In Nigerian stand-up comedy, some comedians use pitch changes to bring the conversations in their narrations “alive”, in that, they use a change in pitch to signal a change in voice. Some comedians usually change their pitch during narration and the change of pitch corresponds with the point where they assign utterances to different participants-in-the-joke. Pitch, in this way, functions as one of the devices for indicating a change in voice in the narrations of the comedians. The change in pitch in this manner presents to the audience that it is not just only the comedians that are speaking to them, but also the participants-in-the-jokes are actually interacting. In this use, changes in pitch are meta-functional. This meta-functional use of pitch is exemplified in Excerpts 9 and 10

[Excerpt 9, Boy 1]

I dey Abuja, my wife dey Lagos

I dey gis! wife babe! just dey smile!

My wife just calls me, I pick just pick [gesticulates receiving a call with right hand]

“Baby what up?”

“Who you dey smile give for there?”(P) (AL) 5

>Let me turn, she say < “no dey look round I no dey there” (P) (AL) (AC)

>when you are married, you go connect with your partner (CL)

Come dey check my phone whether camera dey wey she take dey see everything wey dey happen

[Translation: I was in Abuja, my wife was in Lagos/ I was smiling and talking with a lady/ then my wife called me, I answered the call/ babe how are you/ who are you smiling at/ then I began to turn, she said you need not look around, I am not where you are/when you are married, you will be attached to your partner/ then I began to

check my phone to see if there is a camera in it with which my wife was using to see everything that was happening where I was]

[Excerpt 10, Bovi]

I friend girls for this Lagos

When I enter, I no get anything so I no dey fear!

I just dey toast girls anyhow!

Na im I go toast one girl wey for my mind she get money

She just! gree! ah! and small thing wey I don dey hustle dey gather!

When dis girl enter relationship she wan! wreck! me

She stubborn! I stubborn! (AL) so na war

< “Bovi!, you will buy! me! something! (closes eyes, gawks and gesticulates with hand)

< I say “I’ll buy you no:thing:!” (AL, AC)

[Translation: I dated ladies in this Lagos/ when I arrived in Lagos, I had nothing so I was not afraid/ I was just asking ladies out/ then I asked a lady who, to me, seems to be rich to go out with me / she gave me a ye and then the little things I had been working hard to get/ when this lady entered the relationship with me, she wanted to ruin me/ she was stubborn, I was stubborn, so we always quarrel]

In Excerpt 9, the comedian employs a change in pitch in lines 5, 6 and 7. The changes in pitch coincide with reported speeches in the narration. In line 5, he increases his pitch level so as to show that the utterance which is said with a higher pitch belongs to a participant-in-the-joke, his wife. In addition, choosing a higher pitch for the interrogative utterance, “who you dey smile give for there”, helps the comedian to express the attitude of his wife. The increase in pitch in Line 5 is metaphorical in that it indicates that the participant-in-the-joke to whom the statement is assigned is annoyed. In line 6, Bovi, drops the pitch which was employed in line 5 to a lower one. The pitch of line 5 corresponds with the pitch he has been using for his narration. Thus, the lower pitch signifies the comic voice which is being used for narration. The increased pitch in line 6 also indicates that the utterance belongs to his wife and it also expresses the attitude of the wife; while the lower pitch adopted for line 7 signifies that the comedian has returned to the comic voice of his narration. In Excerpt 10, in line 8, there is an increase in pitch. The increase corresponds with a change of voice, and the attitude of a participant-in-the-joke, his girlfriend. In line 9, rather than returning to the pitch that is being used for the narration, the comedian uses a higher one to indicate that as a participant-in-the-joke, he disagrees with his wife. Thus, indicating his attitude to the imperative of his wife, on one hand as a participant-in-

the-joke, and his attitude to the demands of a participant-in-the-joke as a stand-up comedian.

4.2.2.2 The use of accent

The term accent is used to refer to prominence given to a word by the use of pitch (Roach 2009). It is distinguished from stress, which refers to all sources of prominence including prominence resulting from increased loudness, length, sound quality, or the efforts made by a speaker to produce a stressed syllable (Roach, 2009). Brown and Yule (1983) suggest that accent is used in sentences to give new information. Whenever, a word is accented, the speaker places emphasis on such a word and draws the focus of the listener to such a word as new or important. Such a word may form the topic of the discourse.

In Nigerian stand-up comedy performance, comedians make use of accent. In their use of accent, they place emphasis on the accented words and such emphasis helps the audience to identify the focus of the comedians in each narration. Excerpts 11 and 12 below illustrate instances where accent is used.

[Excerpt 11, Gordons]

Now! anywhere you see poverty!!
Jump am pass! (AL)
We were so poor!, even poor people they call us poor! (P)(AL)

[Translation: Now whenever you perceive poverty/ run away from it/ we were so poor that poor people were calling us poor]

In Excerpt 11 the comedian uses accents; he places emphasis on the following words “now”, “poverty”, “pass” and “poor”. By placing emphasis on “now”, he indicates that he is about to introduce a new joke in his narration. The accents on “poverty” and “poor” indicate that the joke to be said is connected to the notion of poverty. The extract is a prelude to the comedian’s joke on how his impoverished background denied him favour from his prospective father-in-law.

[Excerpt 12, I Go Dye]

And the beginning of suffer na anybody! wey dey sleep te!
wake-up 10 o’clock na sign of poverty
[heckle- yes thank you]
how boy, mature! boy! Go just sleep for midnight!
wake-up! around! 9 o’clock! poverty!!

Smart! people always wakeup around 6 o'clock
hardworking! guys!

[Translation: And poverty begins when someone begins to wake up late/ waking up at 10 o'clock is a sign of poverty/ how will a man, mature man will sleep at midnight/ then wake up around 9 o'clock, poverty/ smart people always wake up around 6 o'clock/ hardworking men]

Similarly in Excerpt 12, the comedian uses the accent on the words which suggest the focus of his narration. The comedian had earlier talked about why it is good to be rich and how being rich befits an individual. In the extract, he focuses on the reason why a man may become poor. He uses the accents to lay emphasis on words like “te” (long and late), “mature”, “boy”, “wakeup”, and “poverty”, to draw the audience’s attention to them and show that they constitute the key words that suggest the subject of his narration. Also, the accent helps him to achieve the comparison he makes between people who wake up at 9 a.m. and people who wake up at 6 a.m.

In the two extracts, the comedians make use of accent on some words. The accents help to identify these words as the loci and foci of their narrations. Another contextual significance of accent is that it indicates the comedians’ attitude to the concepts that the accented words represent. In Excerpts 11 and 12, the accents show that the comedians denounce poverty and anyone who is associated with attitudes which can lead to poverty.

4.2.2.3 The use of intonation

Joynt (1991) posits that intonation is the fluctuation in pitch over utterances of connected speech and that it combines with accent to suggest the meaning of utterances. Intonation is one of the prosodic cues that speakers use to indicate new information as against given information in a discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983). Also intonation depicts the attitude and emotion of the speaker, as much as it assists him/her to give prominence to a syllable or word (Roach 2000).

Although the comedians in the selected performances present their routines in Nigerian Pidgin, there are instances when they adopt intonation to indicate attitudinal meaning and enhance the musicality of their performances. For example, a comedian may use a prominent rising or falling intonation as a means of placing emphasis on an expression in his/her monologues. In the stand-up performances studied, some

comedians make use of a sequence of two opposing patterns, such that the intonation variation of two utterances in a sequence forms an adjoining pair. The adjoining pair is made up of two opposing patterns; if the first pattern is rising, the second will be falling and if the first pattern is falling, the second will be rising. The adjoining pair is exemplified in Excerpts 13 and 14:

[Excerpt 13, Princewill]

So we two plan! say anyhow we write the WAEC↗
If we no pass we go spy↘ as we brain no gree make we pass↗
The spy suppose gree make we pass↘

[Then the two of us planned that we just have to write WAEC/ If we don't know the answers, we will cheat since our brains are too dull for passing exams/ cheating will at least help us pass]

[Excerpt 14, Gordons]

Every! body! for this country now dey talk about change!↘
Change!↗ Change!↘
We need change!↘ We need change↗
I say↗ wetin!↘

[Trans: everybody in this country is now talking about change/ change, change/ we need change we need change/ I wonder why]

In Excerpt 13 Princewill makes use of the adjoining pair which is made up of the rising pattern and then the falling pattern. Similarly, in Excerpt 14 Gordons makes use of the adjoining pair which is made up of the rising and then the falling tone. He also makes use of the falling tone sequentially. Textually, the use of these intonational patterns is to enhance the musicality of their narrations, in that it creates a flow of discourse by mapping information (new and given) construed as tone groups in the comedians' monologues, such that the audience will be able to easily identify a continuity in the comedians' presentations. It also helps to engage and sustain the audience's attention in the narrations. Should the comedians adopt only a single pattern whenever intonation is used, the narrations would become monotonous and very predictable. Apart from functioning together in the sequence, each of the intonational patterns has its own textual function. The rising tone conveys to the audience that the comedian is not done with what he wants to say while the falling tone conveys an idea of finality.

In addition, the Nigerian stand-up comedians in the sampled performances also use intonation to express attitudes and emotions. In this sense, they adopt intonation to achieve their institutional goals. Specifically, when they use intonation attitudinally, they use it sarcastically to mock the target of their narration or to express their reservations about the behaviour of the targets in their narration. An example of this is seen in the last line of Excerpt 14 where Gordons adopts both the rising and falling tunes. Unlike the previous tunes in the Excerpt, the tunes on the last line indicate that he rejects the persistent demand for change which he has reported. Excerpt 15 illustrates an instance where a comedian uses intonation sarcastically.

[Excerpt 15, Eneche]

Na in I see one woman just dey come
 < Eh, Eneche so you are in Makurdi, sorry,
 you are in Calabar?
 I say we came for night of thousand laugh
 <E ya, thank you. How am I looking like. 5
 I am going for this thing
 I say Ah! Your face alone , you look like under 20
 She happy↗
 <What about my finger nails
 I say under 17. She Happy↗ 10
 Person↗ fit born me!↘ Born my mama!↘ She dey!↗ happy!↘

[Translation: Then I saw one woman approaching me/line 4- I said we came for Night of thousand laugh/ line 11- Someone who is old enough to be my mother, even old enough to be my grandmother, is happy that I said she is looking like a young lady]

Excerpt 15 is taken from a routine in which Eneche lampoons Calabar women for claiming to be younger than they are. In lines 8 and 10, he uses the rising tune to indicate that it is ironic for a woman who is old enough to be his mother to be happy when she is complimented and described as looking like a young lady.

4.3 Nonverbal cues

Because stand-up comedy narrations are performances, they involve the whole of the comedians' physical body and appearance. The comedians do not depend only on their utterances for the instantiation of their humour acts, they also make use of their body moves, stage movements and props to initiate humour and elicit laughter in their performances. Usually, these non-language cues are used as accompaniment to

stand-up comedians' utterances, in that they serve to illustrate what is being said. For the audience, body moves facilitate the choice of what interpretations they would give to the utterances of the comedians. The physical acts found in the NTL are discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.3.1 The comedians' attires

In traditional genres of humour, such as comic plays and sitcoms, one of the ways by which comedians are identified is through their dressing. Likewise, in the early stage of contemporary stand-up comedy, one of the ways by which stand-up comedians initiated laughter was through their dressing (Double, 2005; Schwarz 2010). However, in present-day stand-up performance, stand-up comedians do not necessarily depend on the disembodied mode of dressing to initiate laughter, although, they sometimes refer to their dressing. It should be noted that in the widely accepted definition of stand-up comedy by Mintz (1985:71), stand-up comedians are said to be "unsupported very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle." Even though they may not be too dependent on costumes and props, the modes of dressing of the comedians certainly communicate a message to their audience, and the message communicated by such appearances enhances the rhetoric of their joke performance. It is in view of what a stand-up comedian's attire may contribute to her/his joke performance and initiation of humour acts that the dressing styles of the comedians are examined.

If the performance of a joke is taken as a communicative act, then the manner in which the performer appears before the waiting audience will contribute to the way in which the audience will perceive the performer. The comedians' dressing styles may endear the audience to them even before the performance of jokes begins or it may alienate the audience from the comedians. Thus, the dressing style of the comedian is important to the success of their performance.

The dressing styles and attires of stand-up comedians could function as a marker of and for professionalism. In this sense, the fashion style, cloth material, hairstyle, necklace, wrist watch and any other thing the comedian wears to the stage is a marker of the participants-of-the-joke shared knowledge- SCK and SSK. Modes, types and forms of dressing are largely influenced by culture and determined by situation of the interaction. Some stand-up comedians dress somewhat formally by

wearing business-like suits, (as shown in Plates 4.5- 46 in which Seyilaw dresses formally with a hat, suit and tie)

Plate 4.5 Comedian's manner of dressing



Plate 4.6 Comedian's manner of dressing II



Dressing formally makes comedians appear as professionals and comparable to people in other professions like banking and medicine. The rhetorical significance of this manner of dressing is to enhance their positive face as professionals. In RT terms, such dressing style, as ostensive stimulus, activates shared level beliefs, first from the SSK, that to put up a comedy show requires professionalism, and second from the SCK, that professionals are expensive to hire (in this sense to watch). With the act of

dressing, comedians cognitively manipulate the audience to justify the money they pay to purchase the tickets to the comedy shows. Dressing formally may not contribute to humour as it may not be connected with the context-in-the-joke.

However, whenever a comedian uses her/his dressing as a strategy for initiating humour, the dressing functions as a costume and/or prop for the performance of joke. It is in this instance, that comedians relate their dressings with and to the context-in-the-joke. Elam (1980) describes the semiotics of costumes and props in terms of indexical signs in that they could point to the user of such costume or prop. Nigerian comedians may not necessarily use all the attires on them for the purpose of humour, however, they do use articles of clothing on them as the subject of humour or the vehicles through which they initiate laughter from the audience. The performance of I Go Dye in one of his routines illustrates the use of dressing as a prop or costume (Plates 4.7- 4.9).

Plate 4.7 Costume in I Go Dye's Performance



Plate 4.8 I Go Dye removing his sunglasses



Plate 4.9 I Go Dye using his necklace as a prop

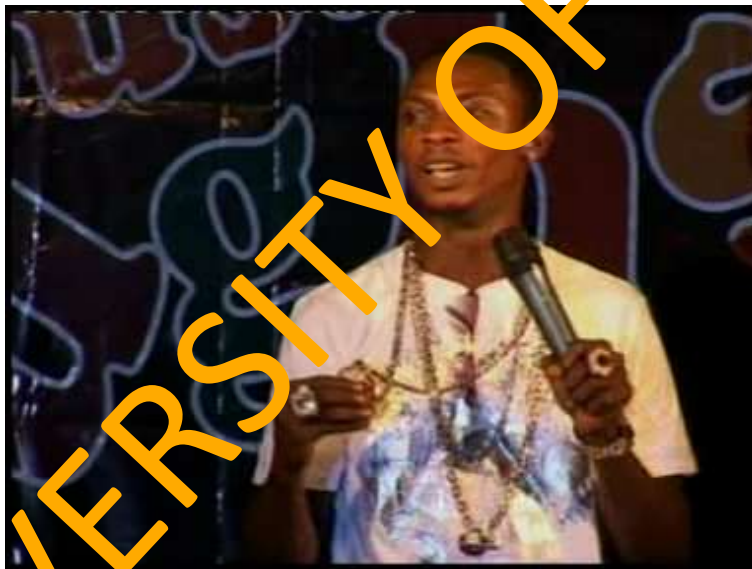


Plate 4.7 shows the comedian in a T-shirt, two necklaces, fashion ring and a pair of sun glasses. It pictures the comedian at the start of his performance. To the audience, the comedian might not have dressed in a distinct manner; however, they may wonder why he has two necklaces. As index signs, the necklace primarily points to the social image the comedian wants to create for himself. In Plate 4.8, the comedian is seen tucking in his sunglasses into his tee-shirt. It should be noted that the comedian has verbally attacked a musician, DBanj, who always appears in public with a pair of sunglasses. In the routine, I Go Dye deliberately refers to the sunglasses as impairing his eyesight. By referring to DBanj, the comedian turns the pair of glasses

into an index sign, pointing to Dbanj. By noting that the pair of sunglasses was impairing his eyesight, I Go Dye uses the sunglasses to mock Dbanj. In the collective culture of the participants, it is common to find visually impaired individuals with a pair of sunglasses. Thus, by verbally attacking Dbanj for his use of sunglasses and by stating that the sunglasses is impairing his vision, he covertly compares Dbanj with the visually impaired. The implicature that is derived from this comparison is that Dbanj, with his sunglasses, looks like a visually impaired individual.

In 4.9, I Go Dye refers to the necklace on him. He notes that the necklace, which denotatively indicates expensive jewellery and connotatively indicates that its user must be rich, is not made of genuine gold. He asserts that they are made of iron so as to denigrate his personality. His intention is not to incite laughter by denigrating himself, but by drawing from the SCK so as to attack “Warri boys”- a common target in his jokes. I Go Dye grew up in Warri and started his career as a humourist in Warri. Apart from this, the term “Warri boys” connotes youthful restiveness, as it refers to the youth of Nigeria’s Niger-Delta Region who are known for militancy. Part of their activities includes kidnapping and armed robbery. In the routine, he explicitly asserts that the “Warri boys” in the venue of the performance should note that his necklace is not gold, therefore, should not bother to waylay him to steal the piece of jewellery because if they do, they would only steal iron which has low market value. Stealing his necklace, therefore, does not worth the effort. By using his necklace to refer to Warri boys, I Go Dye uses the necklace as a costume and/or prop for the joke he is performing on Warri boys. Also, as indexical sign, the necklace serves as a basis for inferential meanings which the audience would have derived given the SCK of who “Warri boys” are. By drawing from the SCK, the comedian articulates shared beliefs about the use of necklaces in Nigeria.

Another performance significance of the comedians’ dressing styles is that the styles could be used to mark affiliation with the audience. In this instance, the comedians draw from the SSK to accentuate that they are also like the audience. Rather than dressing formally to indicate professionalism, they dress down by wearing informal clothes just as members of the audience would have done. It is commonly believed that comedy performance is not formal like working in a bank or government parastatal, therefore, comedians can perform their routines when they are informally dressed. By extension, to attend a comedy show, one does not need to dress formally.

This belief from the SSK influences the comedians to dress down for their performance. This kind of dressing is illustrated in Plates 4.10 – 4.11

Plate 4.10 Princess appearance on stage



Princess dressing down for her performance in a sleeveless blouse and leggings trousers.

Plate 4.11 Bovi's appearance on stage



Bovi dressing down for his performance, leaving his shirt unbuttoned to indicate he is informally dressed.

Another aspect of indicating affiliation with the audience is seen in Plate 4.5 above, in which Seyilaw wears a hat to stage. At the time of his performance, the president of Nigeria was an Ijaw man. Part of Ijaw dressing code for men includes wearing a hat. In the performance, Seyilaw draws from the SCK by wearing a hat to the stage, to indicate affiliation with the president of the country.

4.3.2 Layout and space utilisation

Although space utilisation is different from layout, these two aspects of the performances are combined because space utilisation is predicated on the layout of the performance arena.

Norris (2004) posits that in any interaction, participant positionings are influenced by the setting (and design), and the objects within the setting. According to Norris (2004), layout is a communicative mode and it consists of the setting and the objects within the setting of the interaction. As a communicative mode, participants utilise the layout for achieving their interactional goals. Although several things could be in the layout of an interaction, they all do not influence the interaction. The things in the layout that influence an interaction are those that the participants utilise; for instance, in stand-up performances, there could be several sound gadgets occupying space in the venue of the performance but comedians may not necessarily refer to the sound gadgets in their narration.

The layout of the venues of Nigerian stand-up comedy performance is rectangular in design, and it is divided into two distinct spatial functional areas: the first is a platform where comedians occupy to perform their jokes (stage); the second is the area where the audience will be seated while watching the comedians' performances. The layout is designed such that the audience seat opposite the comedians as shown in Plates 4.12 and 4.13 below:

Plate 4.12 Performance layout



4.13 Performance layout II



In Plate 4.12, the camera is behind the audience and opposite the comedian. It is positioned such that it faces the comedian performing while in Plate 4.13, it is at an angle where it picks the side-view of the performance layout. In Both Plates, the audience are seated opposite the platform on which the comedians stand to narrate their jokes. The platform functions as the stage for the performance. The layout of Nigerian stand-up performance reflects the conversational structure of stand-up comedy performance. In the layout, the comedians are placed on podiums or platforms

that are higher than the audience arena, such that the comedians can easily be spotted by everyone in the audience area. Technically, the position of the comedian is foregrounded, and, pragmatically highlighted as the participant who has conversational superiority. The design of the layout is reflective of the SSK. Both the audience and comedians are aware that stand-up performance is an interaction which favours the comedian to take a superior conversational role. This is why the position of the comedians is always foregrounded in the performances.

From the sociosemiotic perspective, the positioning of the comedians and audience in the layout contributes to the textuality of the venue, and also projects interpersonal meanings. Nigerian stand-up performances are usually staged in halls which may not have theatrical designs. However, the way the halls are adopted for the performance, as shown in Plates 4.12 and 4.13 above, projects a performance layout with two main components. These two components combine to make a coherent whole: there is a stage for the comedian and an area for the audience. There is a collocational relationship between the two with one selecting the other in that the presence of one is predicated on the presence of the other. Without the audience area, even if the comedians' stage exists, the layout will not be complete for the performance of jokes. Therefore, the relationship, textually, is that of interdependence. Interpersonally, the audience's seats are fixed and are positioned to face the performers' space while the stage expresses the comedians' conversational role.

Other features of the layout include lighting, decorations and the use of the microphone. The layout is lighted such that the stage is more illuminated than the audience area. In some instances, there is a spot light on the comedian. Lighting on the stage performs an indexical function in that it points out the stage as the area in the stand-up venue where the comedians' performances take place. In Elam's (1980:17) terms, lighting has "the general function of what Peirce terms 'focusing the attention' and is thus closely related to explicit foregrounding devices (which in this sense, points to the object offered to the audience attention)". As an indexical sign, it tells the audience where they should direct their focus. It is in view of this that the producers and directors of stand-up performances adopt the use of spotlight, which is "the most direct form of technological pointing that the theatre possesses" (Elam 1980:17). Spotlights foreground the comedian and any action s/he performs. In the performance sense, spotlights indicate the subject or speaker of an utterance and they also motivate speakers and provoke them to speech and action (Elam, 1980).

In the humour acts model, lighting is a function of the SSK. The SSK informs the roles of the participants-of-the-joke. It is because the audience plays a relatively passive role in the interaction, compared to that of the comedian, that the lighting of the stage is more intensified, sometime with a spotlight on the comedian, than that of the audience area. The use of lighting is illustrated with Plates 4.14- 4.17 below:

Plate 4.14 The use of spot light



Plate 4.15 The use of coloured light



Plate 4.16 The use of Spotlight II



Plate 4.17 The use of borderlights



Plate 4.14 and 4.16 show instances where spotlight is used on the comedians. The plates also show the audience area which is not as illuminated as the stage. In Plate 4.15, there is the use of coloured (blue) light together with the spotlight. The adoption of blue is meant to add an aesthetic value to the performance. In addition, blue is adopted because it is a colour with several connotative meanings, some of which is that it indicates night, freshness and softness (Van Leeuwen, 2005). By implication, the colour projects the performance as containing the needed social context for entertainment. Similarly, in Plate 4.16, there is a mix of red light with the spotlight. The spotlight focuses on the comedian, while the red light is directed to

other parts of the stage. In Plate 4.17, there is the use of borderlights, a unit which is used to light a larger area, normally from overhead. The borderlights face the stage so that it can illuminate the stage properly. This is also meant to give high prominence to the stage as the area where the actions will be performed in the interaction.

The second aspect of this section is space utilisation. In this study, space utilisation refers to how stand-up comedians use the space allotted to them during their performances. The comedians' organisation of the fixed location assigned to them results in both higher and lower level actions. In multimodality terms, the location occupied by the participants-of-the-joke is an instance of higher level action while the movement they make within or outside that location is an instance of lower level action (Norris, 2004). Using Hall's (1966) terms, at the start of a performance, the participants-of-the-joke occupy a variable space which the comedians can manipulate from the public distance to social distance, and then to personal distance. When comedians stay on the stage all through their routines, they maintain public distance. When they move down from the stage to audience area, they maintain social distance. When they move further, getting close to a member of the audience, they maintain personal distance. The SSK, however, has conditioned the comedians to maintain a public space, staying on the stage, while narrating their jokes. So it is more common to have a comedian maintaining public space than a comedian who manipulates space for connotative meanings during a performance.

The act of manipulating performance space by comedians is common with three male comedians: I G Dye, Buchi and Gordons. These three comedians move into the audience area during their routines. Thus, they move from the public space to social space. In Gordons' and Buchi's performances, the comedians go further to initiate personal space with individuals in the audience by standing right in front of the individuals and striking conversation with them. It is important to note that in some comedians' routines, for instance, Funnybones, they maintain the public space while engaging individuals in the audience in such "private" conversations.

Another important aspect of comedians' use of performance space on the stage is their movements from one point on the stage to another. Commonly, comedians do not maintain a single position while performing. They employ a large portion of the stage layout, they do move from one point on the stage to another and their movements on the stage may or may not be accompanied by body moves. The comedians' movements on the stage and their use of the stage layout are rhetorical,

and, have connotative implications. Primarily, they depict that the comedians have mastered their crafts and they present the comedians as individuals who are not bound by stage fright. They also show that the comedians have taken charge of their performances.

Comedians' space utilisation can be grouped into two, following Hall (1960). The first category, which refers to comedians' choice of keeping themselves on the stage, reflects the use public space. In this instance, stand-up comedians maintain the conversational structure of the interaction. They occupy the position which is designed for them from the institutional structure of the performance. The second category, which refers to comedians' choice of moving into the audience area, reflects the social as well as personal space. In this instance, comedians leave the stage and walk into the audience area. The connotation of the use of this space is that the comedians disregard the institutional setting of the performance and that they demote their elevated role in the interaction, so as to express familiarity and solidarity with the audience.

In Plates 4.18- 4.24, the movements of two comedians, Funnybones and Gordons are captured. Funnybones is shown moving from one spot to another on the stage while performing his jokes. On the other hand, Gordons is shown stepping into the audience area while performing his jokes.

Plate 4.18 Funnybones' use of stage layout



Funnybones maintaining the performance space while he talks directly with people in the front row in the audience area.

Plate 4.19 Funnybones' use of stage layout II



Funnybones picks another person in the front row while still keeping with the conversational structure of the stand-up performance.

Plate 4.20 Funnybones' use of stage layout III



Funnybones changes his location on the stage so as to speak with another member of the audience in the front row.

Plate 4.21 Funnybones' use of stage layout IV



Funnybones still maintaining the performance space while he talks directly with his target

Plate 4.22 Gordons' use of performance layout



Here, Gordons has come off the stage and he is moving towards a member of the audience.

Plate 4.23 Gordons' use of performance layout II



Here, Gordons directs his gaze towards the member of the audience, to whom he is directing his utterances.

Plate 4.24 Gordons' use of performance layout III



Here, Gordons is right in front of the member of the audience and he is having a direct conversation with him.

In Plate 4.22, Gordon is seen maintaining a social distance in the audience area of the performance layout. In 4.23, he moves towards a target in the audience while in 4.24, he is in an intimate position with a member of the audience, focusing on the member of the audience as the target of his questions.

There also are instances where comedians choose to stay on the stage in a performance, while in other performance, they move from one spot to another, specifically from the stage to the audience area. In Volume 17 of NTL, Buchi is seen moving around in the audience area while in Volume 23, he stays on the stage throughout his performance. Similarly in Volume 19, Gordons perform parts of his jokes in the audience area while in Volumes 17 and 21 he keeps himself on the stage while performing.

4.3.3 Adoption of dancing

A dance is a stylized and rhythmic movement which evokes meanings. Sebeok (2001) describes dance as a sophisticated art form which is capable of expressing human thoughts and feelings through the instrumentality of the body. Theatrically, a dance is a sign which is embedded with several other signs. According to Backer (2007), signs in a dance appear in form of choreographic elements like theme, movement, gesture, facial expression, props, costume, props and technical elements like lighting, sound and setting. The meaning of a dance is a product of the cultural convention where the dance is situated. Such conventions result from cultural traditions or ritual and theatrical codes.

Since the dance in stand-up comedy is adopted for humour, there is need to explain it within the purview of humour. A stand-up comedian dance may be a function of context-in-the-joke or context-of-the-joke. As a function of context-of-the-joke, comedians do not necessarily use their dance to initiate humour, rather, they use it as only an aspect of the text they present to their audience. An instance of the use of dance in this sense is found in Princess' performance (Plates 4.25- 4.30). In the routine, the comedian uses dance as a strategy for starting her performance. She dances into the stage while music is being played to welcome her to the stage. The music serves as disembodied mode in the high density mode she adopts. Her motions were unsynchronized with the music and this depicts that she is utilizing the disembodied mode.

Plate 4.25 Princess dancing into the stage



Plate 4.26 Princess focusing on her dance



Plate 4.27 Princess facing the audience while dancing



Plate 4.28 Princess adoption of Alanta dance



Plate 4.29 Princess intensifying her Alanta dance



Plate 4.30 Princess focusing on the audience while performing Alanta dance



As a function of context-in-the-joke, comedians use dances to reflect the action of a participant-in-the-joke and/or activity-in-the-joke. In this instance, in the world of the joke, the comedian presents a participant-in-the-joke as dancing. Thus, while the comedian dances to illustrate what a participant-in-the-joke is doing, s/he enhances the garden-path phenomenon of the joke. An instance of this kind of dance is found in the routine of Basketmouth where he uses dancing to illustrate the action of the target of

his joke. In the dance- (Plates 4.31- 4.34), Basketmouth is seen dancing, however, there was no music being played for him to dance. His narration focused on a girl he danced with in a night club. He used his dance to illustrate how the girl danced with him in the club. He created the rhythm of his dance with his body movements. Thus, his dancing mirrors the activity of the target of his joke.

Plate 4.31 Basketmouth mimicking the dance steps of his target



Plate 4.32 Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target



Plate 4.33 Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target II



Plate 4.34 Basketmouth intensifying the mimicry of his target III



Whenever comedians dance, gestures have high modal intensity in that they are the modes that take primacy while the dance is on going. Their dances involve intricately intertwined multiple modes which include gaze, head and hand movements, and facial expression.

Plates 4.25-4.30, which are from Princess' routine, indicate different adoptions of gestures, hand movement and gaze. Plate 4.25 shows the comedian dancing to the centre of the stage while she was looking at the members of the audience seated on the

front row. In 4.26 she is at the centre of the stage and she turns her body, so that her torso and posture can face the audience. In 4.27, she is fully facing the audience. These movements take place while she was dancing. Her hands make different movements. In 4.30, her left hand fingers are folded into a fist with the thumb pointing upwards while her right hand is holding the microphone. Her left hand is raised to the shoulder level while the right is a little bit lower than the left. She raises the left hand above the right so as to use it for gesticulating her dance, while the right hand will only serve to hold the microphone. In 4.28, she drops her hands so as to begin a popular dance style, Alanta, which she demonstrates with her hands around her stomach, her mouth open and her tongue out. These embodied actions are indexes of the Alanta dance.

In addition, her gaze contributes to the intensity of her communicative codes. In Plate 4.25, Princess is looking sideways to the audience while she moves to the centre of the stage; in 4.26 and 4.27, she looks at herself, specifically, at her dance steps. In 4.28 and 4.29, she keeps her eyes closed. In 4.30, her eyes are opened looking at the audience. The different positioning of her gaze indicates different focuses while she is presenting the dance as a text for her audience. When her eyes are on the audience, she connotatively suggests that her focus is the audience. When her eyes are on her dance step she suggests that she is focusing on herself, watching her dance step and evaluating the moves she is making vis-à-vis the music being played. When she closes her eyes she indicates that she is fully concentrating on the Alanta dance, which she is performing. Her closed eyes indicate the level of seriousness with which she takes the dance. In 4.30, she is looking at the audience and this indicates that her focus has returned to the audience.

It is important to comment on her adoption of Alanta dance. Alanta is a kind of dance popularised by Nigerian hip hop artistes like P-square and Iyanya. In the humour acts model, the use of Alanta is an instance of making manifest assumptions from the SCK. When she changes her dancing steps to Alanta, she draws affiliative response from the audience, as her dance is greeted with a loud clap. The response of the audience to her Alanta dance indicates that both the comedian and audience are members of the same cultural community. She adopts Alanta as a strategy for bonding with the audience. In RT terms, it is an instance of foregrounding a shared background assumption and strengthening such assumption in the context-of-the-joke.

Just like Princess, Basketmouth adopts different gestures in his dance, albeit, unlike Princess, for a different purpose. Basketmouth uses his dancing to mimic the actions of a participant-in-the-joke, which the audience do not know. Thus, to make his audience to believe that he danced with a girl in a night club, he demonstrates how the girl danced. His intention to demonstrate how the girl danced motivated his gesticulations in the dance. In Plate 4.32, Basketmouth is seen with his hands raised to his chest level. His postures, with his legs apart, in 4.31, 4.33 and 4.34 indicate a serious stance (an in-depth concentration in the dance). Basketmouth chose such a posture to show how serious the lady in the joke was dancing with him. He uses his hands around his chest to indicate how the lady deliberately heaved her breasts while dancing with him (Plate 4.32). In Plates 4.33 and 4.34, his hands are dropped but his legs are still apart so as to foreground the posture of the participant-in-the-joke.

Another aspect of the adoption of dance in Nigerian stand-up comedy is music. In instances where music is adopted to accompany the comedians' dance, it falls into disembodied mode category since the comedians do not produce the music, but only incorporate it into their narration while it is being played by a disc jockey. An instance of this is seen in Princess' performance, which has been illustrated in Plates 4.25-4.30 and explained in the preceding paragraphs. Another means by which music is employed is by using it in mimicry. An instance of this is found AY's routine where he mimics the dancing and singing patterns of Nigerian musicians from the distant past like Raskimono, Chris Okotie and Alex .O. while a disc jokey plays their popular songs. It should be noted that these artists no longer hold sway in Nigerian music industry and that one of them, Chris Okotie, has become a popular Pentecostal pastor in the country.

Plate 4.35 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Raskimono



Plate 4.36 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Raskimono II



Plate 4.37 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Chris Okotie



Plate 4.38 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Chris Okotie II



AY mimicking the dancing steps and gesticulations of Chris Okotie while he mimes the music of Chris Okotie that is being played.

Plate 4.39 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Alex O



Plate 4.40 AY mimicking the dancing steps of Alex O II



AY mimicking the dancing steps and gesticulations of Alex O while he mimes the music of Alex O that is being played

In the adoption of music in these instances of mimicry, music provides the rhythm of the dance. In RT terms, the music serves two purposes. First, it is an ostensive stimulus which activates an important background assumption needed for the interpretation of the dance. In deriving the music's overt interpretation, the audience will easily assign the ownership of the music to the artist whose dancing pattern is being caricatured. Second, the audience will see the dance steps, which previously in the SCK have been assigned referentially to the musician and have been viewed as acceptable, creating an implicated premise in stand-up performance. This implicated premise is that such music and its accompanying dance are out dated.

4.3.4 Posture: comedian's body position on the stage

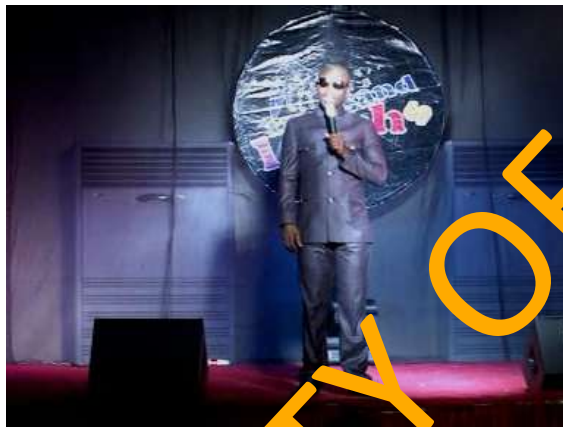
Posture, which is influenced by culture, refers to the ways in which participants in an interaction position their bodies (Norris 2004). Participants may display open or closed posture as well as indicate directionality with their posture. The significance of posture in an interaction is that it gives insight into the involvement of a participant with another participant (Norris, 2004).

While narrating their jokes, a common posture taken by the comedians is the open posture in which they leave their limbs apart, using one of the hands to demonstrate while the second holds the microphone. This common postural stance of the comedian is illustrated in Plates 4.41 and 4.42

Plate 4.41 Open posture adopted by Bovi



Plate 4.42 Open posture adopted by Seyilaw



Plates 4.41 and 4.42 show the comedians with open posture. Open posture primarily indicates that a participant is ready for an interaction with his/her interlocutor. In the context of stand-up performance, the comedians use it to indicate their readiness for the performance of their jokes. Rhetorically, open posture foregrounds the comedians as bold and confident.

A factor that influences the postural stance of the comedians is the action of the participants-in-the-joke. More often than not, comedians take postural stance that indicates the posture of the participants-in-the-joke; for instance, should they present a participant-in-the-joke as stooping, they will stoop while narrating their joke. This is illustrated in Plates 4.43-4.44

Plate 4.43 Gordons mirroring the postural stance of a participant-in-the-joke



Plate 4.44 Gordons mirroring the postural stance of a participant-in-the-joke II



Plates 4.43 and 4.44 show Gordons narrating his wife's experience while she was in labour. These plates show the comedian gesticulating his wife's actions and mirroring his wife's posture during labour pains. His posture was to show that, at the moment his wife went into labour, she lost control of herself. In 4.44, he mirrored his wife dropping the wrapper which was initially around her torso, not caring if she was bare or not. The postural stance of the comedian, which reflects his wife's posture, remains open, with the torso bending backwards. The open posture implies that the wife was calling for help while the backward bending torso reflects the helpless state of his wife. The backward bending torso also mirrors the way pregnant women push out their stomach, especially when they are in the last trimester of their pregnancy.

Another form of posture found in the sampled performances is one which the stand-up comedian uses to involve the audience in the narration. In this kind of posture, a comedian bends his/her torso forward towards the audience. By so doing, comedians attitudinally involve the audience in the performance of jokes. Plate 4.45 from the performance of Funnybones illustrates this form of posture.

Plate 4.45 Funnybones with an inviting posture



Funnybones is seen bending forward his torso towards the seated audience. His postural stance invites the audience to him. He takes this posture while he deliberately directs interrogatives to some members of the audience.

4.3.5 Gaze

Analysis of gaze deals with the organisation, direction and intensity of looking. Depending on the number of activities participants are engaged in, gaze may play subordinate or superordinate role in an interaction. When participants are engaged in only the conversation, gaze will play a subordinate role while it will play a superordinate role when participants are concurrently engaged in other activities while conversing. Coupland and Jaworski (2001) note that gaze could be used by participants as a marker of transition relevance places, especially, when a current speaker focuses his gaze on the participant selected as next speaker.

Unless a comedian has specifically identified a member of the audience who s/he may engage in a conversation, it is quite difficult to say the stand-up comedian's gaze is focused on a particular individual in the audience. This is because the audience, as the addressee in the interaction, are numerous. However, what is

observed is that stand-up comedians usually try to keep their gaze on the audience throughout the period of their joke narration. A comedian may move his/her gaze from the audience to him/herself, especially when s/he is physically demonstrating the actions of a participant-in-the-joke. A stand-up comedian may also focus her/his gaze on other objects which s/he has adopted as an improvised prop for dramatic vehicle. In such instance, the comedian quickly returns her/his gaze to the audience. This change in gaze is illustrated with the Plates 4.46-4.48 below taken from the performance of Basketmouth.

Plate 4.46 Basketmouth focusing his gaze on the stage



Plate 4.47 Basketmouth focusing his gaze on his gesticulations

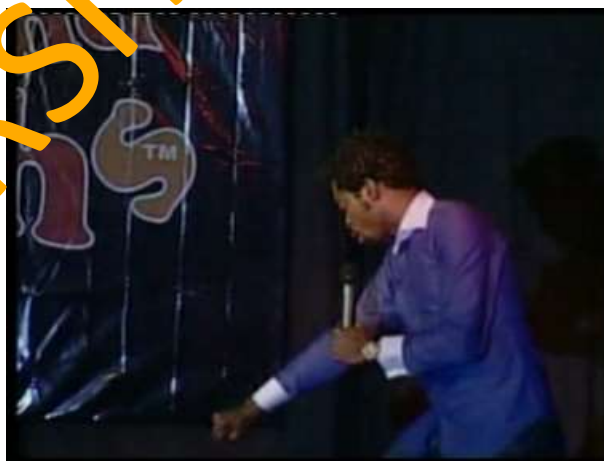


Plate 4.48 Basketmouth focusing his gaze on the audience



In 4.46, Basketmouth has taken away his gaze from the audience and is focusing on the stage. The change in gaze is motivated by the fact that he wants to demonstrate “pulling back a lady in a wheelchair”, an act performed by a male participant-in-the-joke. In 4.47, he is focusing his gaze on his (right) hand-movement. In 4.48, his gaze is on the audience while gesticulating the reaction of the “lady in a wheelchair”. He returns his gaze to the audience so as to indicate that the audience are important in the performance. By returning his gaze to the audience, he will be able to measure the impact of his joke on the audience.

It is also common for comedians to move their gaze from one angle or area of the audience to another. Since the audience are usually seated over a large area, a comedian may find it impossible to focus his/her gaze on all of the audience at the same time. The need to give all the audience a feeling of involvement in the interaction makes them to change their gaze, from one direction of the audience to another. An instance of this kind of gaze movement is found in one of the routines of Bovi and it is illustrated in Plates 4.49-4.51 below. In Plate 4.49, Bovi directs his gaze towards the audience members seated on his left; in 4.50, he directs his gaze towards the audience members seated, approximately at the centre of the hall while in 4.51, he directs his gaze towards the audience member seated at his right.

Plate 4.49 Bovi gazing at the audience to his left



Plate 4.50 Bovi gazing at the audience opposite him



Plate 4.51 Bovi gazing at the audience to his right



For the comedians, keeping their gaze on the audience enhances their performance dexterity. In the first place, it is a means of identifying the audience role in the interaction. By keeping their gaze on the audience, comedians indicate that the audience are vital to the success of any joke performance. Comedians imply that the stand-up interaction is a two-way communication: the comedians initiate the interaction by performing their jokes and the audience provide feedback to the comedians. By keeping their gaze on the audience, comedians can tell if their routines are having desired effects on the audience or not. Rhetorically, by making eye contact with the members of the audience, the comedians are perceived by the audience as professionals who are not covered by stage fright.

4.3.6 Gestures

Gestures are composed of body moves. According to Poyatos (2002), gestures include both the conscious and unconscious movement of the head, face and gaze, communicatively joined to the use of verbal language. As stand-up comedians narrate their jokes, they employ different types of gestures to express the propositional contents of their jokes. Their gestures “have the property that strokes synchronize with coexpressive speech” (McNeill, 2006: 303). They are thus used to intensify whatever the comedian is saying. They are used to give a representation of the comedians’ jokes and comedians’ attitude to the participants-in-the-jokes.

Following McNeil's (2006) classification of gestures, the following types of gestures are found in Nigerian stand-up comedy performance:

- i. Iconic gestures: these are gestures which present images of concrete entities and/or actions. They are body moves which interpretations are connected to the speech of the speaker. Iconic gestures are used to illustrate and substantiate what is being said by the comedians. Plate 4.52 below shows the use of iconic gestures in a performance. Here, the comedian, Bovi, narrates a joke about his relationship with his wife. At the point where these Plates are taken, he is talking about receiving telephone calls from his wife. Since he has used his left hand to hold the microphone, he uses his right hand to gesticulate talking on the phone. His gesticulation reinforces the notion of receiving call which is the activity with which he depicts his relationship with his wife and on which he builds his joke.

Plate 4.52 Iconic gesture



Bovi gesticulates receiving a call

- ii. Deictic gestures: Primarily, deixis involves locating entities and actions in space in relation to a reference point. The prototypical deictic gesture is an extended index finger, but any extensible body part or held object could be used as deictic gesture (McNeil, 2006). A common type of gesture is the pointing of the index finger. Much of the pointing found in conversations and narrations is not pointing at physically present objects or locations but it is abstract pointing. On the other hand, concrete pointing is the pointing at physically present objects or locations (McNeil, 2006).

Both abstract and concrete pointings are found in the sampled performances. Comedians make use of concrete pointing whenever they point at the audience, which they do in order to enhance the audience participations in the performance (Plate 4.53). They also make use of concrete pointing whenever they decide to pick on someone in the audience and make a joke on such individual. An example is seen in Plate 4.24 where Gordons is talking directly with a member of the audience. On the other hand, comedians use abstract pointing whenever they are illustrating the activity or what a participant in their jokes did. In such instances, the comedian points at any direction. The use of these two types of pointings is differentiated based on the joke utterance, the participants-in-the-joke and the activity-in-the-joke. For the concrete pointing, the audience is part of the participant-in-the-joke, while in the abstract pointing, the audience need not to be part of the participants-in-the-joke. Concrete pointing is used whenever comedians are poking fun at the audience.

Plate 4.53 Concrete pointing in Princewill's performance

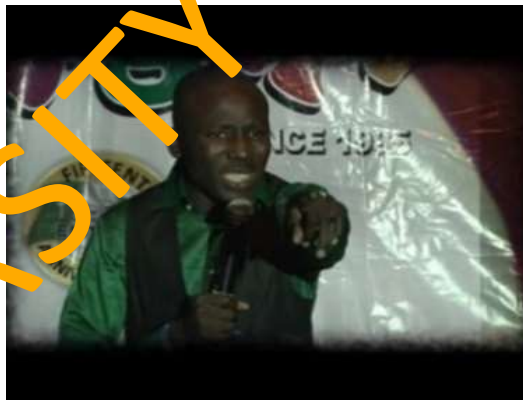


Plate 4.54 Concrete pointing in Basketmouth's performance



In Plate 4.53, Princewill adopts a deictic gesture. In the joke narration where the plate is taken, he refers to the members of the audience. He uses the gesticulation to include the audience in his narration. In 4.54, Basketmouth points to his inner ear as an act of reinforcing the proposition of his joke which is built upon the human organ of hearing.

Another form of deictic gesture found in the Nigerian stand-up comedy performance is one which points to the butts of the jokes of the comedians. To use this, the comedians simply mimic the gesticulations of the social actors they select for their jokes. When comedians mimic the gesticulation patterns of the butts of their jokes, such gesticulations are indexed of the butt and are therefore pointing to the butt of the joke and not to the comedian. Such deictic gesticulation can also be regarded as abstract deictic gestures in that they are pointing to the butt of the joke who may not be physically present at the location of the stand-up comedy performance.

- iii. Metaphoric gestures: McNeil (2006) describes as metaphoric, gestures which picture abstract content. Such gestures help to visualise the non-imaginable. In metaphoric gestures, “an abstract meaning is presented as if it had form and/or occupied space.”(McNeil 2006:300). Metaphoric gestures meta-represent the speech of interactants.

In the sampled performances, comedians make use of metaphoric gesture to metarepresent their narrations. The metaphoric gesture depicts the activities, concepts and thoughts that are mentioned in the narrations. In the Plates 4.55-4.56, Gordons uses his hand gesticulations in a metaphoric manner. The comedian is lamenting the low social status of poor people and he moves his hand down-ward to indicate what it means to be poor. The hand movements in the Plates correspond with the comedian statements “Everything about the poor is low”, “low blood count, low sperm count” and “low income”. The hand movements meta-represent the concept of low status of poverty-ridden people.

Plate 4.55 Metaphoric gesture in Gordon's performance



Plate 4.56 Metaphoric gesture in Gordon's performance II



Another metaphoric gesture found in Nigerian stand-up comedy is gawking. Gawking, as a physiognomy act, is found interspersedly in some of the performances. The comedians use gawking whenever they want to emphasize a particular action or word. Thus gawking in their narrations metaphorically represents reinforcement acts since it is used to accompany expressions on which stand-up comedians place emphasis. By gawking while narrating, they foreground the expressions which coincide with the action. Plates 4.57- 4.58 illustrate instances of gawking by the comedians

Plate 4.57 Bovi gawking



Plate 4.58 Basketmouth gawking



4.4 Towards a classification of jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy

The classification of jokes in clear-cut taxonomy has been described as a quixotic exercise by Dynel (2009) because of two reasons. The first is that categories overlap and merge, as some instances of humour can be subsumed under more than one label. The typology of jokes thus depends on the criteria which are considered for classifying the forms of humour. Second, because humour mirrors the creativity of language users, new forms of jokes are constantly being innovated and researchers do propose new terms and definitions for new humorous phenomena they observe. In addition, Lew (1997) opines that the classification of jokes has been met with major drawbacks because of the semantic nature of the classificatory criteria, which mirror the open-endedness of semantic systems. To Lew (1997), classification of jokes have not been so successful because scholars apply multiple mutually incompatible criteria

to produce a single classification, scholars choose open and unconstrained values for their classification, and lastly, because of the richness of types of humour tokens.

Regardless of this backdrop, it is important to attempt to classify the jokes and the humour tokens found in the narrations of Nigerian stand-up comedians. It is important to note that the jokes found in the narrations of the comedians fall under the category of referential jokes or humour. The comedians do not manipulate the structure of language in their routines; rather, they manipulate contextual knowledge from the SCK and SSK so as to create surprises and incongruities needed for humour. Thus in this attempt to classify their jokes, reference will not be made to the structure of the jokes in their narration, and by extension, it will be practically impossible to follow the classification of jokes found in Attardo (1994), Levin (1997) and Ritchie (2004).

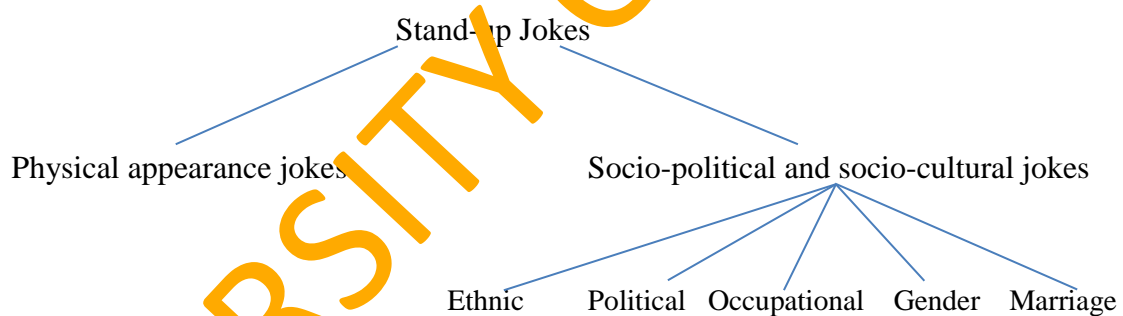
The present classification of jokes will draw its signifier from the humour act model which has been discussed in Chapter Two. Following the model, the first classification of stand-up comedy jokes is predicated on how the joke is conveyed: is it conveyed by verbal cues or nonverbal cues? The jokes can be grouped into verbal jokes and nonverbal jokes, where verbal jokes are those jokes in the comedians' performances that are performed by means of language and nonverbal jokes are those that are performed by means of body movements such as dancing, gesture and costume. Mimicry, for instance, reflect this classification of jokes. Whenever comedians mimic the speech mannerism of participants-in-the-joke, they perform a verbal joke. Whenever they mimic the body movements of a participants-in-the-joke, they perform a nonverbal joke. An example of nonverbal joke is found in AY's routine, where the comedian mimics the dancing steps of Nigerian musicians like Alex O and Chris Okotie while he mimes their songs. Apart from verbal mimicry, verbal jokes of the comedians include all instances of joking stories of the comedians.

As a strategy mimicry can be used as a criterion for classifying jokes. Two broad categories of jokes are identifiable using mimicry as the basis of classification: caricatured jokes and non-caricatured jokes. Caricatured jokes include all instances where comedians mimic individuals like pastors, politicians, musicians and people with low intelligence quotient. Non-caricatured jokes refer to jokes that do not involve any form of mimicry.

Another way by which Nigerian stand-up jokes can be classified is by examining the source of the jokes of the comedians. The source of the joke refers to

the origin or domain from which the comedians draw their jokes. This classification is informed by the activity-in-the-joke, participant-in-the-joke, especially the targets, and the participants-of-the-joke, especially the comedians themselves. Two categories of jokes can be identified: jokes that are based on stand-up comedians' physical appearance and jokes that are based on socio-political and socio-cultural situations in Nigeria. In the first category, Nigerian stand-up comedians make jokes out of their physical appearance on the stage. They could make jokes from their clothing, weight, height or visage. In the second category, the comedians make jokes from issues in the society, especially from Nigerian political and cultural events and circumstances. In the second category, the activity in their jokes has to do with governance, education, music, marriage, occupation or religion. The comedians also make individuals who are practitioners in these fields of human endeavour the targets of their jokes. Based on the target and content of the jokes, Nigerian stand-up comedian jokes can further be grouped into divisions like ethnic, political, occupational, gender and marriage. The foregoing is captured in the schema below:

Fig. 2 Classification of jokes in Nigerian stand-up comedy



4.5 Summary

In this chapter, the narrative aspects of stand-up comedy performances have been identified and analysed. The chapter focuses on voicing and conversational cues like physical and prosodic acts used by stand-up comedians. In the next chapter, the pragmatic strategies of stand-up comedians are identified and analysed.

CHAPTER FIVE

HUMOUR STRATEGIES IN THE SELECTED NIGERIAN STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to pragmatic analysis of humour strategies. The strategies employed by the comedians are explained within the purview of the humour acts model using RT.

5.1 Predicting interpretive steps

Encyclopaedic knowledge in the humour acts model shows that language use in stand-up comedy performance is informed by language use in non-humorous contexts. Stand-up comedians, as language users, are aware of the steps and processes involved in using and interpreting language. Stand-up comedians design their jokes knowing that their audiences will make interpretive steps like reference assignment and deriving implicature. They manipulate these steps for the purpose of generating humour. In humour acts model, assigning referents to names is an important process that must be done during a performance so as to identify the butts and other participants-in-the-joke.

Stand-up comedians envisage jokes that will attract their audience's attention and they also envisage the interpretation that would be given to each joke. Common social issues, topics on public figures are adopted by the comedians so as to easily access the mutual cognitive environment of the audience through their narrations. Excerpt 16 illustrates that stand-up comedians' routines are based on common social issues that will easily draw the audience's attention.

[Excerpt 16, Bovi]

I like women, but, una too, una too dey wicked person
and anything wey involve women people go just dey shout
dem say one senator marry 13 years
Una dey fear? Na true na
but dem dey lie for the man's head
and I no dey like when den they lie for person's head
I can feel his pain say he marries 13 years
The girl is not 13. She is 14. (AL)

5

[Translation: I like women, but all women are mischievous/ And anything that involves women attract a lot of debates/ they said a senator married a thirteen year old/ You don't believe it? It is very true/ But they were lying against the man/ I can feel the discomfort the senator would experience / The girl is not 13. She is 14]

The comedian builds the joking story on a popular social issue, a senator's marriage to an underage girl, because he is aware that such a topic will easily draw and sustain the audience's attention to his joke performance. Bovi chooses to begin his joke with "women" and then narrows down to "a senator marry 13 years" because he is aware that a joke like this would easily attract the audience's attention. He is aware of the background assumptions that the audience would retrieve in processing the joke. This background information includes social beliefs about women, the identity of the senator, the debates about, as well as, the criticism of the senator's marriage to a thirteen-year-old girl. Furthermore, the comedian knows that the audience would attempt to derive the implicated premise of the joke, right from the start of the joke. The comedian is aware that the audience, from the mention of the senator's act, would assume that he is about to criticise the senator since the senator received several criticisms. With lines 5-7, however, he is aware that the audience would assume that he is not about to criticise the senator since his proposition overtly suggests that the senator might not have married a thirteen year old. Furthermore, he is aware that the audience will make a backward reference when his punchline (line 8) is given, which will make the audience to realise that he is actually lampooning the senator (as against the implicated premise of the comedian in lines 5-7).

From the foregoing, it can be suggested that the interpretive processes like reference assignment, extraction of logical form of utterances and deriving implicature are explored by Nigerian stand-up comedians in the creating humorous effects. They use these processes in leading their audience in garden-paths, through which the audience find the comedians performances humorous.

5.2 Employing conflicting assumptions in joke performances

A repeated observation in the incongruity approaches to humour is that humorous utterances contain two opposing propositions and/or assumptions. These propositions are brought together by a common part which makes a shift from one to another possible. RT approaches to humour substantiate the hypothesis of the incongruity principle by emphasising that humorous utterances are endowed with two

opposing interpretations. The two opposing interpretations found in humorous utterances have been given different terms: multiple graded interpretation and single graded interpretation (Yus 2003 and 2004), key assumption and target assumptions (Crucó, 1996), and, hypotheses one and two (Jodłowiec 1991).

Stand-up comedians perform narrations which are embedded with instances of opposing propositional contents. In their presentations, stand-up comedians lead their audience to entertain assumptions that the audience do not previously possess, believe or even query at the point when such assumptions are presented. According to Yus (2004), such assumptions are not evaluated as true or false because the audience members have submitted themselves to be led in a garden-path. Should the audience express an associative or dissociative attitude to the comedians' assumptions, the joke will not be felicitous.

Following Crucó (1996), the conflicting assumptions found in the stand-up narrations are the key assumptions and the target assumptions. The key assumption is an implicated premise and it can be seen as a proposition gotten from the first interpretation of the narration while the target assumption is the strongly implicated premise which is gotten from the second interpretation of the joke (Yus, 2004; Attardo, 2011). In the humor acts model, the first interpretation of the joke is got from the context-in-the-joke. The audience begins by interpreting the joke utterance and the physical cues that are attached to it. They also interpret the activity-in-the-joke and assign referent to the participants-in-the-joke. It is from these meaning making processes carried out on the context-in-the-joke, that the first interpretation of the joke is got. However, the participants make recourse to the context-of-the-joke too in the process of deriving the first interpretation of the joke. The order and manner of performance of jokes by the comedians make their audience to realise the key assumptions in their jokes before the target assumptions. This is because the non-humorous parts of their narrations are always before the humorous part of the joke performances. Before the punchlines in the narrations are given, the audience would have arrived at the key assumption. However, when the stand-up comedians present their punchlines, the audience would realise that the first implicated premise they derive from the joke is untrue, thus, they are made to backtrack and re-interpret the joke performance. This is because the punchline is not congruous with the key assumption. With the re-interpretation, the audience will arrive at the target

assumption- the strongly implicated premise. The target assumption is got, also from the context-in-the-joke, but only after the whole joke text has been re-interpreted by the audience, using background information from the context-of-the-joke. The re-interpretation of the joke text involves both the build-up and punchline, while the first interpretation is limited to the build-up alone. It should be noted that as the stand-up comedians move from one joking story to another, the context-in-the-joke changes while the context-of-the-joke remains the same.

Excerpts 17 and 18 are examples of how stand-up comedians employ conflicting assumptions in their narrations:

[Excerpt 17, Youngest Landlord]

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

You are welcome

My name is Youngest Landlord.

Comedian of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

I've realised, in comedy, is not all about cracking jokes with Pidgin English 5

that actually makes you a professional comedian

you understand. As a comedian, you gat to use! English! in cracking your jokes,

that would make! audience! know that you are a little bit educated

you understand?

Most audience think that we comedian, we are drop out 10

You understand?

That's why I would be the first! comedian! tonight!! that will be cracking my jokes with simple! and correct! English!! (P) (AL, AC)

I think I deserve another round of applause (P) (AC)

<He get one man eh (AL) 15

Benin people wey dey here oba ato kpeye

Na only Benin you go see chemist wey dem dey sell igbo! (AL, AS)

[Translation: There is one man/ Benin people who are here (Benin cultural salutation)/ it is only in Benin that you would find a chemist who sells marijuana]

In Excerpt 17 the comedian begins his narration in English. Considering the language with which he begins his narration and the propositional content of his narration, the implicated premises is that his ability to speak English indicates that he is educated and that performing jokes in English indicates that he is an educated comedian. Conversely, to perform jokes in NP indicates that the comedian is uneducated. These premises make up the key assumptions of the excerpt from Youngest Landlord's narration. Given the context-of-the-joke, it is taken that the

lingua franca of stand-up performance is NP, and that competence in NP, which is a contact and first language in the country, does not demand formal education, unlike English which is mainly acquired in schools. From the narration, the audience could identify that the comedian is implying that he is well-educated and will prove that he needs not to perform in NP before he could make them laugh. This implicated premise draws affiliative responses in Lines 13 and 14.

The implicated premise serves as the key assumption. The key assumption subsequently functions as the background knowledge for the target assumption. In line 15, the comedian code-switches to NP and also in line 16, he code-switches from NP to Edo. His code switching contradicts the implicated premises which he has given in Lines 1- 14. This means that the target assumption of the comedian is that narrating in English, as a stand-up comedian, indicates that the comedian is not professional. Thus, a good and professional comedian is one who is not restricted and limited to a single language.

It is important to comment on the roles of the two languages mentioned by the comedian: the English language and NP. English is the official language of the country and it performs high functions in Nigeria, therefore, it is a language which Nigerians desire to have in their repertoire. NP on the other hand, does not enjoy much prestige as the English language. Even though NP is the language of wider communication in Nigeria, it enjoys a low status and it is met with a negative attitude in official circles. The use of English in Nigeria signals high level of education, intelligence and high social status while the use of NP signals absence of formal education, not so much serious discourse and absence of rigorous intellectual activity.

[Excerpt 18, Youngest Landlord]

I thank God for comedy

My boss, I Go Dye wey package me

Please make una clap for I Go Dye (AC) and Opa Williams and Ali Baba in the building

Clap for them (AC)

Na them package me like this come make me dress like mortuary attendant (AL)

[Trans: My boss, I Go Dye dressed me/ Please clap for I Go Dye and Opa Williams.../ They dressed me with this attire and this makes me look like a mortuary attendant]

In Excerpt 18, the comedian creates the clashing assumptions in the joke around his appearance. Here, he dwells on the social need for presentable outlook, which is drawn from the SCK and SSK. Both the audiences and the comedian are aware that since the comedian will be standing before the audience, he must be neatly and nicely dressed. This knowledge acts as the background context for the retrieval of the key assumptions. To broaden the context which the audience needs to derive the key assumptions, the comedian mentioned two social actors who are well-known in the Nigerian stand-up comedy: I Go Dye (a veteran comedian) and Opa Williams (the producer of NTL). By mentioning these people as his costumers, Youngest Landlord strengthens the implicated premise that he needs to be well-dressed each time he performs. The audience are indirectly informed that these social actors in the comedy business have validated his pattern of dressing before he is allowed to perform in the NTL. The key assumption, therefore, is that Youngest Landlord is well-dressed and therefore presentable to the audience.

Having led his audience in the garden-path of his key assumption, Youngest Landlord presents the target assumption in the last line of Excerpt 18. By comparing his dressing to that of a mortuary attendant, the comedian is implicitly denying the fact that he is well-dressed and this contradicts the already held assumption from the context-in-the-joke. Apart from the propositional context of the comedian's narration, another thing that strengthens the key assumption is that the audience could see that the comedian is actually well-dressed, since he was dressed in a red shirt with a black tie, a sunglasses and black jacket as shown in Plate 5.1 below:

Plate 5.1 Youngest Landlord's mode of dressing



In another instance, a comedian Princewill draws chiefly from the SCK to generate the conflicting assumptions. This is shown in Excerpt 19 below:

[Excerpt 19, Princewill]

I come enter secondary school,

I write WAEC seven times

To the extent say the year wey I no register, WAEC send me result (Intensified AL, AC)

[Trans: I proceeded to secondary school/ I wrote WAEC seven times, to the extent that in the year that I did not register for the examination, WAEC processed and sent a result to me].

In the joke from which the excerpt is taken, the comedian presents himself as a student who consistently fails examination. In the exact, the comedian draws from the shared background knowledge about an examination body, the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) which regulates the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in West Africa. WAEC is seen as a stumbling block to students because of the high rate of examination failure which is usually recorded in the SSCE. It is assumed that people generally fail the examination and therefore they have to re-register for it. In Excerpt 19, the propositional contents of the comedian's utterances suggest the implicated premise that the comedian fails the WAEC examination several times and thus, he repeated the examination seven times. Furthermore, these propositions sum up into the key assumption that if a candidate fails the WAEC examination, s/he has to re-take the examination. This is derived from the participant's SCK. However, the target assumption contradicts this. The target assumption, which is strongly implicated from the key assumption suggests that a student who has repeatedly registered and sat for the WAEC examination needs not to register again for the examination since his name has been recognised by the examination body as a permanent "customer" who will always register for the examination and whom the examination body will always automatically generate a result for.

5.3 Comparing, contrasting and extending corresponding concepts and referring expressions

Since there are more concepts in the human cognition than referring expressions which could be used to describe those concepts, RT proposes that concepts are not just assigned to words and words are not just used to encode concepts, which in-turn would be decoded by language users. In communication, what happens in the encoding or interpretation of concepts is that words are contextually used and their interpretations are context-bound. Words and other expressions are used flexibly to encode the concepts in the speaker's mind.

In stand-up comedy, words and other referring expressions are used in a peculiar way, such that they are endowed with meanings or interpretations which encode the comedians' intentions- eliciting humorous responses. They are also interpreted in a special manner by the audience who find what is humorous in their use so as to fulfil their goal of participating in the stand-up discourse. In the sampled Nigerian stand-up comedy performances, comedians endow concepts and referring expressions in their narration with new meanings or abilities through the process of semantic extension. In this way, such words become indexical signs, which apart from possessing their primary semantic meanings, connote new contextual set of features. The audience too, through processes like reference assignment, disambiguation, enrichment, loosening and/or narrowing, will be able to identify the intended meaning of the comedian. Some instances of this kind of semantic extension in the performances are:

- i. In Funny Bone's performance, the pattern of smoking cigarette could indicate frustration or pleasure. The Whiteman's manner of smoking is an indication of pleasure while Nigerians' manner of smoking is an indication of frustration. The pattern of smoking cigarette adopted by Nigerians indicates that they are frustrated with Nigeria.
- ii. In Bovi's performance, girls could acquire tails, which, like dogs' tails indicate their emotions and attitude such that they would not be able to hide their feelings.

- iii. In Buchi's performance, a corpse could knock a door and talk; a power generator could jog and cross the highway.
- iv. In Gordon's performance, "cell" is different from "prison". When a person gains his/her freedom from "cell", he/she becomes an "ex-convict"; but when a person gains his/her freedom from "prison" he/she becomes a "president".
- v. In Godon's and Seyilaw's performances, rats acquire the human ability to talk, drink beer, and enjoy the pleasure of air conditioners. In Seyilaw's performance, mosquitos acquire the human ability to talk and even abuse and shout insults at humans. They could even write letter, travel, and use gadgets to protect themselves from insecticide.
- vi. In Simcard's performance, "birthday" is what children whose parents are rich "celebrate" while "baider" is what children whose parents are poor "do".
- vii. In Princess' performance, there is a difference between ladies who stay in Lagos Island and ladies who stay in Lagos Mainland. She stays on the Mainland unlike ladies who brag about staying on the Island but are "bloody squatters".
- viii. In Basketmouth's routine, ladies are classified into groups based on their romantic relationship and/or interactions with men, and ladies in each group "worth" different "levels of treatment". First, there is a difference between asking out ladies who can walk by themselves and ladies who are in wheelchairs. The ladies in wheelchairs will have no choice but to listen to what the men have to say, while those who can walk by themselves could walk away. Thus, the "best girls" to be asked out are those in wheelchairs because they will be forced to listen to the men since they cannot easily refuse by walking away.

Second, on men's "spending money on cheek" (buying gifts for ladies), "girls whose packaging no too dey alright" (ladies who are not attractively dressed) should be bought only carbonated drinks or water; some ladies "try more" (quite well dressed and attractive) so they should be bought beer; some ladies "try well well" (very attractively dressed) so they should be bought "champagne"; while

ladies who “no just try at all” should only be danced with. The covert meaning of basketmouth categorisation is in the financial value attached to each category: “girls whose packaging no too dey alright” are ladies who use or wear cheap and common clothings, thus, they are poor and should be bought only cheap drinks like “water” or “soft drinks” like coke; ladies who “try more” are those who use or wear not so expensive but good attires, thus, given the SCK, they are neither poor nor rich, and they are richer than “girls whose packaging no too dey alright”, therefore they should be bought beverages more expensive than “soft drinks” like “beer”; ladies who “try well well” are those ladies, given the SCK, who wear expensive attires and thus spend lavishly on their looks, they are therefore ladies who are very rich and should be lavishly taken care of; and his last category, ladies “who no just try at all” are those who, given the SCK, are very poor or stingy, therefore, cannot use or wear any form of make up because they cannot afford such; men only dance with such ladies and must not buy them “water or soft drinks, beer or champagne”.

Thirdly, he makes a distinction between when a man is caught with an “ugly girl” and with a “fine girl” by his girlfriend. When a lady catches her man with an ugly girl, she gets angry and refers to the girl as “this thing” but when a lady catches her boyfriend with a fine girl, she asks her boyfriend: “why are you doing this to me, am I not good enough for you?”

ix. In Helen Paul’s performance, “packaging” and “branding” refer to the methods or means by which a lady can enhance her physical appearance. “Packaging” and “branding”, therefore, include putting on high-heeled shoes, wigs, tucking pieces of clothes into the brassier and pants to make the breast and buttocks look bigger. Plates 5.2 and 5.3 depict Helen Paul at the start of her performance. In the Plates, she has “packed” and “branded” herself. She is with a wig and a pair of high-heeled shoe. In Plate 5.4 is seen removing pieces of cloths with which she “packaged” her bust while in Plate 5.5 she has removed her wig. By removing the pieces of cloths and

her wig, she demonstrates to the audience what “packaging” and “branding” means.

Plate 5.2 Helen Paul’s appearance on stage I



Plate 5.3 Helen Paul’s appearance on stage II



Plate 5.4 Helen Paul removing her “packaging”



Plate 5.5 Helen Paul without her wig



Whenever stand-up comedians use words in this manner, the words become indexes for their intentions. Stand-up comedians do not just haphazardly extend the semantic features of words, there is always an underlying goal in each instance. For example, in Simcard’s performance, the use of “birthday” as against “baidei” indicates the socio-economic distance between the rich and the poor; adducing human abilities to mosquitoes and rats in Seyilaw’s and Gordon’s performances indicates the difficulties encountered in exterminating these pests; and, generators crossing the

highway in Buchi's routine is indicative of his mockery of inferior goods sold in the Nigerian market.

The semantic extension contradicts the encyclopaedic knowledge, and as a result, the audience find such peculiar use of concepts incongruous. Apart from drawing assumptions from the encyclopaedic knowledge, the comedian banks on the SCK and SLK to use these words in an indexical manner. The comedians draw from their shared experiences with the audience on issues discussed in the joke, for instance, the use of power generators in Nigerian households is very common and in several instances, there is a challenge with purchasing power generators of the standard quality. In the same vein, pests, which are difficult to eradicate, are common household issues in Nigeria.

Furthermore, stand-up comedians do compare and contrast corresponding concepts. It is not in all instances that stand-up comedians adopt semantic extensions, they sometimes could compare and contrast corresponding concepts. They identify concepts and referring expressions from the SCK, SSK and SLK and make them mutually manifest to the audience. From the manifested status of the concepts, the audience would be able to interpret and deduce the goal of the comedian. For instance, in Elenu's routine the terms "Pako" and "Ajebo", which are the NP words for the poor and the rich respectively, are repeatedly used. Elenu brings out the differences between the two, he notes that what the "Pako" eats in the morning, "eba and yesterday's Ogbono flour" makes him/her very strong compared to the "Ajebo" who takes "two slices of bread and a cup of tea". The contextual significance of the comparison is that there is an incongruity in the attributes the comedian assigned to these two classes of people in his narration: "Pako" should be the impoverished person and therefore the weak person, however, the comedian implies that the weak person is the "Ajebo".

The comparison of concepts and referring expressions in stand-up performances works well when comedians dwell on the similarities or differences between identified terms and then rhetorically expand such contrasts and resemblances so as to pragmatically expand the audience cognitive environment. It is the expanded cognitive environment that enables the audience to interpret the concepts in terms of the comedians' goals.

From the foregoing, it can be assumed that in stand-up comedy, concepts and referring expressions acquire peculiar semantic features. These new features make it

possible for the comedians to play on lexical items, the collective background assumptions held on such words and the audience's cognitive process of interpretation. Excerpts 20 and 21 are instances where comedians give concepts extra semantic features.

[Excerpt 20, Seyilaw]

I like the UK men

It's interesting

I no even know say a place like Yaba dey there

You know that place wey them call Primark

Una know the place right? (CL, AL)

Na people wey dem dey go, na them know (CL, AL)

Some people dey back, they just, wetin he dey talk? (CL, intensified AL)

I can understand una situation (CL, AL)

I used to be like you (CL, AL)

[Translation: (Line 3) I don't know that there is a place like Yaba in the UK/ You know the place called Primark/ You all know the place, right?/ It is the people who have been going there that know it/ some people at the back are wondering "what is he saying?/ I can understand your situation/ I used to be like you]

In the extract, the comedian makes two comparisons: the first between two places in different geographical locations, Yaba in Lagos (Nigeria) and Primark in the UK, and the second, between the members of the audience who occupy the back seats at the venue of the performance and himself. In the two instances, the comedian does not give the basis of his comparison or the link between the entities. The link is left covert because the comedian banks on the belief that the audience would be able to derive the link while interpreting the joke. Besides, should the link be given by the comedian, the iteration will lose its surprise effect and thus the humour in it would be lost.

In the first instance, the mention of Yaba brings up the background assumption, a place where cheap and fairly used articles like clothes are sold. It is thus a place where the masses troop to purchase their household items and gadgets. The comedian narrates his experience in the UK, and with his mention of UK, the audience would draw from the SCK and SSK of what is obtainable for a Nigerian in the UK. A major background assumption for deriving the right implicature here is that Nigerians in the UK buy a lot of things and bring such with them while returning from the UK or send such goods to their relatives. The strategy of comparing the corresponding

places, Primark, a clothing store in the UK, and Yaba, a popular area in Lagos where fairly used articles are sold, is to contradict the shared background knowledge that most of the items brought into the country by Nigerians who stay in the UK are new. The contradiction of the assumption will make the audience to see that their previous belief is untrue and that they have been deceived by assuming that anything brought into Nigeria from the UK is new. The aftermath of this contradiction is the recognition of incongruity and the discarding of previously held belief which finally results in laughter in line 5.

In Excerpt 20, for the audience to arrive at the comedian's intended meaning, they have to carry out the RT process of meaning identification called narrowing, since Yaba which serves as the reference point for Primark is also known for several other things, for instance, it is the location for the popular Yaba College of Technology. Through narrowing, the audience would be able to identify Yaba as a place where cheap articles are sold. By juxtaposing Yaba with Primark, they will be able to assign the propositional meaning of a place where new clothing are sold to Primark, its literal encoded meaning and then deduce the strongly implied meaning, a place where cheap or not necessarily new clothes are sold.

Similarly, the statement "Some people dey back" in line 7 is also compared with the person of the comedian in Line 8. It has the encoded concept- people who had come to watch the performance, but its communicated concept or strongly implied premise is that the people in the back seats are poor since they cannot afford the ticket for the front seats. Here, rather than inviting the audience to laugh at the commonly held background assumption, the comedian invites them to laugh at themselves.

Unlike Excerpt 20, Excerpt 21 illustrates an instance of unrelated concepts with their conceptual link given. Here, the comedian does not only make comparison between several entities: perfume, roll-on (deodorant), kunu (a popular local Nigerian drink), Pepper soup, egusi (melon soup), sheltax (a popular brand of insecticide), spray starch and camphor, he also provides a conceptual link to all of the entities: items that give a particular kind of smell that is more pleasant than body odour.

[Excerpt 21, I Go Dye]

Girls, I dey tell girls, girls please
Some of una dey come hug us "Hey I Go Dye"
Spray something Ah Ah, wetin! now! (AL)

How much for pef? Common find something!
 Smell something, spray!, how much? He no dey cost 5
 Smell nice when someone hug you at least
 Ah common ah (AL)
 How much for pef...roll on... smell, in fact smell some thing
 If na kunu oh (AL)
 Pepper soup oh (AL) 10
 Egusi oh (AL)
 Just smell something!, if na sheltox, spray!! (AL)
 If na spray starch spray
 At least smell something smell something
 No dey... you go just hug person you dey smell camphor 15
 Ah no o. (AL)

[Translation: Girls, I do tell girls, girls, please/ some of you dey come to hug us “Hey I Go Dye”/ use something, exclamations, why don’t you want to use something/ how much does a perfume cost? Common, find one/ Wear one, wear one, it is not expensive/ Smell nice when someone hug you at least/exclamation/ How much does a perfume cost...deodorant...wear, in fact just smell something/ if it is kunu... exclamation/ pepper soup... exclamation/ egusi... exclamation/ just smell something, if it is sheltox, use it/ if it is spray starch, spray it on yourself/At least smell something smell something/ Do not just... when you hug someone and the person perceive the smell of camphor]

By emphasizing “smell something” through repetitions in the narration, the comedian loosens and broadens the encoded concepts of these items from just edible, laundry or insect-killing items to include a cologne or body spray. He also suggests his strongly implicated premise, that the ladies that come greeting him have body odour. By comparing these concepts, the comedian makes the audience to realise his strongly implicated premise which made them to give their affiliation for the joke.

5.4 Referring to assumptions from previous discourse(s)

It is observed in RT that utterances are interpreted using assumptions that have already been processed, such that in the interpretation of utterances, interlocutors draw from the assumptions they derived from their previous discourses. New utterances, therefore, contribute to changing the background information from which subsequent utterances would be processed.

The narrations of the comedians in the volumes of NTL under study reveal that Nigerian stand-up comedians construct their jokes by referring to previous discourses.

The comedians' reference to previous discourses can be grouped into two categories: referring to previous discourses outside the immediate context, and, referring to previous discourses in the context of the stand-up comedy.

In the first instance, considering the fact that stand-up comedians build their jokes around common events, actions and interactions, every joke narration would be a reference to previous discourse. However, referring to previous discourse outside the immediate context of stand-up comedy narration is used here to denote that the comedians do make reference to contemporary crucial social issues which could be government policies, actions or inactions of public officers, media events or any other public figure's actions or speech. It is the comedians' reference to this kind of social discourse that brings out their roles and significance as a public joker, rhetorician and cultural anthropologist. In their capacity as rhetorician and cultural anthropologists, stand-up comedians entertain their audience, comment on social issues and persuade the audience to re-examine their previously held perspectives on social issue as well as take a new stance on such issues.

Some of the instances where stand-up comedians refer to previous discourses outside the context of their performances are:

- i. Bovi's and Funny ones' reference to a senator's marriage to a thirteen year old girl
- ii. Bovi's reference to the speculations in the country's entertainment industry about a musician (D-banj) dating an actress (Genevieve).
- iii. I Go Save's reference to the country's Federal Government's rebranding strategy.
- iv. I Go Dye's reference to the federal government amnesty programme for the Niger-Delta militants.
- v. Princess' reference to the traditional hierarchical positioning of husband and wife in the family

In RT terms, at each instance where comedians refer to discourses outside the context of performance, they draw from their shared experiences with the audience. They make manifest assumptions from the SCK and SSK. The audience too, draw from the assumptions that have been made manifest to drive the stand-up comedian's stance on such issues. In some instances, the reference to such previous assumptions is to strengthen the collective belief of the participants, for instance, in i-iv above, the

reference to previous discourse is to mock and criticise the targets. However, in another instance, it is to subvert the shared cultural assumption, for example, Princess' reference to the traditional hierarchical positioning of husbands above wives is to attack the patriarchal family structure and project women as stronger, more intelligent and wiser than men.

In the second instance, comedians refer to earlier utterances which have been mentioned in the venue of the stand-up performance by making reference to the statements and jokes of other comedians who have performed ahead of them. Apart from referring to the performance of other comedians, a comedian may decide to give certain propositions at the start of their performance, and then subsequently build on such propositions in the course of her/his performance. In both cases, stand-up comedians build humour by directing the audience to draw assumptions from already processed discourses in the context-of-the-joke.

The major difference between the two instances of referring to previous utterances is that in the second instance, the comedian refers to the utterances of other comedians, while in the first instance, the comedian refers to the utterances or actions of people who may not be comedians. In the second instance, comedians could refer to a previous performance or the utterance of a compere. The strategy of referring to comedians' previous discourse makes the audience to carry out a backward inference. Yus (2004) describes it as involving the manipulation of the assumptions arising from the audience processing of explicitly communicated information of some previous portions of the performance.

An instance of referring to propositions that have been made in the context-of-the-joke is seen in Excerpt 22.

[Excerpt 22: Youngest Landlord]

Some comedian dem go come stage
 dey say my papa poor, my mama poor
 Is not good, you understand,
 because comedy now he dey take another level, you understand
 So it's not about coming on stage, 5
 start come dey insult your father on stage
 Is very bad, say my papa poor, my papa poor,
 dey make audience happy
 And you dey insult your father (AL)
 No be lie, many comedian wey dem papa no poor, 10

dem they talk am say my papa poor my papa poor
 just to make the audience laugh
 That's why I love myself, I'm so different
 My father was not poor before I started comedy
 My papa no poor, only say na only him get 12 chargers he no get handset (AL) 15
 Na only my papa buy motor the we dem dey build house
 He first buy 4 tyres we no know say na motor he dey buy (AL)
 Before we know he buy boot we no know (AL)
 As we dey look the next two years, nah in he buy engine
 Only he come construct the motor, motor come become the combination of different
 different spare parts 20
 Benz windscreen, trailer tyre (AL) engine na wetin dem dey take grind garri (P) (AL)
 Wetin pain me, the seat na our parlour chair. (intensified AL)

[Translation: some comedians would come on stage/ they would assert that their father
 is poor, their mother is poor/ it is not good, you understand/ because the comedy
 industry has developed to a higher standard/ so comedy performance is not about
 coming on stage/ and insulting your father on stage/ it is very bad to insult your father
 by saying that he is poor/ so as to make the audience happy/ Line 15: my father was
 not poor, only that he had 12 phone chargers but he had no phones/ only my father
 bought a car as if he was building a house / he started by buying four tyres, we did not
 know he was buying a car/ then he bought the boot but we still did not know he was
 buying a car/ after two years, he bought the engine/ he single-handedly constructed a
 car which was a combination of different spare parts of different brands of car/ Benz
 windscreen, trailer tyre, grinding machine engine/ the most annoying thing to me was
 that the car seats were our parlour chairs]

In Excerpt 22, the comedian refers to propositions from other comedians.
 Here, his goal was to distance himself from what could be seen as the trend in
 Nigerian stand-up performances and then realign himself with it so as to create
 humour. In Nigerian stand-up performances comedians deliberately denigrate their
 background. The strategy of denigrating humour forms the crux of lines 1- 12 and it
 serves as the background assumption on which this extract is interpreted by the
 audience. In lines 13 and 14, the comedian's utterances create a cognitive dissonance
 with the background assumptions that Nigerian stand-up comedians are from a poor
 background. With lines 13 and 14, the audience will have to discard the assumption
 that the comedian, Youngest Landlord is also from a poor background. Having made
 the audience to reframe their beliefs about his background, Youngest Landlord, from
 line 15, made utterances whose propositions imply that he is from a poor background.

The implied premise of the comedian's narration, from line 15, creates another cognitive dissonance with the newly introduced assumptions in lines 13-14.

Another aspect of the strategy of referring to comedians' previous discourse identified by Yus (2004) is re-incorporation. Re-incorporation is the reappearance of any part of a joke, apart from the punchline, later on in the stand-up comedian's narrations. To re-incorporate, stand-up comedians introduce a topic at a point in their narration and then later return to it. Another way of achieving re-incorporation is repetition of topics or expression during a performance. With re-incorporation, comedians play with the audience's short term memory in that the audience would still retain certain assumptions from processed jokes, and with the reappearance of parts of the processed jokes, comedians achieve different effects. In addition, re-incorporation reflects the institutional role of the stand-up comedian, in that it shows that comedians have total control over "what to repeat and where this repetition has to appear" (Yus, 2004:324). Excerpt 23 illustrates the use of re-incorporation.

[Excerpt 23, Gordons]

Every! body! for this country now dey talk about change!↘
 Change!↗ Change!↘
 We need change!↘ We need change!↘
 I say↗ wetin!↘
 See Intercontinental Bank dey don change their logo... 5
 See GTB bank dey change their logo...
 Even the way we dey do things! don change!
 Man! no dey chase woman again
 Man! go dey chase! man! now! Hei! (AL)
 But devil wicked! oh 10
 (frowning) As I dey so, me Gordon! I go dey see! somebody like Basketmouth yansh!
 (P)(intensified AL)
 I come dey eye am, baabu!, Holy Ghost [fire!
 Audience: [fire! (P) (intensified AL, AC)

[Translation: Everybody in this country is now talking about change/ change, change/ we need change, we need change/ I wonder what is it about change/ look at Intercontinental Bank which has changed her logo/ look at GTB bank which has changed her logo/ even the ways we carry out our activities have changed/ men are no more interested in a relationship with women/ men are now interested in men/ the devil is indeed wicked/ so as I am, myself Gordon, I would be interested in having sex

with someone like Basketmouth/ I would then make passes at him, no! Holy Ghost fire]

In Excerpt 23, the comedian re-incorporates the word “Change”. At the first mention of “change”, the audience are encouraged to provide an intertextual link with word in the narration (context-in-the-joke) and the word outside the narration (their encyclopaedic knowledge, SLK and SCK). The comedian does not only demand that the audience should intertextually link “change” with their shared experience, he also makes manifest the use of the word in the SCK by mentioning financial institutions that have carried out changes, that is, rebranded their image. With this, the audience would be able to derive the implied propositions from the word, which have positive connotations for the participants-of-the-joke. However, to create a surprise effect in the audience, the comedian uses “change” with a negative notion. From lines 7-12, the audience are invited to reconsider the assumptions they have held from the use of “change” in the previous lines. The audience have to process the term “change” in parts, corresponding their interpretation of change with the different uses the comedian has put it and infer the comedian’s rejection of change in the later part of the utterance.

Similarly, two female comedians whose routines are also selected for analysis also adopt reincorporation as a means of referring to assumptions from previous discourse. In Princess’ routine, she re-incorporates her reference to the pair of tights she wore as means of degrading herself and mocking some participants-in-her-joke. Likewise, in Helen Paul’s routine, she reincorporates the terms “packaging” and “branding” to refer to her attempts at enhancing her beauty so as to attract men. In performance, she criticises the social structure that permits only men to ask out women, she criticises men’s attitude of asking out only beautiful women and then advises women, “women be using wisdom”. She then translates using wisdom as “packaging” and “branding”, which entails the use of wig, high heels, padding clothes in the brassiere and the buttocks. Most of which she demonstrates on the stage by removing her wig, and the padded clothes in her brassiere and buttocks.

5.5 Joking with shared cultural beliefs and representations

A repeated observation in literatures on stand-up comedy is that comedians’ jokes are based on the collective cultural beliefs and representations of the stand-up

comedians and their audiences. Studies like Yus (2004) and Mintz (1985) have noted that stand-up comedians articulate shared cultural beliefs in their performances in order to persuade the audience to change or strengthen their positions about such cultural beliefs.

Excerpt 24 illustrates an instance where comedians joke with the collective beliefs and representations.

[Excerpt 24, Princess]

Oh boy this thing dey scratch me (scratching her thighs and referring to the pair of tight she is wearing)
 I really want to praise those slim girls
 that wear these things
 put your hands together for yourself (AC) 5
 you really try
 that's ok!, you people are stupid!
 skinny crony tooth-pick-looking spaghetti things
 you are the ones giving this country a bad name
 people look us for CNN say Nigeria is suffering
 they did one documentary, I was watching it in London 10
 Nigerians are suffering!
 We! are! not suffering!
 (slapping her chest)This is the correct stature for any Nigerian cheek!
 If you are slimmer than me, you are being tormented by demons (P) (AL)
 You know yourself (P) (AL)
 Oh boy! that's what they call fashion! consciousness! (P) (AL)

In the routine where Excerpt 24 is taken, the comedian consistently identifies specific cultural beliefs in form of stereotypes and other cultural tenets like religious beliefs, marital relationship and dressing. In the extract, she mocks her pattern of dressing, specifically the tight trousers she wore by noting at intervals that it was itching her (line 1 of the Excerpt). By overtly asserting repeatedly that her tight trousers is itching her, she employs the strategy of re-incorporation. In the extract, she denigrates herself as being incapable of wearing tight trousers (probably because she is chubby) and then she explicitly expresses praise for ladies who do wear them (probably because they are slim) (lines 2-5). Her reference to wearing of tight trousers by slim ladies is a strategy which she used to build a background on which the subsequent lines in her narration would be interpreted. Her goal is to criticise the contemporary belief that beautiful and attractive ladies must be slim and which contradicts the traditional belief that plump ladies are beautiful and well taken care of. To fully make manifest her informative intention, she overtly expresses her disgust for slim ladies by tagging them negatively

in lines 6 and 7. From line 8, taking from the shared knowledge of the country's image in the international scene, she overtly asserts that the reason why the international media (represented by CNN in her routine) report that the country's citizenry are suffering is because of the "slim girls" whom she labels "stupid crony tooth-pick-looking spaghetti things". Implicitly, she projected her personal belief that it is because of the "slim girls" that the international media picture the country as a poor one and presented herself as an archetype of a Nigerian who is not suffering by overtly referring to her plump stature as "the correct stature for any Nigerian chick". In addition, she draws from the shared cultural knowledge when she mentions that slim girls "are being tormented by demons".

She also draws from the shared encyclopaedic knowledge. In the extract, she aligns being slim with suffering and deprivation, and being fat with enjoyment and satisfaction. From the participants' experience in the world, they would deduce that deprivation could lead to weight loss while satisfaction could lead to weight gain. Having watched Princess' routine, the audience could use the newly manifested assumption about "slim girls" and fat ones (represented by the comedian herself) to appraise their previously held contemporary cultural assumption on being slim and being fat. Their appraisal will lead them to see that the newly manifested assumption by the comedian contradicts their previously held ones.

In the following sections, the manner in which Nigerian stand-up comedians have manipulated shared cultural beliefs and representations are illustrated and discussed.

5.5.1. Manipulating shared cultural representations

Nigerian stand-up comedians present overt descriptions of issues drawn from the sociocultural stance of Nigerians. In such instances, humour is enhanced by the comedians' ability to foreground cultural issues through their verbal or nonverbal behaviour. Laughter is aroused in the audience because of the way the comedians have presented what they (both the comedians and their audience) have held in esteem, and because they are being reminded of their stance of such sociocultural issue.

An instance of manipulating shared cultural representations is seen in Excerpt 23 where Gordons refers to the change in sexual behaviour in the society. By his reference to homosexuality trend in Nigerian society, the comedian reminds the

audience of the connotations attached to the word “homosexual” and how their society views anyone who is homosexual. In the narration, Gordons presents to the audience their ideological stance on the issue of sexuality and the humour is derived from the fact that the audience are reminded of their cultural representation on what their sexuality should be. In another performance, I Go Dye also makes reference to Nigerians’ naturalisation in foreign countries.

[Excerpt 25, I Go Dye]

Nigeria is our country (p)
 Whether good or bad (p)
 I don tire for Nigeria problem
 And I am very! very! happy! that (p) I’m not a Nigerian (P) (AL)
 I be Togo (P) (AL) 5
 You know say since Obama become president now
 All the Nigerian boys wey dey America, all of dem dey claim say dem bi... (CL, AL)
 All of them na Kenyan now
 “Excuse me I’m Kenyan” (P) (AL)
 No dey deny your country 10
 I’m proud to say I’m! a! Ni!-ge!-ria!

[Translation: I am tired of Nigeria’s problem/ and I am indeed very happy that I am not a Nigerian/ I am a Togese/ you know, since Obama became the president/ Nigerians who live in America started claiming to be.../ all of them are now Kenyans/ excuse me I’m Kenyan/ Stop denying your country/ I am proud to say I’m a Nigerian]

In Excerpt 25, the comedian reminds the audience of the connotations attached to Nigeria- a country with social and political unrest, connotations attached to naturalisation in other countries- leaving Nigerian troubled life behind and enjoying pleasant life, and the connotations attached to coming from the same province with a political office holder. The audience are reminded of a common social stance- the advantages of being connected to a high ranking public office holder. Although he employs conflicting assumptions Lines 4 and 5 (denying that he is a Nigerian because of the social and political turmoil Lines 1-3), what enhances humour is his ability to bring up Nigerians’ attitude and common belief about the situation of their country- their desire to quickly travel out of the country at the slightest chance and then naturalise in their host country.

5.5.2 Distorting collective knowledge of people, social events and situations

Another way by which Nigerian stand-up comedians joke with shared cultural beliefs and representations is by exploiting the collective knowledge of people, their social roles, social events and situations. In this sense, the comedians innovatively distort what is collectively believed to be true and what is assumed to be the normal state of affairs.

A common way by which Nigerian stand-up comedians carry out creative distortion is mimicry, which has been discussed in Chapter Four. Mimicry in the performances can also be explicated using RT. What mimicry acts do in the stand-up performances is that they suggest to the audiences the assumptions which they would not have entertained due to social considerations or inhibitions. When the assumptions are entertained by the audience, they would realise that the comedians' presentation of the target of the mimicry is plausible. Most especially, new assumptions are made communal through mimicry, such that the audience become amazed at the realisation of the fact that they have not entertained the assumptions brought by the mimicry.

The stylization of the comedian during mimicry, however, does not lead immediately to modifying collective representation. It begins with modifying the previously held individual representations. Individuals in the venue of the performance must privately realise the mimicry acts of the comedians by monitoring the comedians' caricatures against their personal background knowledge, what is individually believed as true about the mimicked individual, before any alterations of the background knowledge could be established- accepting that what the comedian is presenting as true. Since the individually held assumptions are products of the shared assumptions, the individuals in the venue of the performance would recognise the mimicry against the background of their collective/cultural representations, what is culturally believed as true. The result of this juxtaposition of beliefs or representations- what is individually believed as true, what is presented by the comedian as true and what is culturally believed as true- is that the audience may see how their previously held beliefs are contrary to the presentations of the comedians. Also, the comedian's role in the mimicry acts is to persuasively present as plausible certain representations that have not been previously entertained by the audience or that have been entertained by the audience and then discarded due to social inhibitions.

The use of multiple representations in the stand-up comedians' performances is made possible because humans have the cognitive ability to have differing representations for the same referent (Yus, 2004). Thus, the comedians' representation is different from the one of the audience and these two may be different from the cultural representation. According to Yus (2004:329) "the relationship between these types of representation may range from a high degree of overlapping to a totally distinct quality, an individual can be aware of what is believed in a culture without supporting these beliefs, and at the other end of the continuum, notice how his own beliefs are strengthened and reinforced by cultural similarity."

An example of the use of distorting collective knowledge apart from mimicry, is found in the performance of Basketmouth. By asking the audience to imagine things they would not have thought of, Basketmouth employs the technique of eliciting acts to distort the audience's encyclopaedia knowledge of human body and activities. He suggests different impossibilities as prospects in his routines whenever he asks the audience to envision that some parts of the body could be used in certain ways.

[Excerpt 26, Basketmouth]

Now when you talk about cheating on women
 You know... guys stop it! and it's hard to stop
 Because, as long as that thing dey our body,
 You must react to other things wey you dey see.
 The only way dem fit stop da thing 5
 Na if (p) dis thing (p) dey detachable (P) (AL)
 Imagine say you fit remove am keep
 Which means no man fit cheat on his girlfriend again
 Maybe you just tell your girlfriend
 "Honey, I am going to Lagos for the weekend, I have a meeting 10
 I will see you on Monday"
 "Okay, have a safe trip"
 "Okay, bye"
 "hey! Hey! Tony come (P) (AL) remove am now (P) (AL)

[Translation: Line 3- Because as long as that thing is in our bodies/ you must react to other things that you see/ the only way it can be stopped/ is if this thing is detachable/ imagine that you can remove and keep it/ which means that no man can cheat on his girlfriend again/ Line 14- hey Tony come, remove it]

In Excerpt 26, Basketmouth begins by presenting a shared knowledge of men cheating on their partners. He also gives a reason to excuse men for cheating on their spouses

(lines 1-4). He uses the shared knowledge as a background for his distortion of the encyclopaedic knowledge of the male sexual organ. In his distortion, he suggests that cheating on spouses could be stopped by detaching the male sexual organ. Since he is aware that this is impossible, he asks the audience to imagine a situation in which the organ becomes detachable such that it can be removed and be kept away.

[Excerpt 27, Basketmouth]

Then imagine say, the one way worse pass
Imagine say (p) you know God dey create people from different way
Imagine say this ear, this meat wey dey here so (pointing to his ear)
You know say this meat no dey do anything for here,
Think am now, wetin this thing dey do? 5
Nothing!, which means this meat come here
because of people wey go get eye problem to wear glasses
na lie? Because wetin you dey use dey hear dey inside the hole
this meat no dey do anything
now imagine say dem create us for different purposes 10
maybe dem come change this ear now,
he come dey here (points to his buttocks) imagine am
I dey imagine how una dey use am listen to my jokes (P) (AL) (CL)

[Trans: Then imagine that, the worse one/ imagine that, you know that God created people in different ways/ imagine that this ear, this outer ear/ you know that this meat does not do anything here/ think about it, what is this thing doing here?/ nothing, which means this meat is here because of people who will have eye problem so as to use it to wear glasses/ is it a lie? Because what you are using to hear is inside the hole/ the meat is not doing anything/ now imagine that we are created for different purposes/ maybe the position of this ear is changed/ it is place here, imagine that/ I am trying to imagine how you will be using it to listen to my jokes]

In Excerpt 27, he distorts the audience's background knowledge about the outer ear by suggesting to the audience that it is meant for holding the frame of eyeglasses. Since it performs no other function in the position where it is situated on the head, he further suggests that it could be moved to another location in the human body. Specifically, he asks the audience to imagine that it is moved to the buttocks, then he demonstrated how it would be used for hearing when it is moved to the buttocks.

Excerpt 27 presents to the audience multiple contradictions of background beliefs. First, after making manifest the belief that God created humans, he contradicts

the encyclopaedic knowledge about the function of the outer-ear by saying that it is only useful for people who wear eyeglasses. Second, having opined that the outer ear is not used for hearing, he suggests that, when it is moved to the buttocks, it could be used for hearing. A major function of the multiple contradictions of background beliefs in this routine is that they repeatedly create incongruities for the audience interpreting the monologues. In the first contradiction of the function of the outer ear, the audience will discover that the comedian's proposition is incongruous to their collective encyclopaedia knowledge of the function of the ear. In the second instance, they will find out that the comedian's proposition about the ear in its "new location" is incongruous with the comedian's proposition about the function of the ear in its "original position".

Exaggeration is another stylization that presents the audience with distortion of background beliefs. When comedians exaggerate, they distort what the audience previously held as true and the audience's cognitive representation of what is being exaggerated. Exaggeration presents the audience with an opposing view of their previously held belief. Excerpt 28 below illustrates the use of exaggeration in a comedian's routine:

[Excerpt 28, Helen Paul]

I even hear say that one daddy, uncle, brother
Hum um um Kanayo O Kanayo (AL)
Ehn ehn play written by Kanayo O Kanayo (AL)
Directed by by Kanayo O Kanayo (AL)
Lead actor by Kanayo O Kanayo (AL) 5
Scriptwriter by Kanayo O Kanayo (AL)
Music by Kanayo O Kanayo (AL)
Daddy why are you selfish? (AL)

Helen Paul employs exaggeration to poke fun at Nigerian actors, particularly, the actor mentioned in the routine, Kanyo O Kanayo who was present at the venue of the stand-up performance. She presents to the audience a key assumption that the Nollywood actors (typified by Kanayo O Kanayo) are highly versatile since an actor could take up any role in the process of movie production, and a conflicting target assumption, that Nollywood actors are so greedy and stingy in that, instead of employing the services of other actors, an individual actor would rather take up all the roles in the process of movie production. In her bid to present the target assumption, Helen Paul exaggerates the versatility of Kanayo O Kanayo by noting that he plays

several roles in a movie (writing the play and script, producing the music, directing the movie and taking the lead actor role). These roles are recoverable from the encyclopaedic knowledge as part of the characters and professionals needed for movie production while exaggerating that an actor played most of the roles of the production crew is informed by the shared situational knowledge of the happenings in the Nigerian movie industry. Her exaggeration also has elements of sarcasm.

5.5.3 Strengthening and/or contradicting stereotypes

One of the means by which stand-up comedians strengthen and/or contradict shared cultural knowledge is by reinforcing and/or contradicting stereotypes. Stereotypes are fixed notions that people have about someone, something or a concept. Gruner (1997), Martin (2007) and Neria (2012) observe that stereotypes are tools which are deployed by humourists to create humour. Alardo and Raskin (1991) suggest that the use of stereotypes in jokes is not necessarily aggressive or offensive. However, Martin (2007) opines that the use of stereotypes in jokes could contribute to the culture of prejudice.

From the foregoing, it is the stance of the users of humour that determines whether the use of stereotypes in a joke is negative or positive. Stand-up comedians may use stereotypes as a tool for expressing their bias or for correcting social vices. Stereotyping works as a source of humour in that comedians make manifest a number of assumptions that are deeply rooted in their stereotypical frame and which may or may not be shared by the audience. Mostly, for the stereotypes to have the intended effects, the audience recognises them to be part of their storage of cultural information. These stereotypes are then subverted or reinforced by the comedians in their narrations.

In the humour acts model, participants-in-the-jokes function as the cue which suggests to the audience what stereotypes are being manifested in the narration. When stand-up comedians mention their butts and assign actions and utterances to them, their audience will derive the stereotypical beliefs that are associated with the butts.

Adetunji (2013) observes that Nigerian stand-up comedians make use of stereotypes to categorise all sorts of people. Specifically, he identifies two stereotypes, gender and ethnic stereotypes. In addition, the Nigerian stand-up comedians make use

of sexual stereotypes and self-deprecating stereotypes. Excerpts 29 and 30 below illustrate the use of stereotypes in the Nigerian stand-up comedy.

[Excerpt 29, Lepacious Bose]

(Posing and catwalking across the stage)

Hello Calabar (AC, AS)

What's up?

I am feeling fresh tonight (AC, AS)

Shey I get solid guys? (AC, AS)

Last valentine, only me, six guys

No, but, because to fit handle me, you need like six guys

Two for one hand, two for the other hand,

Two for front, then one person go dey open the manual (AL, AC, AS)

In analysing the use of stereotype in Excerpt 29, it is important to begin with the physical feature of the comedian whose performance serves as the source of the excerpt. Lepacious Bose is an overweight female comedian, and as part of her comic style, she does make joke out of her body features. In Excerpt 29, she draws from the stereotypical assumptions about fat women. The main assumption here has to do with the stereotype that fat women are difficult to satisfy sexually. Her physical acts on the stage, cat-walking across the stage makes manifest assumptions related to sexual activity. Also, her utterances, "I am feeling fresh tonight, shey I get solid guys..." reinforce the sexually related assumptions. These assumptions strengthen the stereotypical belief that it is difficult to sexually satisfy fat women. The audience find the joke funny because they realise that their stereotypes about fat women are reinforced in the joke.

[Excerpt 30, I Ch Dye]

No matter the name wey you call yourself,

If you no hustle (p) you go broke (P) (AL)

I dey see people wey dem dey call success

They are failure (P) (Intensified AL)

Na only name dem take dey success

Dey just shake you, "I'm success"

[Translation: no matter the name you call yourself/ if you don't work hard, you will be poor/I have seen people who are called success/ they are failures/ it is only in their names that they are success/ they only greet you and say "I'm Success"]

Unlike Excerpt 29 where there is an instance of strengthening stereotypical belief, Excerpt 30 presents an instance where the comedian narration contradicts the stereotypical beliefs attached to the Nigerian onomastic practices. Nigerians assume that it is the names they bear that determine their level of success in life. In the text, the comedian, having made manifest the cultural stereotype attached to names, introduces another cultural belief which underlies how human efforts and labours are viewed. His strategy is to contradict the collective belief about names – that the name of an individual could enhance the rate and level of the individual's success. The audience are presented with the illogicality of their cultural assumption which is subverted by the comedian when he notes in line 2 that it is hard work that leads to success and in lines 3-6 that there are people who are christened Success, but in reality, are actually failures. The subversions of cultural stereotypes are likely to easily attract the audience attention, creating an instantaneous cognitive assessment of stereotypes. This is done in lines 1 and 2. The remaining lines present the audience with the explanation of why the comedian has challenged the stereotype on names. By contradicting the collective stereotype about names, the comedian suggests a new view on the practice of naming.

5.5.4 Projecting personal beliefs

Three kinds of representations come into play in the stand-up comedy interactions: the audience representations, the comedians' representations and their collective or cultural representations. The categorisation of different representations helps to identify how the comedians present beliefs to the audience which are different from the audience mental representations and from the collective representations. For instance, while foregrounding shared stereotypes, the comedians may present to the audience an archetype which is different from the audience representation.

To achieve the projection of their personal beliefs, the comedians draw from the unequal authority between themselves and the audience. The institutionalised structure of stand-up comedy interaction has bequeathed the comedian with power to control the discourse. The comedians determine the contents of the interaction, the topics of their narrations, the butt of their jokes and the manner of their presentation. They also determine what is standard or unusual. The institutionalised authority of the comedians enables them to project what they take to be the archetypal image in their

narrations, regardless of what the audience believe or what is taken as the standard in the SCK. Greenbuam (1999) supports this view by noting that stand-up comedians are ritual dismantlers of societal norms and political dictums.

The relevance of projecting personal beliefs to eliciting humour is seen in the mutually manifested status that comedians' personal beliefs acquire in the performance. Projecting personal beliefs and representations result in creating humour when the audience view the comedians' representations against their background knowledge. When the audience receive the comedians' representations in the jokes, the audience may find the representations in the joke contradictory to what is obtainable in their cultural knowledge, or, they may find out that it strengthens their own personal beliefs. Comedians may make their representations contradict background assumptions so as to make other representations look illogical to the audience. The realisation of illogicality by the audience is usually greeted with laughter.

[Excerpt 31, I Go Dye]

I dey always tell people, money!
 I dey people this word every time!
 anybody wey tell you say money! is not every thing
 beat! am!, before I dey say slap am
 but now just use koboko!, whip!! am!! 5
 without money! there is no true love.
 Even for my mama to fall in love with my papa for village,
 na small thing wey my papa get
 make my mama to quick gree.
 Village love, just clear grass (gesticulates cutting of grass with cutlass) 10
 my mama just beg my papa "I beg, help me with your cutlass"
 he just gave my mama
 my papa just pose (p)(comedian smiles while posing) say "I love you"
 she just gree
 if to say my papa no get cutlass, no love 15
 but now no be cutlass oh
 Nigerian girls need money, ice cream and recharge cards.

[Translation: I always tell people that money/ I tell people this every time/ anybody who tells you that money is not everything/ beat the person, I used to tell people to slap the person/ but now I say use a whip on the person/ without money there is no true love/ even before my mother fell in love with my father in our village/ it was the little thing which my father had/ that attracted my mother to my father/ village love:

clearing a bush/ my mother requested for my fathers' cutlass: please, lend me your cutlass/ he gave it to my mother/ my father then posed and said to my mother, I love you/ she agreed/ if my father had no cutlass, there would be no love/ but now, it is no more cutlass/ Nigerian ladies need money, ice cream and recharge cards]

In Excerpt 31, I Go Dye presents the audience with his representational stance on money, which is his belief that “money is everything”. The comedian belief is so strong that he persuades the audience to “beat” anyone who holds a contrary view. The comedian’s representational stance on money is also connected with another belief which he presents in the narration: “without money there is no true love”. While presenting these beliefs, the comedian exemplifies with an archetype of how a man’s wealth attracts the attention of women by narrating his father’s experience with his mother (lines 7-15). The comedian’s archetype represents his belief on the interconnection of a man’s wealth and his marital relationship. The comedian’s belief is an individual belief which contradicts the collective belief on the interconnectedness of wealth and love, which is, wealth is not a pre-condition for true love. Since this is the popularly-held belief by the audience, the comedian has to reinforce his own belief with an archetype and this he does through his emphasis in lines 3-6, where he advises that people with the cultural belief should be beaten. It is possible that part of the audience may hold the comedian’s beliefs as their own individual belief; nonetheless, all participants in the performance are aware of the collective cultural beliefs.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, the humour strategies of Nigerian stand-up comedians have been identified and analysed. The strategies of the comedians are embedded in their jokes. The next chapter discusses the humour acts in the sampled performances.

CHAPTER SIX

HUMOUR ACTS IN THE SELECTED NIGERIAN STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the humour strategies adopted by Nigerian stand-up comedians were examined. This chapter is dedicated to analysing the humour acts found in their performances.

6.2 Analysis of humour acts

6.2.1 Commencement acts in stand-up comedy performances

Stand-up comedians do not just suddenly begin their joking stories during their performances, they commence their performances by presenting utterances with which they indicate the beginning of their performances and joking stories. In the context-of-the-joke, such contextualisation cues are commencement acts. A commencement act, therefore, can be defined as a contextualisation cue which is adopted by a stand-up comedian to indicate to her/his audience that s/he is about to begin her/his performance or to say a joke. Such contextualisation cues are termed commencement acts because they are used by comedians to indicate the start of stand-up comedy performances and the start of a joke narration.

Commencement acts play significant roles in stand-up comedy narrations. Rhetorically, commencement acts register the presence of the comedians and acknowledge the attention of the audience. Textually, they indicate the beginning of a joking sequence, and pragmatically, they indicate the communicative intention of stand-up comedians. They also suggest and establish that the background beliefs are communal in the venues of stand-up performances.

Commencement acts are also used to establish the institutional relationship between the comedians and their audience. Since they are the first cues which result from the contact of the participants-of-the joke, they establish the institutional roles of the comedians as the initiators of the interaction and that of the audience as the recipients in the interactions. Therefore, they are used to negotiate the institutional identity of stand-up comedians as the participants endowed with superior

conversational role and authority to control the interaction. In addition, commencement acts are used by stand-up comedians to invite the audience to participate actively in the interaction and affirm the audience's solidarity for the stand-up comedians' role.

From the sampled routines, commencement act is instantiated by different techniques: greetings at the start of the performance, introduction at the start of the performance, referring to previous discourse and the use of discourse connectives, situation-bound utterance or formulaic expression. These are illustrated with Excerpts 32-36

[Excerpt 32, Youngest Landlord]

Good evening ladies and gentlemen
You are welcome
My name is youngest landlord
Comedian of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Excerpt 32 is taken at the start of Youngest Landlord's routine. The comedian overtly greets the audience. In so doing, he establishes that his performance has begun by foregrounding his personality through the act of greeting the audience and mentioning his stage name.

[Excerpt 33, Federation Mallam]

(Using Hausa accent)
Please, I will like to introduce myself
My names are Federation Mallamu aka Anointed Aboki
Walahi, the only mallam that attend the Animal Grammar School for Kano
Where I get my several kinds of degrees
HND, NNPC, OPC, PDP, AIT, HIV (AL)

Like Excerpt 32, Excerpt 33 is taken at the beginning of the comedian's performance. In Excerpt 33, the comedian gives an introduction of himself by mentioning his stage name. Specifically, he describes himself by listing the degrees he claims to possess. These degrees are not actual degrees, however, he uses acronyms which the audience are familiar with in order to lampoon the way Nigerians like to use several appellations to indicate their social status. The comedian's goal here is to strengthen his comic image. His introduction and description of himself is to enhance the common ground between himself and the audience, as the addresser and addressee

in the stand-up interaction. In stand-up performances, greetings and introductions establish the institutional relationship between the comedian and the audience.

[Excerpt 34, Bovi]

You know, normally, if I dey see girls, dey like to hang around guys
Even some guys dey hussle girls to get something

[Translation: You know, normally, I do see girls who like to hang around men/Even some men love to hang around girls for selfish reasons]

[Excerpt 35, Seyilaw]

No, on a more serious note
For the first time for my life
I see where cripple and stammerer dem dey argue about football

[Translation: Line 3- I saw where a cripple and a stammerer were arguing about football]

In Excerpt 34 there is the use of a discourse connective, “you know, normally” (line 1), while in Excerpt 35, a situation bound utterance (SBU), “No” (line 1) is used, to indicate the start of the narration of a new joke. The functions of these linguistic cues are textual, in that they are used by the comedians to delineate their performances into bits of different jokes. In Excerpt 34, the discourse connective links the previous joke in the narration to the joke that is about to be said by the comedian. In Excerpt 35, the word “No” is a SBU because, here, it has a situation bound interpretation. “No” primarily is a marker of negation and/or denial, however, it is used in the narration to indicate the comedians attitude to the joke he is about to narrate. “No”, in the extract is synonymous with “unbelievable”, and its use helps the comedian to frame the audience into a garden-path that is needed for the surprise effect for humour. These cues are instances where commencement act does not indicate the start of a performance, since they indicate the delineation of the routine into different jokes.

[Excerpt 36, I Go Dye]

Make God let me fit crack good things make una laugh oh (P) (AL)
All the ones wey dey don hype person like this
Im come fuck-up (P) (AL)
Me myself go dey come dey vex for basketmouth
He go dey call person like say if he just dey talk,
You go just die for laugh

[Translation: I pray God to help me to crack good jokes to make you laugh/ now that someone has been hyped up/ and then one does not meet up/ I myself will become angry with Basketmouth/ for introducing me as if when I am talking/ you will die as result of laughing]

In Excerpt 36, the comedian initiates his commencement act by referring to a previous discourse in the context of the performance. He refers to the proposition expressed by the stand-up comedian who has functioned as the compere and has just introduced him to the audience (line 5). Here, he makes manifest background assumptions, that the audience are gathered to be entertained by his monologues (line 1), and that he as a comedian, will present narrations which will make the audience to laugh (lines 5-6). His goal, by making reference to the proposition of the compere, is to affirm an already introduced assumption in the context of the performance, and thereby, build on the assumption while he narrates his joke. The comedian also suggests in his initiation of the commencement act, the institutional roles of the participants in the interaction. He notes that as a comedian, his task in the interaction is to say funny things to the audience (lines 1 and 5), while the task of the audience is to laugh at the monologues he will present to them (lines 1 and 6). What suggests the comedian's reference to the institutionalised identities of the participants is his use of the second person plural which refers to the audience (una and you), and, the first person singular pronoun (me) with which he refers to himself.

In all these instances of initiating the commencement act, the comedians affirm for themselves their role in the interaction (the participant who initiates and sustains the talk by presenting succession of funny stories). They also affirm the role of the audience (the participant whose role is to listen). By not replying the instances of greeting and reciprocating the instances of introduction (which is expected in other genres of communication), the audience affirm to the comedian their readiness to play their institutionalised role in the interaction. The participants, therefore, affirm solidarity for each other's roles through the initiation of this act.

6.2.2 Informing acts in stand-up comedy performances

Informing acts occur whenever stand-up comedians frame themselves as one of the participants-in-the-joke. In some instances, they could frame themselves as the target of their narration. Informing acts present single voiced utterances and actions to

the audience. In informing acts, the audience are able to identify the stand-ups as the characters that are performing the actions in the joking stories. For instance, Princewill narrates his experience in primary and secondary schools respectively. He describes himself as a dullard who persistently failed the class exercises and the SSCE. The rhetorical significance of informing acts is that the audience are likely to view the jokes as personal and real-life experiences of the stand-up comedians. With this act, stand-ups establish not just a persona of reporting an event or action but a persona narrating what s/he has experienced. Informing acts thus place the stand-ups in an advantageous and authorised position as personas who speak from experienced angles.

Stand-up comedians use informing acts to identify a particular feature or character trait in themselves which they would then eulogise or disparage. Informing acts can therefore be grouped into two categories: self-praising and self-denigrating/disparaging acts. In the first instance, stand-ups eulogise themselves while in the second instance, they denigrate themselves. Stand-ups' self-denigrating acts have been well-mentioned in literature but their self-praising acts are rarely mentioned. Usually, in self-praising acts, stand-ups narrate the manner in which they have tactically coped with situations and/or manipulate events to their advantages. Self-denigrating acts, on the other hand, identify negative traits and the impoverished state of the stand-ups.

Although self-praising acts are different from self-denigrating acts, their functions are similar. Both are forms of stand-up comedians' preconceived self-presentation and performance politics. In self-praising acts, comedians enhance their positive face as members of the society as well as their positive face as performers. With self-denigrating acts, they threaten their positive face. Threatening of their positive face is pragmatic in that they use it to present themselves as defective in some ways, and below socially acceptable standard, such that the audience would have no other choice than to pity their weakness, exempt them from socially accepted behaviour and through affiliation celebrate their sincerity in dealing with their shortcomings. Informing acts, in Norrick (2000) terms, enhance the reputation of the comedians, enhance their personal image through a covert prestige, and elicit understanding and commiseration from the audience. In the next two sections, denigrating and self-praising acts are examined.

6.2.2.1 Denigrating acts in stand-up comedy performances

Denigrating act has to do with the comedians' presentation of themselves and sociocultural background. To initiate denigrating acts, stand-up comedians present themselves and who/whatever is related to them in a dishonourable manner. Denigrating acts foreground stand-up comedians as disreputable or despicable.

Denigrating acts are acts in which comedians present themselves as the butt of their jokes. The use of denigrating acts in stand-up comedy is not peculiar to Nigerian stand-up comedians. It seems that one of the reasons why it is prevalent in stand-up performances across the world is that comedians have discovered that one of the simplest strategies of initiating humour in their audience is to present themselves in a pitiable state, less than their audience. Several stand-up comedians attest to the use of this act in stand-up performances. For instance, Jerry Seinfeld, who is described by Schwarz (2010:24) "as one of the world's best stand-up comedians ever" is quoted in *The Comedy Bible* as saying, "normal people express their sense of humour by memorizing jokes; comics transform their life experience into punch line... We funny people are a strange sort. We like laughs, even at our own expense. We funny people were the cave people who probably slipped on the banana peel just because we are certain that it would get a laugh" (Carte, 2001: 34).

The reason why denigrating acts initiate humour and generate laughter in stand-up comedy performance can be explained from two philosophical approaches to humour: the incongruity and the superiority approaches. In the incongruity sense, the denigrating acts of the comedians present the audience with expressions and actions that are incongruous with SCK and with audience expectation from the stand-ups. In the superiority theory sense, the stand-up comedians deliberately denigrate themselves so that their audience can view them as socially incapacitated and then laugh at them.

Through the denigrating acts, the comedians defame, vilify and present themselves as inferior to the members of the audience. The stand-up comedians use denigrating acts to deemphasise their interactional positioning. Like Adetunji (2013) observes, denigrating acts are used by comedians to tell the audience that they, the comedians, are inferior to them, the audience. Denigrating acts indicate to the audience that the comedians are marginal in terms of behaviour and social status. The audience can recognise the comedians through their denigrating acts as reflecting the natural trends, though not overtly socially acceptable, in their collective culture.

Some common themes of denigrating acts found in the sampled performances are:

- i. The comedians present themselves and their families as paupers; for instance, Youngest Landlord, Gordons, Seyilaw and Mc Shakara;
- ii. Youngest Landlord presents himself as not capable of engaging in an intelligent career; he further presents stand-up comedy as an irrational career;
- iii. Princewill presents himself as academically stupid. He asserts that he repeatedly failed WAEC;
- iv. Bovi presents himself as a victim of manipulative lady in a relationship; and
- v. Princess presents herself as incapable of keeping current fashion trends.

Excerpts 37 and 38 below exemplify the use of denigrating acts in Nigerian stand-up performances:

[Excerpt 37, Gordons]

Now! Anywhere you see po!-ver!-ty:
 Jump am pass! (P)(AL)
 We were so poor! Even poor people dey call us poor (P)(AL)
 I remember when!, I wan come marry,
 I come go meet my father-in-law 5
 {...}quote bibl When the guy see my outlook
 Na him he hulla
 “Are you he that is to marry my daughter or should we wait for another?” (AL)
 Na him I tell am say “I am he” (AL)
 Na him he say “who is your father” 10
 I say biological or spiritual (p)
 The guy say “biological”
 I say “na only spiritual I get” (P)(AL)
 Why? Because when the guy see! me!
 He say he no trust my future (P)(AL) 15
 Now they don first give me info say men!
 My papa like bankers! oh!
 Dress! Wear coat! He go like you
 O!-mọ! Me wey I never wear coat before
 I go! Okirika joint go collect coat! 20
 When I see myself in mirror (starts looking at himself)

See coat! He be like bed sheet
 Now I dress go meet my in-law
 As soon as he see me, he say
 “oh, nice, nice, nice, you must be a banker”
 I say (nodding) “yes, yes”
 He say “okay, which of the banks?” (p)
 I say “Savannah State” (P) (AL)
 He say “is that a new bank?”
 I say “yes, Savannah merge with All States” (P) (AL, AC)
 Oh boy, na hin the guy tell me say
 “I no! get! Pikin! wey I go give somebody like you”

25

30

[Now, anyway you see poverty/ run from it/ we were so poor that the poor people were calling us poor/ I remember when I wanted to get married/ I went to meet my father-in-law/ he quoted the bible. When he saw my appearance/ he then yelled/ “are you he that is to marry my daughter or should we wait for another”/ then I replied, “I am he”/ then he asked me, “who is your father”/ I asked if he meant biological or spiritual father/ the man said biological/ I replied that it is only spiritual father that I had/ why, because when the man saw me/ he said he thought that my future was not bright/ I had been told that/ my father-in-law liked bankers/ I was told that if I put on suit when I met him for the first time, he would like me/ I, that had never worn suit before/ I went to where fairly used clothes were sold to buy one/ when I looked at myself in the mirror/ the suit looked like a bedspread on me/ After I was dressed and I went to meet my father-in-law/ as soon as he saw me, he said/ oh, nice, nice, nice, you must be a banker/ I replied, yes, yes/ he then asked which of the banks/ I said Savannah State/ he asked if that was a new bank/ I said yes, that Savannah merged with All States/ oh boy, the man told me that/ he had no child to give to someone like me]

In Excerpt 37, Gordons narrates his experience when he went to meet his prospective father-in-law. In Line 3, he overtly asserts to the audience that his family is abjectly poor. With his proposition, he makes mutually manifest his financial state to the audience. The premise from this proposition becomes the background with which the other part of his monologue in the excerpt is interpreted. Gordons subsequently reinforces this premise in the narration: in Line 13 where he denies having a biological father because of his father’s poor state, and, in Line 20 where he avers that he got a coat from a market where used clothes are resold to members of the

public (Okirika joint). Gordons also draws a sociocultural belief from the SCK- the belief that wealth is a prerequisite for finding a wife, as another basis for his humour. He denigrates himself in these aspects- family background, socioeconomic state and physical appearance.

[Excerpt 38, Princewill]

When I dey school, especially primary school, I fail eh
To the extent say one day, dem bring classwork, I fail am
dem bring correction, I still fail am (P) (intensified AL, AC)
hold it! I never finish.

The thing worry me

I come enter secondary school, I write WAEC seven times

To the extent say the year I no register, WAEC send me result (P) (intensified AL, AC)

[Translation: When I was in school, especially primary school, I failed terribly/ to the extent that I failed the classwork given to us/ and when the correction was given, I still failed it too/ Wait a minute. I have not finished/ the rate of my failure worried me/ then I entered secondary school, I wrote WAEC seven times/ to the extent that in the year which I did not register, WAEC sent me result]

In Excerpt 38, Princewill presents himself as someone who is intellectually handicapped. He presents himself as someone with a very low intelligence quotient, who fails class tasks and still cannot write out accurately the teacher's solution to the tasks. Also, in line 6-7, the comedian presents himself as failing repeatedly the Senior School Certificate Examination in all of the seven attempts he made at writing the examination. It is important to comment that Princewill employs exaggeration in this act. Exaggeration is seen when he asserts that he failed the correction to class assignments. The exaggeration contradicts the audience's knowledge of what is obtainable in a classroom setting, in that, corrections to class assignments are not graded. Likewise, he exaggerates when he asserts that WAEC sent a result to him the year he did not register for the examination. His propositions about WAEC activate in the audience, a communal belief that WAEC examinations are difficult to pass. Furthermore, his propositions about the examination body contradict what the audience know that the examination body is capable of doing- generating result for a student who did not register for an examination.

These instances of denigrating acts elicit laughter because they present the comedians to the audience as inferior. The audience see that the stand-up comedian's life is framed with unpalatable experiences. The audience are thus placed in a superior position where they can make fun of and laugh at the stand-up comedians. In the incongruity sense, the audience would find that the comedians' propositions contradict what exists in their society. The contradiction would be then processed against the backdrop of the comedians' communicative intention. It is from juxtaposing the communicative intention and contradiction that the audience would resolve the incongruities in the joking stories.

6.2.2.2 Self-praising acts in stand-up comedy performances

The second form of informing acts is the self-praising act. Self-praising acts occur in instances where stand-up comedians present themselves as one of the participants-in-the-joke, but rather than denigrate themselves, they choose to commend themselves. A self-praising act is one in which a stand-up comedian celebrates his/her prowess or qualities. In self-praising acts, stand-up comedians do not make themselves the butt of the joke, rather, they foreground themselves, their utterances or actions in a positive light. Whatever is foregrounded by comedians may not be socially acceptable, but the way it is presented and how stand-up comedians present themselves as dealing with it will make the audience to see the stand-up comedians as tactical individuals.

Unlike denigrating acts which present stand-up comedians as below socially acceptable standard, self-praising acts present stand-up comedians as individuals above social average. When stand-up comedians instantiate self-praising acts, the audiences celebrate the comedians' abilities through their affiliative responses. The audience see the comedians as individuals who do what should be done at the right time.

Excerpts 39-41 below illustrate self-praising acts in the Nigerian stand-up comedy performances:

[Excerpt 39, Seyilaw]

After about a week in the UK,
I come dey dey bored, they are just so organised
You know, everything, their management level

Everything is so organised, I come dey miss Lagos
 I miss! the lawlessness! in Lagos men! 5
 As I come back, only me nah in stop for Oojota!
 Run cross road, KAI run! follow me! (AL)
 As the guy hold me, na him I tell him say “oga wetin I do?”
 He say “you run cross road”
 I say “you nko?” (AL) 10
 Na the two of us break the law make we just dey (P) (Intensified AL, AC)

[Translation: Line 2- I began to feel bored/Line 4- I began to miss Lagos/Line 6- as I returned, I deliberately stopped at Oojota,/I ran across the high way, traffic control officer ran after me/ as the official arrested me, I asked him what my offense was/ he said you ran, crossing the high way/ I asked him what about you it was the two of us that broke the law, let it just be]

In Excerpt 39, Seyilaw presents to the audience with a situation that the audience are familiar with, breaking the country’s highway codes. He begins by sharing his experience in the UK, a place where commuters adhere to the law. He complains that such an environment bores him because everything is orderly (lines 1-5). The first five lines of the extract place the audience in an interpretive frame; they await the reason why the comedian has said he was tired of a well organised society and why he was missing a lawless one. In line 6, the comedian makes manifest a defiant trait in him, by saying that he deliberately crossed the high-way in a place where such an act is not allowed. He disobeyed the traffic code- a trait which the audience are familiar with. The defiant trait, disobedience to traffic code, thus acquires an ostensive status and serves as the frame through which the surprise effect of the joke is derived.

From lines 6-9 the comedian, through his propositions, present an implicated premise that he would definitely be punished for violating a traffic law. However, in line 10 he presents a proposition from which the strongly implicated premise, the law enforcement agent who arrested him cannot punish him because he also violated the same law by running after him, is derived. The proposition in line 11 and its strongly implicated premise places the audience in shock recognition of incongruity. However, because of the initially foregrounded trait, defiance to traffic rules and the common attendant social reactions to it, which the members of the audience easily relate to as part of the SCK, the audiences find the comedian’s proposition in line 11 congruous to the situations that have been given in lines 6-9. They recognise that it is a socially

coherent act in the context of their country. Another important belief from the SCK is the knowledge of highhandedness of Lagos state traffic officers (signified by KAI, in line 7). Given this, the audience will assume that Seyilaw would rather beg or attempt to bribe the officer that arrested him. His choice of accusing the officer of the same crime does not fulfil the garden-path expectation of the audience. Their laughter and applause is an indication that they do not only enjoy the joke, but also they celebrate Seyilaw's boldness in challenging the traffic officer who arrested him.

[Extract 40, Seyilaw]

This kind blackface, woman no too dey like us
 But we are promising (P) (AL)
 You know people like us that are burnt offering,
 God get reason (p)
 If you fair!, you yellow, we give you belle, you born chocolate 5

[Translation: this kind black face, women do not like us/ Line 4- God has a reason for it/ If you are fair, you are yellow, we impregnate you, you will give birth to chocolate]

Seyilaw's intention in Extract 40 is to praise his physical attribute. He foregrounds his complexion and thereafter, makes manifest stereotypical beliefs attached to being black. Rather than using the stereotype as a source of negative humour, his goal is to show to the audience that the foregrounded feature has a positive side by foregrounding that when a black-skinned man engages in a reproductive relationship with a fair-skinned lady, the outcome of their coupling is a baby with an attractive skin.

[Extract 41, Gordons]

When I hear for TV, people talk about economic recession
 Because of economic recession,
 could you believe a man brought out his family
 since his 5 kids!, his wife! and himself!
 God punish devil! 5
 That kind! thing! cannot happen! for Naija! (p)
 Even Igbo man wey dey soak garri he get plan (P) (AL)
 What do you mean about, we were born in recession (p),
 We progress in recession (P) (AL)
 We are making money in recession (P) (AL, AC) 10

[Translation: when I heard people talking on TV about economic recession/Line 5- may God punish the devil/ such a thing cannot happen in Nigeria/ Even the Igbo man who soaks gari has a plan]

Unlike Seyilaw who focuses on himself, Gordons uses his self-praising act to involve all the participants in his routine. In Excerpt 41, he emphasises the ruggedness of the Nigerian spirit. He begins with economic recession and its effects on people. By mentioning what he learnt about the effects of the recession on television, he makes manifest an implicated premise- the man who killed his family and then himself because of the recession is not resilient and tough. This serves as a background for the target assumption. With the mention of Nigeria, he switches the audience's focus to their country, thus, he activates a mutual assumption about the country, the ruggedness of Nigerians. The mention of "Igbo man" and his act of "soaking gari" is to make overt an implicit assumption that is needed for deriving humour from the joke. The implicit assumption is that Nigerians are very tough and resilient, and therefore, they can survive under any condition. In lines 5-10, he gives out the key assumption that regardless of the condition, with the resilience spirit, Nigerians can survive and succeed. The comedian's use of "we" in Excerpt 41 is to involve the audience. The "we" is a marker of collectiveness (Leech, 1983). According to Ogunsiyi (2007), the collective pronoun "we" is used for solidarising and construing identity. With it, he emphasises that both the audience and himself are members of the Nigerian society who "were born in recession, progress in recession and are making money in recession." This enhances the homogeneous status of the audience and the common ground between the comedian and the audience. The deliberate inclusion of the audience in the narration by the use of *we*, helps the audience to see that feature being commended in the comedians' monologue is also possessed by them. This realisation leads the audience to give an intensified affiliative response, which is made up of intensified laughter and applause.

6.2.3 Eliciting acts in stand-up comedy performances

Eliciting acts are requests and interrogative structures directed to the audience in a performance. Nonverbal cues such as pauses and pointing during the narration of jokes are also instances of eliciting acts. An eliciting act is used by a stand-up comedian to derive the audience opinion. It is also used by stand-up comedians to

request a particular action from the audience, say a clap or any other affiliative reaction. Sometimes too, comedians use this act to kick-off an interaction with any member of the audience whom they have singled out for the purpose.

In deriving audience opinions, eliciting acts perform the following pragmatic functions:

- i. They are used for affirming that the stand-up comedians' propositions belong to or are derived from shared background assumptions.
- ii. They are used for affirming the significance of the audience during a performance.
- iii. They are used for affirming that the audience's expectations of humorous effects and entertainment are fulfilled.
- iv. They are used to enhance humorousness of stand-ups joking stories. Eliciting acts may suggest for the audience what exactly stand-up comedians want to joke on, or they may leave the audience bewildered about how stand-up comedians will make a joke out of the subject of the eliciting act.

The audience are very important in any stand-up performance. Without them, there will be no contextual basis for the narration of jokes. Eliciting acts engage the audience in a way that makes them to leave their traditional role of passive participants to take a more active role in which they make contributions to the performance. When the audience responds to interrogatives or in pauses when they give (dis)affiliative responses, their contributions become a vital part of stand-up interaction. Audience "responses and actions are seen to help feed a performance which is as reactive as it is active" (Harbidge, 2011:129). Eliciting acts provide intersection through which the dialogic nature of stand-up performance is achieved.

The use of interrogative structures and forms is a principal way through which the stand-up comedians initiate eliciting acts. A distinction must be made between interrogatives which are directed to participants-in-the-joke and interrogatives which are directed to participants-of-the-joke. In the first, comedians use the techniques of voicing and adduce such interrogatives to participants-in-the-joke and they give responses to such interrogatives by themselves. While in the second, comedians need not to adopt the technique of voice, they simply direct interrogatives to the audience. The audience recognise interrogatives directed to them through the use of

contextualisation cues like gesture (comedians may point to the audience), and pause (should comedians direct interrogatives to the audience, they will pause to derive their response).

An eliciting act may be directed to all members of the audience or to selected individuals in the audience. In the first instance, comedians use eliciting acts directed to all members of the audience to affirm that the audience is homogenous and to ascertain that common ground exists between the participants-of-the-joke. In the second instance, comedians use eliciting acts to engage a member of audience in a “private” discourse. Often, comedians then make such individuals the targets in their routines. From the sampled performances, Gordons and Funn bones are comedians who use eliciting acts for engaging in a “private” discourse. When stand-up comedians direct eliciting acts to individuals, they create an illusion of segregated audience. The individual becomes a focal point in the interaction. The audience no longer function as a homogeneous entity, since the individual suddenly becomes an addressed recipient while the other members of the audience become ratified over hearers, using Goffman’s (1981) terms. Having successfully isolated an individual for eliciting acts, comedians may direct teasing acts to such individual.

Another way by which Nigerian stand-up comedians initiate eliciting act is by adopting common Nigerian formulaic expressions in their narrations. Nigerian stand-up comedians recontextualise in their performances common formulaic expressions, giving them new situational meaning. Just like interrogatives, formulaic expressions ascertain that a common footing exists between comedians and their audience. Favourite formulaic expressions of stand-up comedians are in a call-and-response format, such that they could be used both by the person who initiates them and the person who gives the response. Some of the formulaic expressions in Nigerian stand-up performances are derived from Christianity. By adopting these expressions, and recontextualising them, they deliberately bring their audiences into their performance. Some of these formulaic expressions are: “Praise the Lord/Hallelujah”, “Holy Ghost/Fire”, “Amen/Amen” and “You are blessed/Amen”. The use of these expressions depends on the joke to be performed. Buchi, I Go Dye, Gordons and Princewill are the comedians who adopted the use of these formulaic expressions in the sampled performances. The reason why some comedians use formulaic expressions which are derived from the language of the church is not far-fetched. Most of the stand-up comedians grew up in the southern part of the country which is predominantly made

up of Christians. The southern part of Nigeria is also known to possess a large number of television-evangelists with large churches and followership.

To illustrate eliciting acts in the sampled performances, Excerpts 42-44 are given below

[Excerpt 42, Mc Shakara]

How many of una know Plantation Boyz?
You know why dem separate?
Now make I tell you.

[Translation: How many of you know plantation boys/ do you know why they separated?/ let me tell you]

Excerpt 42 presents a situation in which the comedian directs two eliciting acts sequentially to the audience. In the first act, the comedian confirms from audience if the audience are aware of a splinter musical group, Plantation Boyz, that he wants to poke fun at. In the second instance, the comedian tries to find out from the audience if they are aware of the reasons why the members of the group split up. These eliciting acts function as the foundation of the joke on the group, which he subsequently presents to the audience. What Mc Shakara does with his eliciting acts is to exploit the audience's background knowledge and derive the information that is needed for the performance of the joke on the splinter group. Should the audience not have affirm that they are aware of Plantation Boyz, he will find it difficult to make them laugh with the joke on the group because there will be no shared background information needed for humour.

[Excerpt 43, Buchi]

Young man how are you?
I is well (AL)
Forget about your condition (AL)
Militants will not see you this year (AL)
They will not kidnap you, you will kidnap them (AL)
Your enemies are fallen already (AL)

In Excerpt 43, Buchi directs his eliciting act to an individual in the audience. Here, he warns the audience that his interrogative is not meant for all the members of the audience. The individual becomes the addressed recipient while other members of the audience become ratified over-hearers. Buchi's private discourse with the individual

suggests that s/he is a possible actor for the target in his narration. In the next line, the comedian uses a popular cliché from the Christian religion. This is meant to help the comedian to achieve a common ground with the audience since the cliché is part of their collective cultural background. Similarly, in Excerpt 44 below, Funnybones directs his eliciting acts to individuals in the audience, first to a public figure in the Nigerian show business, Charlie Boy, who is in the audience, and then to four other ladies in the audience. His goal here is to poke fun at Charlie Boy, whom he believes is having multiple relationships with women as the joke suggests. With the mention of Charlie Boy, Funnybones expects the audience to assign the right reference and activate from the SCK a common belief about Charlie Boy as a man in multiple relationships. He draws the script of relationship by foregrounding that the ladies to which he directs his eliciting acts all came with Charlie Boy to the performance.

[Excerpt 44, Funnybones]

I see... how are you?

Hey! Bros Charlie Boy? (pointing and waving to a member of the audience) What's up man? (AL)

How are you doing? (pointing to another member of the audience) Your daughter right? (AL)

Are you married my dear? (intensified AL) (CL)

I know you are not married

(Pointing to another member of the audience) hello, you came alone right?

How old are you? Okay you came with Charlie boy

No this joke no go fit you (AL)

Pointing to another member of the audience) how are you? (P) How old are you? (P)

With Charlie boy to? (P) (AL) (CL)

Bros only you? (P) (AL) (CL)

I go find another person I beg

Okay, you came alone right? (P)

How old are you? (P)

Hope you are not 13 years? (P) (intensified AL) (AC) (CL)

Each of the eliciting acts in Excerpt 44 contributes to the ultimate goal of Funnybones- making fun of the senator who got married to a thirteen-year-old girl. His eliciting acts to the ladies in the audience and to Charlie Boy, are just strategies to lead the audience into believing that the target of his joke is Charlie Boy. The last eliciting act- “hope you are not 13 years”, is not meant to be answered by the individual, but to bring up the audience’s knowledge of the asocial act of the senator

who is married to a minor. With the act, the audience will realise that they have been made to assume that Charlie Boy is the target of Funnybones, that is, they have been led in a garden-path. Funnybones' eliciting acts illustrate the use of eliciting acts to activate background assumptions and to enhance the humorousness of a joke.

6.2.4 Teasing acts in stand-up comedy performances

Although the practice of stand-up performance does not permit the audience to hold the floor, there are instances where members of the audience hijack the floor during a performance by making their voices loud enough to be heard by other participants in the form of heckling. Usually, when someone in the audience heckles very loud, such an individual challenges the authority of stand-up comedians, and as professional performers, stand-up comedians may direct some form of humour at such individual. The type of humour that stand-up comedians direct at the hecklers in their performances is termed teasing acts.

Studies on teasing have conceptualised it as a pragmatic phenomenon (Dyrel, 2009). These studies note that teasing involves elements of criticism and that it is used for correcting the behaviour of the interlocutor to which it is directed (Drew, 1987; Attardo, 1994). In stand-up performances, teasing acts are instantiated whenever stand-up comedians humorously reply the hecklers in their shows. A heckle is a retort aimed at the comedian personality, humorous style and material. Teasing acts are putdowns, ridicules, mocking or sarcastic remarks which are targeted at hecklers in stand-up performances.

Stand-up comedians have primarily two options in dealing with hecklers. They could ignore the hecklers and they could react to them. Should they ignore the hecklers, they would lose their positive face as professional comedians. When a heckler is ignored, other members of the audience may be encouraged to start dishing out heckles at the comedians. If this happens, the comedians will lose total control of the speech event. However, professional comedians do not allow hecklers to hold sway in their performances. In the sampled performances, whenever there is a member of the audience who projects a heckle, the comedians break the flow of their narration and respond to the hecklers through the use of teasing acts. In teasing acts, stand-up comedians stop their original plan for the performance of their jokes, and then turn their performance on the heckler, by making a joke out of the heckler. By so doing,

teasing acts help to discourage the phenomenon of heckling during stand-up performances. Excerpt 45 below illustrates the use of teasing acts to cut down hecklers:

[Excerpt 45, I Go Dye]

Alright, it is not easy (p)
 VIP dey front {Unclear heckle}
 You say wetin {several unclear heckles} ehn? (P)
 Wait now, make one mumu first talk before another mumu
 En ehn, the first mumu, you say wetin? (P) 5
 {heckle: you dey bleach?}
 You father dey bleach (AL)
 Do you know what they call the power of money? (AL)
 There are some money, he get some money!
 Wey you go see, no bi say na your own, 10
 You just only see you don bellefull
 Talkless of the ones wey I don torch
 If I spend half for your body you go just fair (P) (AL)
 I dey always tell people
 Any governor you see come take power begin fair 15
 No be food, no be wine, rest of mind
 {heckle: You dey live large?}
 Shut up! (AL)
 See your voice sef, “you dey live large”
 He be like who men don frustrate (intensified AL) 20
 Today wey be valatine you no even get sugar daddy
 No young boy, nobody (AL)
 Only you just pay yourself enter (AL)

[Translation: Line 2- VIP is in the front row/ you said what?/ wait, let one foolish person speak before another foolish person/ the first foolish person, what did you say/ you are toning your skin?/ your father is toning his skin/ Line 9- there are some money/ which you will see, it may not be your money/ you only see it and you are not satisfied/ not to talk of the one I have touched/ if I spend half of it on your body, your skin will immediately become fair/ I always tell people/ any governor who takes up power and begins to become fair/ it is not food, it is not wine, rest of mind/ are you living large?/ Line 19- look at your voice, are you living large/ it sounds like the voice of someone whom men have frustrated/ today which is valentine’s day, you don’t even have a sugar daddy/ no young boy, no body/ you came alone, paying for yourself]

In Excerpt 45, I Go Dye deals with a number of heckles which are directed at him. Lines 2, 3, 6 and 17 indicate points where hecklers interject his performance. The hecklers challenge his institutional authority as the comedian, and also reshape his plan for the joke narration as he has to react to each heckle professionally by directing teasing acts to the hecklers. In lines 2 and 3, members of the audience might have directed abusive statements at him. In line 3 particularly, there were several hecklers speaking at the same time and they make the venue become noisy. Because several individuals in the audience were talking to the comedian at the same time, the comedian could not continue with his performance as he has planned. With their hecklings, the audience interrupts the comedian's performance. In lines 4-5, the comedian deliberately uses the abusive label, "mumu" (stupid) to refer to the hecklers who have interrupted his narration.

When an individual, finally, makes his/her voice clear enough for the comedian to pick out what s/he says (line 6), the comedian retorts with verbal attack on the heckler by using the abusive term- "your father". The utterance in line 6 is an interrogative. Its proposition is a request directed to mock the stand-up comedian, who is asked to confirm if he has been toning his skin colour. Toning of skin is not always appreciated by every member of the Nigerian society. Given that not everybody in the audience would have appreciated it if the comedian is actually toning his skin; the comedian sees this heckle as an attack on his personality. Rather than accepting that he was actually toning his skin, the comedian accepted that the colour of his skin is changing, not because he is toning his skin, but because he has become very rich (lines 8-12). The implied premise of his proposition is that he is not toning his skin but because he is rich, his skin is changing colour to reflect the change of his social status. In line 13, he directs the same implied premise to the heckler. In line 17, another heckle was directed at him. This time around, the overt proposition of the heckle challenges the implied propositions which he has given in lines 8-16, which suggest that he, as a comedian, is a rich man and is comparable to a governor. Line 17 functions like an echoic irony which is used sarcastically. In return, the comedian directed a verbal abuse at the heckler (lines 18-22). To achieve this, the comedian makes manifest a background assumption- that the lady in the audience who heckled should have attended the performance with her boyfriend since the event was taking place on valentine day. The comedian cut-down the heckler by making overt his observation- that the lady is alone with no male accompanying her. The propositions

of the comedian's reply reveal that the lady is alone because she has not been successful with getting a male to be her boyfriend.

I Go Dye's replies, which are targeted at the hecklers, are teasing acts. They are teasing acts because they function as a means to cut down unnecessary interference from the audience. Each of the replies to the hecklings is primarily a put-down that serves as a way of ridiculing the participant in the audience who has challenged the institutional authority of the comedian. With each of the teasing acts, the comedian turns humour on the hecklers and foregrounds himself as a professional humourist.

6.2.5 Appraisal acts in stand-up comedy performances

Another humour act found in the Nigerian stand-up comedy performance is the appraisal act. It is termed appraisal because it is used by the stand-up comedian to examine actions or inactions of participants-in-the-joke and the social situations from which they have derived their jokes. The purview of this act is to criticise, satirise or praise whatever the focus of the comedian is. To achieve this aim, the comedian emphasises what is to be appraised by foregrounding it. It could be inconsistencies like asocial attitudes or behaviours in a person's or social group's action. The comedian presents to the audience, propositions that show illogicality of what s/he wants to appraise. In these instances, the comedians give evidences of how socially incongruous the participant-in-the-joke is. Here, the main source of humour lies in the comedian's skill to trace, identify and foreground who or what is being appraised.

In appraising acts, comedians present their target in a manner which is strange to the audience. The manner of presenting what the comedians want to appraise (target) becomes a means of evaluating it, such that the audience can view the comedians' target as receiving praise or criticism. With appraisal acts, stand-up comedians' socio-cultural functions are recognised. From their comic lens, stand-up comedians make their audiences to see what or who they are appraising as below the socially accepted average and their collective expectation, therefore, as needing a change or reform.

The use of appraisal acts is common in Nigerian stand-up comedy. Most of the time, when comedians identify a popular event as the activity-in-the-joke, a public individual like popular pastors, political office holders, musician or actors as the butt

of their jokes and frame their joking stories around such individual or events, their goal is to initiate appraisal acts.

It is important to differentiate appraisal acts from other related acts which are teasing acts and the two types of informing acts. The primary difference between these acts is that in appraisal acts, the goal of the comedian is to direct humour at someone who is not necessary part of the participants-of-the-joke. In teasing acts stand-up comedians target a member of the audience who had challenged their institutional roles through heckling while in informing acts, stand-up comedians identify themselves as the focal point of the humour in their narrations. However, in appraisal acts, the comedians' primary goal is to focus on people who are not participants of the joking event but who are participants-in-the-joke.

Mimicry acts in the performances readily fall under the category of appraisal acts. When mimicry is considered as a humour strategy, it falls under the category of distorting knowledge of people. However, it is an appraisal act in that the comedians identify the target and present him/her in the context of stand-up performance so that he/she will be appraised. The appraisal comes through shared laughter and it may be an instance of praising or criticising the target. Excerpts 46 and 47 below illustrate appraisal acts.

[Excerpt 46, Princewill]

Today Nigeria is 50, true or false? (P)
Audience- true
Now wetin we dey celebrate for this country
You ask yourself? (p) because noting dey (p)
And I dey always dey tell people we have the solution 5
But we no dey implement am, ask me how (P)
Audience- how?
Now, good, look at America, check their past presidents
Their names too fine for the country to fail! (AL, CL)
The name is just too fine, they cannot fail 10
Listen to names like
(slower and in Standard English) Bill Clinton, George Bush, Barack Obama
How they wan take fail?
(faster) But when you come to Nigeria here the name be like failure
The name wowo past the state of the country, 15
You dey hear name like (forcefully) General! Sani!! Abacha!! (P) (AL)
You don hear that one, you go hear

Buhari!! (AL) Olusegun!! Obasanjo!! (AL)

It is frustrating (P) (Intensified AL)

No be only president o, everything about them

20

Check when there was racism in America,

check the person that fought for them

Martin Luther King! Why him dream no go come to pass. Fine name

But when you come to Nigeria, you go hear name like

(forcefully) Ojukwu! Why fight! No go dey!?

People need to die! because the name be like fight!!

Asari Dokubo!! (P) (AL)

[Line 3- what are we celebrating in this country/ you should ask yourself because there is nothing/ and I do always tell people we have the solution/ but we do not implement it, ask me how/ Line 9- their names are too good for the country to fail/Line 13- how will they fail/ but when you come to Nigeria here the names sound like failure/ the names are uglier than the state of the country you will hear names like General Sani Abacha/ when you have heard that one, you will hear/ Buhari, Olusegun Obasanjo/ Line 20- not only the presidents, everything about them/Line 23- Why would his dream not come to pass. Fine name/ but when you come to Nigeria you go hear name like/ Ojukwu, why won't there be fight/ People will have to die because the names sound like fights]

In Excerpt 46, apart from prompting his acts through the propositions expressed in the narrations, the comedian also makes use of a peculiar method of delivery. In his narration, he adopts two styles. In the first one, he makes use of Standard Nigerian English pronunciation while he mentions the names of the American political figures (Line 12). He also reduces the rate of his speech. However while mentioning the names of Nigerian political figures (Lines 14-18), he uses a faster speech rate. The adoption of different speech delivery rates in the narration is significant for the achievement of the aim in the narration, inviting the audience to appraise the Nigerian political leaders. He adopts different styles, using the high style for the American leaders and low style for the Nigerian leaders, so as to distort the audience representation of the Nigerian leaders and affirm a collective belief that one of the problems Nigeria is encountering is lack of good leadership.

Princewill begins with eliciting acts in lines 1-7. The eliciting acts are employed by the comedians to affirm that he and the audience share the same assumption about the low level of development in Nigeria. The comedian uses this assumption to set-up the appraisal acts he wants to perform with the joke. Having affirmed that the audience share the same assumption with him, he draws another

assumption from the SCK, the cultural belief that the name of a person determines the person's attainment of success in life, to foreground the implied import of the stylization he uses to mention the names of Nigerian political leaders.

What the comedian is doing is that he is appraising Nigerian leaders. With his stylization, he criticises them as bad leaders who have not improved the state of the country. To achieve criticising the leaders, he presents the key assumption that the Nigerian leaders are bad leaders because of their names, and the target assumption that Nigeria is an undeveloped country because she has not had good leaders.

[Excerpt 47, Youngest Landlord]

I thank God for comedy

My bros, I Go Dye wey package me

I beg make una clap for I Go Dye and Opa Williams and Ali Baba in the building
(AC)

Clap for them (AC)

Na them package me come make me dress like mortuary attendant (AL) 5

[Translation: Line 2- my boss, I Go Dye, who costumed me/ please clap for I Go Dye and Opa Williams and Ali Baba in the building they costumed me and made me to dress like this, like a mortuary attendant]

Like Princewill in Excerpt 46, Youngest Landlord in Excerpt 47 presents an appraisal act to the audience. He focuses on the demands of his profession, stand-up comedy performance. He begins by presenting the proposition- being grateful for stand-up comedy. Then he identifies some major players in the trade: I Go Dye, Opa Williams and Ali Baba, and the demands they have placed on him to be properly dressed while performing. With these, he makes manifest that stand-up comedy is a standard profession and that stand-up comedians are professionals whose trade demands that they should be well-dressed. To make explicit his appraisal act, he compares the way he is dressed with that of a mortuary attendant. He presents to the audience the premise that he is properly dressed for the performance while his implied premise is that he has been made to dress too formal for the act of stand-up comedy.

It is possible to argue that Excerpt 47 is an instance of informing self-denigrating act since it is a joke about how the comedian is dressed. However, the goal of the comedian is not to talk about himself, but about the major players in Nigerian stand-up comedy who demands that comedy is a serious business and should not be

approached shabbily. This is why he gives the proposition that the major players in Nigerian stand-up comedy are the ones who costumed him.

The deliberate manner in which the comedians initiate appraisal acts in these instances is to bring, implicitly, to the audiences' awareness that which is being appraised. Through the strategies of activating background assumptions, and using two opposing premises- the target assumption and key assumption, the comedians make the audience (in the context-of-the-joke) to see that the persons, events, or actions identified in their jokes (context-in-the-joke) are being appraised in their performances. In each instance, the comedian invites the audience to join in the appraisal and to show that the audiences share his point of view, they give their affiliative response.

6.2.6 Reinforcement acts in stand-up comedy performances

Reinforcement acts are used to strengthen specific assumptions that could be deduced from the propositional content of stand-up comedians' contextualisation cues. It reinforces assumptions from context-in-the-joke. In addition, a reinforcement act comes into play when another act has been performed, and the comedian wants to expand the success of such acts. They, therefore, primarily function in association with other acts. Reinforcement acts do not have their own independent occurrence since they are employed by stand-up comedians to strengthen or buttress an initially initiated act.

When an instantiated act brings up affiliative responses, stand-up comedians expand on the success by presenting more punchlines which are connected to the set-up of the successful joke. They do this when they realise that the audience have got the premises needed for humour from their narrations. Apart from the joke utterance, gestures like pointing, gawking and hand movement are instances of reinforcement act. They constitute reinforcement acts because they are used in support of the joke utterance.

[Excerpt 48, Buchi]

Young man how are you? (P)

It is well (P) (AL)

Forget about your condition (P)(AL)

Militants will not see you this year (P)(AL)

They will not kidnap you, you will kidnap them (P)(AL)

Your enemies are fallen already

In Excerpt 48, the comedian reinforces the proposition in line 2 in lines 3-6. In the extract, the stand-up comedian creates an illusion of segregated audience by directing an eliciting act to a member of the audience, whom he has pointed out as target of the humour. In the extract, the comedian uses a style of presentation that the audience will easily adduce to the Nigerian Christian clergies. One of the reasons why the audience find the lines in the extract funny is that they are able to relate the comedian's presentation with what would have been presented by a clergy, and they find that in this instance, the comedian is not actually sermonising but using the style in a burlesque manner. In his stylization, Buchi puns on the styles of Nigerian clergies. To the audience, such style is not 'appropriate', given that the comedian deliberately adopts a style commonly adduced to pastors. The reinforcement acts come into play in lines 3-5, in which the propositions are supportive of the proposition in line 2. In line 2, the comedian directed a cliché, "it is well which is got from the discourse of interactants who are adherents of Christianity. The implicated premise of the cliché is that the addressee will find her/his conditions pleasant. From line 3, still keeping to clergy's mannerism of preaching, the comedian begins to dish out utterances with propositions that support the one in the cliché by telling the individual to forget his condition. In lines 4 and 5, he deliberately created an incongruous situation with his utterance by saying that the individual will not be kidnapped by militants, rather, the individual will kidnap the militants. Lines 3-5, are adopted by the comedian to reinforce the proposition in line 2.

[Excerpt 49, Funnybones]

And I tell people

Some kind, natural things, as God dey create am

Na man ne get for mind,

Some things are masculine in nature

Women no suppose get am, e.g. snoring (P) (AL) 5

If you see girl wey dey snore, slap am (P) (AL)

It is, highly, gi...da..didalibitating (P) (AL)

How can you snore like that and on top that

Women their snore get backup (P) (AL)

You go hear (p) (made a sound like a snore then whistle) (intensified AL) 10

Wetin? Snoring!!!

Second thing! Pot! Belle!

Woman no suppose get pot belle!
 Pot belle is a celebration of man's foolishness (P) (AL)
 Na na him make girls dey tuck belle in 15
 From Nupe go Maitama (gesticulates sucking in the stomach and walks across the
 stage) (AL)
 You will die! (P) (AL)
 Now some things too dey feminine
 Man no suppose dey do am
 To dey eye person, na gift wey God give women! 20
 Dey do am as in freely (gesticulate eyeing) (AL)
 Man no suppose dey do am
 Na him one boy, him friends insult am
 "you dey mad?"
 He go do am eye start to dey turn am (AL) 25
 I dey mad, I dey mad you ma (gesticulates eyeing) (AL)
 He no see again.

[Translation: Line 2- some natural things, as God was creating them/ he meant them
 for man/Line 5- women are not supposed to have them, e.g. snoring/ if you see a girl
 who snores, slap her/ it is highly disgusting/ how can you snore like that, besides/
 women's snore is in stages/ you will hear/ what? Snoring/ the second thing is
 potbelly/ women are not supposed to have potbelly/ potbelly is a celebration of man's
 foolishness/ that is why girls do tuck their belly in/ from Nupe to Maitama/ you will
 die/ Now some things too are feminine/ men are not supposed to do them/ to eye a
 person, is a gift which God has given women/ to freely do/ men are not supposed to do
 it/ there was one boy whose friends insulted him/ are you mad/ he started doing it, his
 started feeling dizzy/ I am mad, I am mad/ then he could not see again]

Funnybones adopt gender categorisation of people as the background
 assumption for constructing his joke in Excerpt 49. He begins by making reference to
 gender differences based on the stereotypical belief that since males are different from
 females, there are certain things which are primarily meant for females which males
 must not possess, and there are certain things which are meant for males which
 females must not possess. This stereotyping, a collective assumption from the SCK,
 was reinforced for humorous effects in the extract by the comedian.

The audience, having identified the manifested status of the stereotypic
 assumption, realise that it is got from their collective cultural background. Given their
 institutionalised relationship with the comedian, the audience wait to see how the
 comedian will use the stereotypic categorisation. The comedian on his own part builds
 on this background and starts presenting features that are culturally taken as
 exclusively meant for specific genders: Snoring (it is culturally assumed that it is

improper for a female to snore), potbelly (it is culturally assumed that potbelly is a body feature of men) and eyeing (which is commonly taken as a female act). The comedian does not only mention these features as belonging to particular genders, he also illustrates them by exemplifying and gesticulating them. The mention of the features and their illustrations with gesticulations by the comedian are instances of reinforcement acts. They are used to reinforce the initial stereotypical belief in the gender differences between males and females.

6.3 Summary

In this chapter, the humour acts found in Nigerian stand up comedy have been identified and analysed. The next chapter is the concluding chapter of this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter is the concluding section of this study. It presents the summary of the previous chapters, the findings of this study and recommendations for future studies.

7.1 Summary of the study

In this study, the joking stories of selected Nigerian stand-up comedians have been analysed. The first chapter gives the general introduction to the study. In particular, it presents history of Nigerian stand-up comedy and provides information on the objectives of this study. The second chapter presents a synthesis of related studies to this research. It reviews studies on humour, jokes and stand-up comedy. Chapter two also presents the theoretical orientation adopted in this study. Chapter three focuses on the methods of data collection and analysis.

The analyses of the sampled performances begin in chapter four. Chapter four caters for the analysis of the narrative aspects of the performances. In chapter five, the humour strategies found in the selected comedians' routines are analysed.

The last chapter of the analysis, chapter six, demonstrates how, when situated in the affordances of the context-of-the-joke, the stand-up comedians' joking stories constitute humour acts. Chapter six presents and exemplifies the humour acts found in the sampled performances.

7.2 Findings and contributions to knowledge

The following are the findings of this study:

Nigerian stand-up comedians adopt two types of voices in their routines.

Selected comedians strategically adopt voicing to articulate the comic voice and the participant-in-the-joke voice. They achieve the realisation of different voices, primarily, through code switching, reported speech and mimicry. Voicing is a deliberate act adopted by stand-up comedians to distance themselves from the actions and utterances of the participants-in-the-joke.

2. Nigerian stand-up comedians use two contexts in their performances.

In the performance of jokes, Nigerian stand-up comedians utilise context-of-the-joke and context-in-the-joke. The context-of-the-joke is the interactional context of stand-up comedy and it is grounded in the common ground that exists between the comedians and their audience. The context-in-the-joke, which is dynamic, refers to the situation that is reported in the routines and it changes as stand-up comedians move from one joke to another.

3. Nigerian stand-up comedians may keep to or manipulate the conversational structure of the stand-up interaction.

Some comedians present their jokes by manipulating the performance space. They walk out of the stage and move into the audience area.

4. Nigerian stand-up comedians are very creative.

In a single routine, comedians may present several joking stories. Each joking story maybe embedded with more than one strategy. For instance, mimicry, which is primarily a form of distorting collective representation of people, also entails reference to previous discourse outside the context of stand-up performance.

5. Nigerian stand-up comedians mirror their society and culture in their performances.

Nigerian stand-up comedians consciously construct their jokes around social and political issues in the country. They use their humour to correct social vices.

6. Nigerian stand-up comedians bring in their individual styles into their performances

Although they all employ the same humorous strategies and initiate the same humour acts, they employ different joking stories to achieve these. Their use of physical acts also differs. The differences found in their performances are motivated by their individual styles.

7. The humour acts model has implications for pragmatic analysis of jokes.

A pragmatic analysis of jokes in interactions should show how the context-in-the-joke relates with context-of-the-joke. It should also identify the significance of humour in the context of its use.

In addition, by placing context-of-the-joke within encyclopaedic knowledge, the model presupposes that joking exchanges take place within the

frame of non-humorous communication. The implication of this is that the distinction between NBF and BF modes of communication may not be needed since the same cognitive mechanism is used for interpreting humour and non-humorous utterances. In analysing humour, what is important is not distinguishing the mode of communication but recognising the intentions of the users of humour.

7.3 Suggestions for future studies

As a descriptive study, this research only analysed the pragmatic aspects of Nigerian stand-up comedy. It does not cover all the linguistic aspects of stand-up performance. Also, it is limited to selected routines. The following suggestions, therefore, are given for future studies.

As observed above, that the individual style of comedians comes to play during their performances, there is a need for other studies to explore, and probably compare and contrast, how different stand-up comedians employ the strategies as well as initiate the acts that have been identified in this study. For instance, how a comedian, say Basketmout or Bovi, realises the commencement act could be examined in different performances. Also, the favoured strategy employed by each Nigerian stand-up comedian can be identified through a quantitative study.

Apart from applying purely pragmatics approach to stand-up comedy performance, other linguistic approaches could be adopted in future studies. Future researchers could explore how social indices such as age group, gender and ethnicity influence the joke performance in Nigerian stand-up comedy. Likewise, future researchers could explore how Nigerian stand-up comedians use their monologues to reflect these indices.

Furthermore, this study has presented a model for analysing humour in the context of use. It is suggested that the model should be adopted for analysing humour in other interactional contexts.

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