

An exploration of phonological jokes in Maryam Apaokagi's selected comedy skits

Ronke Eunice Okhuosi

University of Ibadan, Nigeria
re.okhuosi@mail1.ui.edu.ng

Abstract

The majority of studies on Nigerian comedy are discourse- and pragmatics-related, despite the impact of phonology on humour creation as seminal studies have shown. These seminal studies describe phonological jokes to mean ambiguous utterances whose humour lies in their multiple phonological interpretations. However, comedy skits from Nigeria show that there are more dimensions to phonological jokes. Therefore, this study investigated the phonological jokes in comedy skits from Maryam Apaokagi, using Chomsky and Halle's Distinctive Features and McGraw and Warren's Benign Violation Theory. Twenty skits were purposively selected from the artist's YouTube channel. Four strategies were identified in the data: minimal pairs, phonological restructuring, phonological ambiguity, and phonological extension. Four instances each of minimal pairs and phonological restructuring were identified; the former replaced phonemes in words, thus, changing their meanings, while the latter re-arranged phoneme sets and syllables to achieve new structures. There were two instances of phonological ambiguity where strings of sounds had multiple meanings; homophony was engaged to achieve rhythm and humour. Phonological extension had twenty-eight instances; it occurred when one character produced a syllable, and another extended it by providing a longer but partially similar word. Four types of phonological extensions were identified, and these were extension into regular words, popular names, concepts and other languages. The jokes portrayed socio-cultural and economic situations in Nigeria like poverty, promiscuity, high living costs, and burglary. Apaokagi used comedy to teach patience and tolerance. The comprehension of these jokes thrived on shared background knowledge between the artist and the audience.

Keywords: phonological jokes, Distinctive Features Theory, Benign Violation Theory, Maryam Apaokagi

1. Introduction

Nigerians are a group of people who have reportedly become less happy as the years have passed by. From being the 78th happiest people on earth in 2015, Nigerians have dropped to the 116th position in 2021, according to the World Happiness Report from the United Nations. Even on the African continent, this report puts Nigeria on the 15th in the rank of happy people. Despite

these facts as stated by the United Nations (Helliwell 2021), and the multifaceted challenges that are responsible for this emotional state among Nigerians, humour is still a recurrent phenomenon that is created on a daily basis among Nigerians as a means to cope with the difficulties of living (Adesoye 2021). One of the ways through which this happiness, momentary or not, is created is through the creation and enjoyment of humour in situation comedies, stand-up comedies, humorous music, literary texts, computer-mediated comedy, online comedy skits and so on. Being a culturally peculiar phenomenon (Sen 2012), humour exhibits features and functions that vary across cultures and settings; thus, humour created in Nigeria and by Nigerians, is often characterised by peculiarly Nigerian features, facts and situations. Also, a recurring fact is that humour does not exist in itself, it is always used to perform different functions (Filani 2018; Sunday & Bamgbose 2021), and Nigerians' comedies are no different – they are made to perform specific functions.

In Nigeria, humour which had hitherto been perceived as an unserious endeavour (Filani 2018), is now being engaged as a serious discipline, and is constantly being explored from the perspectives of discourse and pragmatics, especially. Humour sourced from different platforms and mediums such as books, shows, movies, music and memes is now investigated by Nigerian researchers. Despite all the laudable attention that humour studies are getting, there is still a dearth of research on the phonological exploration of these humour creations. Also, the emerging sub-genre of comedy skits has not enjoyed as much investigation as the other genres which have existed for a longer period. This novel aspect of comedy refers to short dramatic enactments that are woven around humorous situations; they are usually presented for viewership on the different social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok.

Therefore, this study set out to investigate the phonological jokes in Nigerian comedies, and Taaooma's comedy skits were found to contain numerous phonological manipulations for the creation of humour. Thus, this study examines the phonological jokes in Taaooma's comedy skits with a view to appreciating the phonological strategies and determining their functions. The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify the phonological jokes in the skits
- ii. classify them into different types,
- iii. describe the different groups, and
- iv. determine their functions.

2. Review

Humour is a universal subject that is present in the majority of the cultures in the world (Sen 2012); it is however quite difficult to describe exhaustively (Bamgbose 2019). Attardo et al. (2013: 1) suggest that studies within humour research generally accept humour to mean “any form of communicative behaviour intended or interpreted as having the intention to elicit amusement, mirth, laughter, or associated feelings of exhilaration”. The study of humour is found in several disciplines such as linguistics, literature, history, psychology, philosophy, sociology, cognitive neuroscience, physiology and so on (Adesoye 2018). Being a phenomenon that is present in very many cultures, humour has been studied in so many cultural contexts, and its cultural peculiarities are revealed in these different situations. Within the Nigerian context, humour has been studied in situation comedies (Bamgbose & Ehondor 2021; Sunday & Bamgbose 2021), stand-up comedies (Filani 2017; Soneye 2019), computer-mediated communication (Inya 2016), comedy skits (Adesoye 2018), literature (Alabi 2021) and even music (Bamgbose 2019). Its features, functions and strategies have also been explored in detail by several scholars. In this context, comedy skits are an emerging sub-genre of comedy within

digital content creation in Nigeria. It is fast attracting researchers' and even the government's attention – recently, comedy skit makers were invited to the country's capital, Abuja, by the Nigerian Vice President for a collaboration (Adesoye 2018; API 2021).

Specifically, Filani (2017) examined political humour in Nigeria within stand-up comedy. He identified different types of political humour: political humour targeted at politicians and political humour targeted at government policies. Although his method for data collection was quite vague because it was unclear how or if the study covered the entirety of Nigerian stand-up comedy sphere, the study was able to establish the broad features that political humour in Nigeria exhibits. Also, the study's identification of the types of political humour is quite limited because there are other comedies that are political but do not fall under either of the study's political humour classification.

There are several platforms for humour creation in Nigeria, and all of them are connected through recognising, depicting and describing the ills in Nigeria (Filani 2018). Filani (2018) identified the nexus among these platforms in Nigeria, but noted that the role of comedy as a depiction and description of societal ills has been under-explored in formal academic research until recently. Humour, whether intended or not, usually carries some socio-cultural, political or economic meaning and this is why the recipients need to be equipped with background knowledge about these for humour to be understood.

Some elements are often found in humorous engagements, some of them are satire, puns, and parody. Akpah (2018) investigated the use of satire, humour and parody as artistic devices in 21st century Nigerian women's poetry which are geared towards showing the experiences of women in contemporary Nigerian society. The study described parody as one of the styles used to create humour while castigating wrongs in a society; it also put forward that satire is a means of condemning social ills, using wit, humour, irony, and mockery. From the foregoing, Akpah's descriptions of parody and satire are interwoven in their use of humour and their purpose of castigating ills. As for puns however, Bamgbose (2019) described them as purposefully ambiguous utterances; one of their meanings tallies with the ongoing conversation while the other interpretation is considered out-of-context.

Using Relevance Theory, Bamgbose (2019) explored the humour techniques and strategies employed by some Nigerian hip-hop artists in their songs. He classified the humour in the data based on name and object phenomena (ibid.). Literary and linguistic devices including simile, metaphor, hyperbole, punning, polysemy and repetition were the humour techniques identified in the study. The humour strategies were comparing, contrasting, distorting common knowledge, manipulating shared cultural representations, and contrasting and extending corresponding concepts. Although the study examined only a couple of musicians and a small number of songs, it was still able to support the fact that music is also a veritable medium for humour in Nigeria. However, the study's claim that some lexical items in the songs could be introduced into the Nigerian English lexicon is a grand but uncertain proposition.

Sunday & Bamgbose (2021) accounted for humour, its strategies and functions in the interactions among the characters in *Jenifa's Diary* and *Professor JohnBull*. Adopting Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Theory, the scholars subjected the data to pragmatic analysis and two discourse functions of amusing and castigating were unveiled. Also, allusion, parody, retort, tease, banter and put-down were the humour techniques found in the sitcoms. Although the justification for the choice of excerpts was unclear, the study examined eight excerpts from both situation comedies. It established that humour is not just for the purpose of amusement; rather, it is deployed to serve certain functions which differ from one situation to another.

Bamgbose & Ehondor (2021) explored the functions of humour in the first three seasons of *Jenifa's Diary*, using Mey's Pragmatic Acts and Meyer's functions of humour as analytical framework. Incivility, domestic violence, poor etiquette, lying and indecent dressing were the issues addressed in this instance of situation comedy. The study rightly concluded that humour

does not exist to amuse only; rather, it usually serves other salient functions of addressing national and socio-cultural issues.

Alabi (2021) examined the use of invectives as a simultaneously satirical and humorous device employed in Femi Osofisan and Ola Rotimi's drama. Although this study only focused on Nigerian drama, it tallied greatly with several other studies that entertainment is not merely fun; rather, it functions to correct some wrongs in the society where it is set. Specifically, Alabi (2021) revealed that these invectives are a constant feature of human interactions and function effectively in satirising the abnormalities in people and societies. Several plays from other Nigerian playwrights qualify to be studied in this research but were not; thus, the question arises about whether the sampled plays are representative enough.

The majority of humour studies in Nigeria have been carried out from the perspectives of discourse and pragmatics as evident in the studies above. This is despite the discovery that most of these humorous acts examine phonological devices such as homophony and homography to generate humour as submitted by Gutiérrez et al. (2018). Studies such as Adesoye's (2018) and Soneye's (2019) that connect humour and phonology in Nigeria are much fewer than those within discourse and pragmatics.

Although Attardo et al. (2013) recognised the dearth of research on the prosody of humour and attempted to describe the prosodic markers of humour, laughter and irony, they specifically acknowledged the contribution of Pickering et al. (2009). Pickering et al. (2009) established that punch lines in jokes, conversational humour and professional actors' comedy renditions are prosodically marked by changes in pitch, volume, speech or pauses.

Furthermore, Pickering et al. (2009) reported that there are more phonological markers depicting irony and sarcasm, than there have been identified for humour generally. However, Glick's (2007) study explored the art of voicing to assume different characters in the joke-telling of Eddie Izzard. This work shares some features with a phonological investigation of humour – it is one of the few phonological studies that exist on humour.

Lew (1997) identified and described what a phonological joke is. This study is a description of the taxonomy of linguistic jokes, which also loosely refers to Attardo et al.'s (1994) verbal jokes; he confirmed that the majority of linguistic (or verbal) jokes thrive on ambiguity. He classified these different jokes on the kind of ambiguity that they contain, and these are lexical jokes, lexico-syntactic jokes, syntactic jokes, phonological jokes, orthographic jokes and so on. He claimed that the humour in phonological jokes is achieved when more than one possible phonetic string and interpretation is derivable from only one phonetic form. This derivable form maybe identical with either of the two interpretations, and it may also share features with both forms. This description serves as a good platform for phonological studies of humour to spring from. It must, however, be noted that Lew's description of phonological jokes is quite limited as more ramifications of phonological jokes are available in several languages and cultures.

For instance, Muñoz-Basols et al. (2013) explored the creation of humour through a parody of the sounds of other languages which is achieved through deliberate manoeuvre, mispronunciation, distortion, substitution and so on. Although this study gave a newer perspective to what a phonological joke is, different from Lew's one (1997), it is still quite restrictive. It painted the picture that that was all there is to phonological humour and jokes, whereas there could be still more.

Adesoye (2018) explored the distortion of phonemes and syllables to achieve humour in a Nigerian's comedy skits. The study used McGraw & Warren's (2010) Benign Violation Theory to account for the phonological violations in Folarin Falana's skits. These phonological violations occurred in the form of phonological processes – liaison, deletion, insertion, monophthongisation, coalescence, and vowel strengthening. The processes were conspicuous but benign violations of the rules of spoken English, and they not only achieved humour, but

also showed pro-Nigerianism on the part of the artist. However, the phonological analysis carried out in the research was not anchored on any phonological framework.

Soneye (2019) explored the phonological features of jibes for the construction of meaning and ideologies in Nigerian stand-up comedy. Twenty shows of five comedians constituted the data for the research, and features such as indigenised exclamations, feminisation, lengthening, focus marking and stylistic deployment of adverbials as entreaty instead of domination were discovered through perceptual, instrumental and taxonomic frameworks, which though are varied, are still quite inadequate in the exploration of these phonological features.

From the above reviews, it is evident that the functions and features of humour are culturally peculiar, and the peculiarity of humour in Nigeria has been explored a great deal. Specifically, humour studies in Nigeria have enjoyed more discourse and pragmatic investigations than phonological ones, whereas phonology has a lot of resources to offer the study of humour as revealed by Lew's (1997) taxonomy. In addition, comedy skits are an emerging sub-genre of situation comedy that deserves more research. Thus, the exploration of the phonological jokes, their functions and strategies in Taaoma's comedy skits is an endeavour worth executing with a view to establishing phonology as a salient aspect of humour construction in emergent comedy skits in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical framework

This study adopts McGraw & Warren's (2010) Benign Violation Theory because of the preponderance of harmless violations used to enact humour in the data. Also, aspects of Chomsky & Halle's (1950) Distinctive Features Theory were used because the phonological jokes in the data involved the construction of minimal pairs and the manipulation of segmental features to achieve humour. Benign Violation Theory (BVT) is an offshoot of Veatch's (1998) Violation Theory of Humour (McGraw & Warren 2010). It is an account of humour that holds that something is funny when these three conditions are met:

1. a norm is violated
2. this violation is a harmless one, and
3. the first two conditions occur simultaneously.

Thus, for humour to be achieved, a situation that is generally accepted as the norm has to be violated, however, this violation has to be a benign one so that no harm is caused as a result. The third condition for humour to occur is that this violation and the harmlessness have to occur at the same time.

These violations affect different areas such as personal dignity, grammar rules, linguistic norms, sound production, accents, social expectations, moral and societal norms and so on. In a comedy situation also, the violation may be incurred against the characters in the skits. Further, the benignity of the norm violation can be realised in its variation from one culture to another, or from one context to another. The harmless violation of the rules of word choices in order to achieve a humorous word play in the data makes BVT an appropriate theory of humour for the present research.

Chomsky & Halle's (1968) Distinctive Features Theory was also adopted to explain some of the phonological strategies in the word play carried out in the data. Distinctive Features, which was initially formalised in 1941 by Roman Jakobson, is situated within Generative phonology. The features of phonemes are presented in a binary form so that a phoneme either has a feature (+) or does not (-). The features used to describe phonemes are divided into major class features, cavity features, body of the tongue features, lip attitudes, length of stricture,

manner of articulation, and source features. These divisions also have further features under each of them, which are used to describe phonemes. A diagram has been provided below to show the different classifications and sub-classifications.

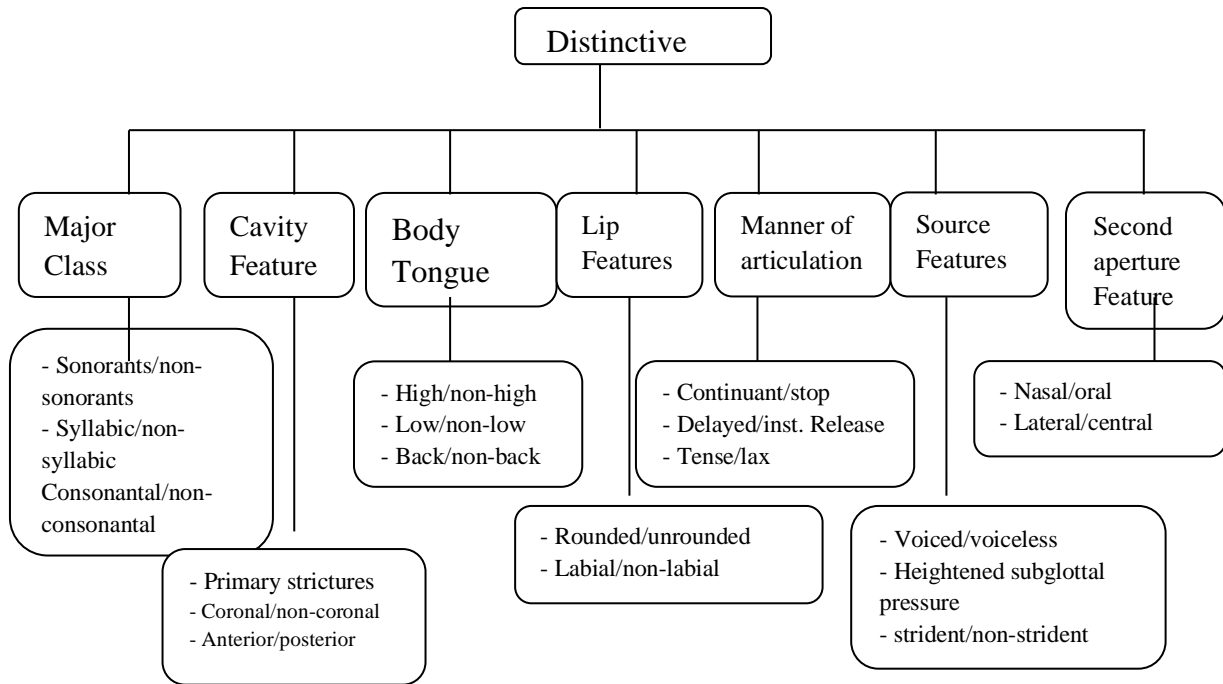


Figure 1. Classification of distinctive features. Source: Chomsky and Halle (1968)

The figure above has been designed with the classificatory information from Chomsky & Halle (1968). The figure was designed to show at a glance the different features as well as their sub-classes.

4. Maryam Adedoyin Apaokagi

Maryam Apaokagi is a digital content creator, cinematographer and social media influencer. A huge part of the content she creates involves the comedy skits centred around a family of five: Kunle (father), Ronke (mother), Tayo (first child), Tao (second child) and Teni (the last child). All five characters in the family are acted by Maryam Apaokagi herself, whose stage name is Taaooma. Her comedy skits are best known for the infamous slaps that Ronke doles out to Tao whenever the latter misbehaves, arguably depicting the harsh training that African mothers give their daughters. She makes these skits available for viewing and sharing on her YouTube channel and other social media platforms. Taaooma is a twenty-three year old Nigerian from Ilorin, Kwara State. She has won at least two awards and has been nominated for several more.

5. Methodology

Data for the study were sourced from Maryam Adedoyin Apaokagi's comedy skits. The data were elicited from her YouTube channel (*Taaooma's Cabin*). The choice of Taaooma was prompted by her nomination as one of the top 10 highly ranked skit makers in Nigeria by Africa Polling Institute (2021) as well as the abundance of phonological jokes in her skits. Compared

to other (comedy) content creators, her comedies contain much more phonological jokes. Only the skits that were found to contain phonological jokes were purposively selected for analysis. A total of twenty (20) skits were selected and subjected to analysis using Distinctive Features Theory and Benign Violation Theory.

6. Analysis

The phonological humour in the twenty comedy skits was classified into four groups based on its features. These four groups have been described as minimal pairs, phonological restructuring, phonological ambiguity, and phonological extension. The preponderant phonological strategy is phonological extension which has thirty instances. Phonological restructuring has four instances, phonological ambiguity has two instances while minimal pairs strategy has four instances. Some skits contained more than one phonological strategy for the achievement of humour. This explains the total of forty phonological jokes in the twenty skits.

6.1. Minimal pairs

This category of phonological jokes involves the replacement of a phoneme in a word, thus changing it to a different word. The replacement creates humour when reading (or hearing) it together with the original structure. There are only four instances of this category in the data, and they are discussed below. The first instance is a situation where Ronke, the mother in the family, obstructs traffic on the street because her car suddenly breaks down. Someone in the oncoming traffic begins to ruffle her to get her car out of the road, to which she responds:

*You will calm down sir o, you will down, because patience is **vulture***
- The Hoolabalu

The common English proverb that the above refers to is “patience is a virtue”, however, apart from removing the indefinite article ‘a’ – a typically Nigerian feature – ‘virtue’ is also changed to ‘vulture’. The two peaks in the syllables of the words ‘virtue’ and ‘vulture’ are divergent. ‘Virtue’ is transcribed as /vɜ:ʃu:/ while ‘vulture’ is /vɜ:lʃɜ:/. The two syllables in both words share the same onset but the peaks are different. Also, ‘vulture’ has a coda in the first syllable while ‘virtue’ has none. These are two different words which refer to two very different concepts that only sound alike. The knowledge of what the original proverb is, which is that patience is a good attribute to possess, and the meaning of the replaced word – ‘vulture’ – which refers to a bird that feeds on carcasses, portrays a conspicuous violation of semantics and world view. This is because ‘patience’ cannot be equated to ‘vulture’ in this context. However, this violation is a benign one because it causes no harm; thus, it elicits humour in the viewers. The similarity in both words is immediately obvious to the ears and the difference in them is also immediately decipherable.

Another instance of minimal pairs as a strategy for a phonological joke is found in the following situation. A neighbour (JessieKeay) tries to market a cleansing lotion to Tao (the daughter in the family). Tao is sceptical about the potency and safety of this lotion which has been produced by this neighbour herself. To decline, Tao says

Sapa bien merci

- Skin Care Routine

The phrase above is supposed to be a French sentence for ‘I am fine, thank you’, that is, ‘ça va bien merci’. The two syllables /sava/ ‘ça va’, have however been replaced with /sakpa/ ‘sapa’.

'Sapa' is a new slangy expression in Nigeria that means poverty. It emerged only recently and is used mainly by the Nigerian youths to depict the pathetic socio-economic downturn of things in recent times. Thus, there is an obvious but harmless violation of the rules for the construction of this French structure, because the noun 'poverty' does not fit into the structure, so code-switching cannot really be said to have occurred either. The phonological joke lies in the fact that the word used instead, 'sapa', is very similar to the original 'çava'. The only difference is in the removal of voiced labiodental fricative /v/ and an introduction of voiceless palato-alveolar plosive /kp/. Knowing what 'sapa' means elicits humour because the viewers can decipher that Tao is not just declining by saying thank you in French, she is also throwing jibes at her neighbour by taunting her with her state of impoverishment. In a sense, this comedy skit subtly projects the socio-economic situation in Nigeria as well as how people are adapting to the problem using both licit and illicit means. This means that background knowledge about some concepts in these skits is needed to have a full comprehension of what the humour is.

The third instance of phonological jokes within the category of minimal pairs is found in a skit where Kunle, the father in the family, decides to take up the chore of cooking himself because he thinks his wife and daughter are ripping him off. He is in the kitchen, struggling to put a meal together when Ronke walks in and says:

*Well done o, **chef Shenko***

When you're ready, carry yourself out of my kitchen because I want to cook

- A Word is Enough for the Wise

Chef Shenko is tonal manipulation of the name of globally recognised football star, Shevshenko. Ronke calls Kunle chef Shenko just to make fun of him, because he is no way as talented at cooking as Shevshenko was at his football skills to have won a Balon d'Or in 2004 while playing for the Ukrainian and AC Milan Football teams. The humour and intertextuality in this line can only be understood if the audience knows who Shevshenko is; thus, shared background knowledge is required for humour to be understood here. Meanwhile, the two nominal categories 'Chef Shenko' and 'Shevshenko' both share the same phonemes but differ in terms of the presence of tone and stress, respectively. Ronke pronounces the former using the fall-high-fall tone, thus, it sounds Yoruba-like even though the phonemes are the exact forms found in the popular footballer's name. 'Shevshenko', meanwhile, is said with the primary stress on the second syllable. Thus, both nominal entities are phonemically the same, but differ phonetically with the presence of stress and tone. The manipulation of this name into sounding like a Yoruba word is a phonological attempt to create humour for the listeners. Like the other instances, the humour in this line comes alive as soon as a hearer who already knows Shevshenko perceives Ronke's pronunciation of /ʃɛʃʃɛnkò/. With this skit, Taaoma presents the financial self-sufficiency of women even when they rely on their husbands for allowances. This is particularly depicted through Iya Tao (Ronke)'s purchase of the oil she had previously asked Baba Tao (Kunle) to pay for, which prompted him to resort to doing the cooking himself.

The Distinctive Features Analysis for three of the instances is shown below.

<p><i>Sapa</i> /kp/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[- voice} \\ \text{- continuant} \\ \text{-} \end{array} \right)$	<p><i>Vulture</i> /ɔ/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[+ lax} \\ \text{+ back} \\ \text{+} \end{array} \right)$	<p><i>Shevshenko</i> /ʃɛʃʃɛnko/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[+ stress} \\ \text{-} \end{array} \right)$
<p><i>Ça va</i> /v/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[+ voice} \\ \text{+ continuant} \\ \text{+ anterior} \end{array} \right)$	<p><i>Virtue</i> /ɜ:/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[- lax} \\ \text{- back} \\ \text{- rounded} \end{array} \right)$	<p><i>Chef Shenko</i> /ʃɛʃʃɛnkò/</p> $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{[- stress} \\ \text{+ tone} \end{array} \right)$

Figure 2. Distinctive Features Analysis

The analyses above show the distinctive features in the minimal set found in the comedy skits. The redundant features have been removed, and only the distinctive features are left. In the case of ‘sapa’ and ‘çava’, the distinctive phonemes /kp/ and /v/ have the features of voice, continuant and anterior as the distinctive features as shown above. As for the second set of minimal pairs, the length of the vowels and the frontness or backness are the features that distinguish them from each other. For the third set, the distinction occurs in the presence of stress and tone.

The final instance of a phonological joke within the category of Minimal pairs is found in a skit where Ronke reprimands Tao for changing the television channel while Teni is watching cartoons. The conversation goes thus:

- Ronke: *Ha-ha! Aunty! Are you okay? Why do you want to change her channel?*
- Tao: *Mummy, I have series that I want to watch o*
- Ronke: *Serial killer ni! My friend put **watermelon** for her joo! she say she want to watch–*

The phonological joke is present in the emboldened compound noun ‘watermelon’, because by it Ronke is trying to refer to a type of cartoon for children called ‘Cocomelon’. Instead, however, she says ‘watermelon’. The similarity between the two nouns is present in the second word making up the compound, while the difference is found in the first. Thus, original meaning for minimal pairs is technically expanded to capture this instance too. In the noun N₁N₂ the difference lies within N₁ which contains two syllables. The only similarity that exists between ‘watermelon’ and ‘Cocomelon’ exists in the N₂, so, there is an obvious violation here. However, this violation is one that elicits humour in hearers who have a background knowledge of what Cocomelon is, and thus understand Ronke’s humorous error in her use of ‘watermelon’ instead.

6.2. Phonological restructuring

This category of phonological jokes refers to the comedian’s attempt at creating humour through the re-arrangement of the phonemes and/or syllables of an already occurring word to form a

new, but related and humorous structure. There is a total of four of these within the data and they are analysed subsequently.

The first instance of phonological restructuring is found in Ronke's address to Sabinus. Ronke, who has just previously explained to Sabinus that the yam flour she is holding cost her a whopping sum of ₦7,000, is extremely upset when Sabinus spills the flour because he is distracted by a beautiful passer-by. The following dialogue ensues right before she slaps Sabinus across the cheeks:

Ronke: *Sabinus, I hope say you **sabi nurse** wound very well*
Sabinus: *Why now?*
Ronke: *Because you are about to receive something huge*
 - Sabinus helps mama Taaooma

The phonological joke lies in the words 'Sabinus' and 'sabi nurse'. The Pidgin English utterance above loosely translates to *Sabinus, I hope you can nurse a wound very well*. Sabinus is a name that is often pronounced as /sabinus/ in Nigeria, and the verb phrase 'sabi nurse' is pronounced as /sabinɔs/ and loosely translates to 'being able to nurse'. Thus, there is intense phonological similarity between the two structures, and the distinctive phoneme between both is the peak of the third syllable. This phonological restructure is one that shows a lot of creativity, especially because of how the semantic import is maintained. Although there is an absence of any form of violation in this instance, humour is still achieved through the creative restructure of syllables. The difficult economic situation in the country is also projected in the high cost of the yam flour that Ronke purchases.

The next instance in this category is found in Tayo, the first child's conversation with an acquaintance who thinks he is irresponsible and calls him a lout. Tayo says the following:

*Na me be tout, cos...cos I hold cigarette for hand, na me be tout. Get to know inside your head that I'm a graduate of **Physics** that's why I'm driving **V6**.*

'So you think I'm a lout just because I'm smoking a cigarette. Be aware that I'm a graduate of Physics and that's why I drive a V6'

The translation of Tayo's outburst is already provided above and Taaooma's phonological play on the phonemes is quite phenomenal, especially because meaning is progressively retained in the excerpt. The phonological humour lies in the words 'physics' and 'V6', which are transcribed as /'fiziks/ and /'visiks/, respectively. The distinctive feature in both syllables lies in the quality of voice: the onsets of both syllables differ in voice feature, meanwhile all other features remain the same. Despite the phonological similarity in terms of phonemes and stress placement, Taaooma is still able to draw a connection between both words to achieve a humorous meaning. There is a creation of contrast between Tayo's reputation as a lout and his educational qualification as a graduate of Physics as well as his economic status of someone comfortable enough to drive a V6 vehicle. By extension, this skit draws attention to the socio-culture of educated graduates who now go into hooliganism and other illicit means to earn a living. It also projects a message about not judging a book by its cover because although Tayo smokes a cigarette, this is not all there is about him.

Another instantiation of phonological restructuring is found in one of Kunle's promiscuous acts during which he tries to convince a lady that a sexual affair with her would build his immunity. However, the lady is uninterested and instead proposes a medication, 'Fecomi', that would build his immunity. To this Kunle replies in Yoruba language:

Fecomi – o fé kó mì l’òmì òbè

‘Fecomi – you want to rob me of my delicacy’

- Baba Tao Loves Big Bombom

Taaooma exploits the resources of Yoruba language to achieve the humour-eliciting phonological restructuring in the excerpt above. The name of the medication being indirectly advertised in the comedy skit is ‘Fecomi’, which is pronounced as /fe'komi/, and the comedian splits up the syllables in this noun to achieve a larger grammatical unit in Yoruba language, which is meaningful and most importantly similar to it. The distinctive feature in both structures is found in the placement of stress and tones on ‘Fecomi’ and ‘o fékó’, respectively. Again, there is no violation here, benign or not, yet, humour is still achieved. Furthermore, the skit preaches against promiscuity under any pretence.

The final instance within this category is found in Tayo’s outburst at a restaurant where he is ripped off for what he considers to be a substandard meal. He demonstrates his disgust to the waiter, just as the latter wishes him and his girlfriend a good time at their meal.

Waiter: *Bon appetit!*

Tayo: ***Bon appetit?** Abiki n yo eti e bo?*

‘Should I remove your ears?’

Bon appetit is a French phrase for ‘enjoy your meal’ and the comedian employs the resources of Yoruba language to reshuffle the French sound segments and show Tayo’s disgust at the service in the restaurant. ‘Bon appetit’ is transcribed as /bɔnapɛti/ and Taaooma uses the clause ‘*abi ki n yo eti e bo?*’ to match the phonemes in the French phrase. Thus, ‘eti’ /ɛti/ and /bɔ/ are represented in the Yoruba excerpt. The phonological similarity between these two linguistically different structures is immediately recognisable once it is perceived by a hearer. The humour is also instantly decipherable considering the goodwill in the French phrase and the bad motive and reaction in the Yoruba response. It is obvious that Taaooma borrows from other languages to achieve the desired effect. Also, the obvious contradiction in both languages and their content is an instance of harmless and humour-eliciting violation. However, this harmlessness is perceived only from the perspective of the listener, and not at the level of the characters. More specifically, the waiter is on the receiving end of the threat from Tayo, therefore, he will not find the threat humorous as a character. However, the threats from Tayo are known to be an act by the audience, thus, there lies the benign violation that constitutes the humour in the skit. Again, this skit is a subtle message about the financial state of people in the nation as well as about some business organisations’ attempt to make ends meet. Some people can no longer afford to take loved ones on treats to restaurants because of the high cost of goods and services that are mediocre and overpriced.

6.3. Phonological ambiguity

This category of phonological humour in Taaooma’s comedy skits engages words and structures that have more than one meaning based on their phonological structure. There are only two comedy skits that employed this strategy and the first is found in Ronke’s reaction to Tao bringing home a boyfriend whose name is ‘Sexy Steel’. Ronke is very unwelcoming of the idea of a boyfriend, and she sends Tao to her room in anger. Below is her retort on discovering that Sexy Steel is still seated even after Tao has retreated to her room:

Steel? You're still here! Hold still. Tayo! Bring my steel! Ee ri nkan na, o l'ohun Sexy Steel, pele o 555 Stainless Steel, o s'òrí bì nkan tan fi n serve stew.

'Look at the thing that calls himself Sexy Steel. Kudos to you, 555 Stainless Steel, with a head like something used to serve stew.'

- Taaooma's New Man

Taaooma engages homophony a great deal in the excerpt above. She uses the word 'steel' to refer to three different entities which are the person himself (Tao's boyfriend), a gun, and a common Nigerian brand of steel plate (555 Stainless steel). Also, she introduces a phonologically similar word, 'still' and the presence of this word in the same structure brings a lot of alliteration and rhythm to the joke. Other words that add to this are 'stainless', 'serve' and 'stew'. 'Still' and 'steel' ought to be transcribed as /stɪl/ and /sti:l/, respectively, based on the Received Pronunciation standard. However, this is not how it is generally produced by an average Nigerian. Instead, an average Nigerian does not make a length distinction between both phonemes, thus, as far as an average Nigerian is concerned, the two words are produced the same way. Hence, the humour lies in the multifaceted use of the supposed boyfriend's name to berate him. Herein lies the phonological ambiguity, because the disambiguation is tied to the co-text that Taaooma situates these words in, within the joke. At the level of the characters, Tao's boyfriend is threatened and harassed, and is therefore not the entity who derived humour from the lines. Rather, the humour is garnered by the audience watching, who realise that the skit is only an act and the threats and violations are harmless.

The second instance of phonological ambiguity lies in Kunle's retort at his wife's lack of empathy when he is swindled of a huge sum of money by a seemingly demon-possessed girlfriend. Kunle tries to pull his wife into the resulting debt so as to get her support, but she quickly exonerates herself, and to this, Kunle exclaims:

Women are scum/women has come!

- The Side Chick

The two possibilities of what Kunle has said are presented in the excerpt above, and although it may be argued that the second option is grammatically incorrect, it must be noted that the character of Kunle commits grammatical blunders such as this, as evident in previous videos. Thus, committing this kind of error is not out of character for Kunle. Also, both possibilities are appropriate responses to Ronke's self-exoneration. By the first possibility, Taaooma, through the character of Kunle, is making an ironical, ideological and humorous statement. More specifically, the common statement among women, especially on Twitter in the Nigerian space, is that 'men are scum', thus juxtaposing the subject for the female gender is hilarious especially because in this particular situation, it is Kunle, a representative of the male gender, that has proved to be scum. However, Taaooma makes the reverse to be the case – it is the culprit that is accusing the innocent of being scum. Therefore, there are layers of violations here; however, Ronke's nonchalant reaction proves the harmlessness of the violation, thus, its humour. The socio-cultural implication of this skit is an advocacy against extramarital affairs. Also, the skit advocates that consequences of promiscuous episodes must be borne by the guilty party alone.

The second possibility is a direct translation from Yoruba language. It does not literally mean that someone has arrived; rather, it means someone has come again with their ways or their ideology. And this is another acceptable and possible response because Ronke blatantly disagrees with Kunle's opinion that they are both going to face the consequence of his infidelity. It is important to note that these two options are possible responses because the central vowel

/ʌ/ is generally produced as a back vowel /ɔ/ so that ‘scum’ and ‘come’ sound alike in many Nigerians’ rendition.

6.4 Phonological extension

This category of phonological jokes is usually enabled by two characters – one or two phonemes said by one character are extended by another character through the supply of a word that has a partly similar structure. The meanings within these lines are maintained, despite the phonological extensions. There is a total of twenty-eight instances of phonological extensions as a strategy in the data. These instances have been divided into four sub-groups which are extensions into regular words, popular people’s names, popular concepts and other languages. Representative instances have been chosen for these four different sub-groups of phonological extension, while the other instances have been listed out.

6.4.1 Phonological extension into regular words

When a character utters a word, exclamation or sound, the other character responds with a longer one, but which shares some phonological similarities with the first word/exclamation. There are ten instances; two are discussed here, while some more are listed below. The first instance is found when Kunle has a premonition that his mechanic, Femi, is using his car for personal functions, instead of repairing it. Therefore, Kunle pays Femi an unexpected visit only to see that his premonition is indeed accurate. In anger, Kunle initiates a conversation:

Kunle: *Femi mecho, na ment?* ‘Are you crazy?’
Femi: *Yes sir, na enjoyment* ‘It’s enjoyment’

The two highlighted words in the excerpt above show the phonological extension strategy. In Nigerian Pidgin English, ‘ment’ is a word recently coined from ‘mental’ through a backformation process, and it is used to mean that someone is crazy. Kunle uses this word in a rhetorical question to ask if Femi is crazy, but Femi still goes ahead to respond. However, his response is really not an answer to the question but a declaration of his state of being: he says he is only having fun with Kunle’s car, and he is not crazy. This is obviously an anomaly in a client-customer relationship. However, this anomaly is a harmless one that evokes mirth in the audience because of Femi’s mindless audacity. Thus, Kunle asks is it ‘ment’ /ment/, and Femi responds that it is ‘enjoyment’ /endʒɔiment/. Both responses share the syllable and suffix ‘-ment’. This skit portrays the sheer irresponsibility that is common with most artisans in Nigeria; they are generally infamous for their deception and disloyalty to their clients.

The next instance is found in a skit where Tao’s friend comes over to seek a loan from her. Ronke, Tao’s mum, is also home at the time. Tao goes upstairs to get something for her mother but does not find it on time, so she shouts to her mother from upstairs, but the distance inhibits perception and Ronke has to keep saying ‘eh?’ to solicit a repetition from Tao. However, every time Ronke says ‘eh?’, Tao’s friend disrespectfully extends it for her thus:

Tao: [shouts something supposedly inaudible]
Ronke: Eh?
Friend: Envelope
...
Tao: [shouts something supposedly inaudible again]
Ronke: Eh?
Friend: Exam

- The Annoying Visitor

This cycle goes on for about three times, all through which Tao's friend disrespectfully provides extensions, until Ronke dazes her with an unexpected slap across the cheek. The portrayed situation itself is not a normal one, because it is not expected that the friends of one's child should disrespect one in this manner. However, this is exactly where humour is situated in this joke because the violation is benign, not from the perspective of Ronke, but from the perspective of the audience. At the character and societal levels, this would not be expected or condoned; however, because it is clearly a comedy skit, the audience tends to appreciate the violation and even predict that recompense is imminent for the aggrieved parent. The exclamation 'eh' /e/ is extended to 'envelope' /envilop/, 'exam' /egzam/ and 'encyclopaedia' /ensaiklopidia/. It is to be noted that these transcriptions do not follow the Received Pronunciation; rather, it is patterned after how an average Nigerian produces the phonemes in these words, as depicted in the comedy skit. Thus, the originally produced sounds are found within the ones supplied by Tao's friend. The violations and the consequences depicted in this particular skit are a message to show that disrespecting older people does not go without punishment. This theme is common knowledge among young people in Nigeria and is clearly being projected in this skit. The other instances of this category of phonological jokes are listed below:

Series...Serial killer

Suck your blood...soakaway ni

Hypo...hypothesis

The first two share phonemes with their extended versions of 'serial killer' and 'soakaway', while in the case of the third, the two syllables in 'hypo' are present in the extended version of 'hypothesis'.

6.4.2 Phonological extension into popular names

This category of phonological extension involves the reference to famous people whose names bear some phonemic resemblance to a word earlier mentioned in the skit. There is a total of seven of these instances, and two of them are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. The first instance occurs in a skit where a couple of armed robbers attack Kunle's home to rob them of their money. Under the pressure of interrogation, Kunle reveals to the robbers that he has ₦50million. However, Ronke is able to subdue them by administering some dose of sleeping medicine to them in the food they greedily requested. Having subdued them, Ronke engages Kunle in a talk:

Ronke: *So you have ₦50million in the house, Kunle*

Kunle: *Ehn, it's not as if... it's in the **bank**, I have the money in the **bank**.*

Ronke: *It's in the **bank**. Oshe! **Banky-W!***

- The Surprise Birthday Party

Banky-W has no connection whatsoever to the ongoing conversation or the bank in question, except for the phonological similarity of 'Banky-W' and 'bank'. Banky-W is a popular actor and artist in Nigeria, therefore, Ronke's reference to Kunle as Banky-W is definitely a non-truth, a type of violation. However, this violation is a benign one. Ronke extends the /bank/of 'bank' into /bankidɔbuju/ of Banky-W, thus, the similarity lies in the first four phonemes. Again, Taaoma uses Ronke and Kunle's conversation to show that deception or half-truths between spouses is a venture that does not always pay off.

Another instance is found in a skit where Tao is trying to get some rest, but her mother will have none of it:

- Ronke: *What are you doing there? Why are you sitting down?*
Tao: *I want to take a **nap** o, I want to sleep.*
Ronke: *You want to take a **nap**, **Napoleon** ni, will you stand up now!*

The phonological extension is present in the supply of ‘Napoleon’ to the word ‘nap’, the former begins with all the three phonemes contained in the latter, although that is where all the similarity ends. Napoleon was a popular French general who became an emperor of the French between 1769 and 1821. In terms of who Napoleon was and what he represents, Tao’s desire to nap is in no way connected; however, Ronke still uses this word not because of the significance of the figure or the semantic content of the word, but because of the phonological similarity. The disconnection in terms of meaning is a conspicuous violation but harmless nonetheless, and the connection in terms of phonology contributes to eliciting the humour from the situation. At the level of the character, Tao must feel violated and harassed by her mother; however, the viewers derive humour from this violation. Furthermore, Taaoma uses this skit to project the kind of typical training and upbringing that female children are subjected to by their African (or Nigerian) mothers. The other instances of this phonological strategy are listed below:

- Finished it...Finidi George*
Economical...Karl Marx
Nack...Nakamorani

6.4.3 Phonological extension into popular concepts

This third sub-group of phonological strategy has to do with an extension into popular concepts. The first instance is found during a conversation between Tao, Kunle and Ronke. Ronke and Tao are trying to convince Kunle to give some money in order to purchase some cooking oil, but Kunle is not ready to give up any cash; instead, he encourages Ronke and Tao to go and pay for the oil by themselves.

- Kunle: *Okay, the two of you that decided, go and buy it*
Ronke: ***Ah-ha!***
Kunle: ***Apocalypto** ni! you people will just be bringing **bill***
Ronke: ***Pele o, Billie Jean!** Who tell you that it is expensive?*

The highlighted parts contain two different instances: ‘Apocalypto’ refers to a popular coconut flavoured alcoholic drink, while ‘Billie Jean’ refers to a character in one of Michael Jackson’s songs entitled *Billie Jean*. The choice of Apocalypto is because of the phoneme in its first syllable /a/ which is the same as Ronke’s exclamation to Kunle’s suggestion. There is a benign violation here because Apocalypto has no relevance whatsoever to what is being discussed, neither does ‘Billie Jean’ have anything to do with the conversation except for the word ‘bill’ that Kunle used in his response. However, Kunle and Ronke infuse the words ‘Apocalypto’ and ‘Billie Jean’, regardless. This is part of what generates the humour in this skit. This is another episode of money issues between spouses as depicted by Ronke and Kunle.

Another instance is found in a skit where Ronke sends Tao to go and buy pepper from Iya Chinaza, but Tao is cheated, so Ronke drags her back to Iya Chinaza’s stall. However, it is Iya Chinaza’s son who sold the pepper to Tao. There, Ronke says the following:

*Se pe Iya Chinaza can born somebody that's having sense like this. You're selling **pepper** ₦200 for ₦1,000. Pele o, **Pepenazi**, se you'll start singing.*

'So someone so smart can emerge from Iya Chinaza's loins. You're selling pepper worth ₦200 for ₦1,000. Sorry o, Pepenazi, perhaps you should become a singer.'

The excerpt above contains an instance of benign violation because selling pepper has nothing whatsoever to do with singing; however, Taaoma links up the two professions, not through their semantic import, but through their phonological similarities – 'pepper' /pepe/ and 'Pepenazi' /pepenazi/, a music artist. The combination of the similarities between both words, despite the semantic violation, elicits humour. Again, the typical reaction of a Nigerian mother when she is cheated is depicted. Although this socio-cultural statement may be argued among some members of the high class in the society, it is often the case with middle or lower class mothers who pay attention to how every Naira is spent.

6.4.4 Phonological extension into other languages

In order to achieve the phonological extensions and also maintain their phonological similarities, Taaoma borrowed from other languages like French and Yoruba language. Excerpts that contain each of the languages have been discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. The first description depicts Tao's dilemma and fear when she is swindled of the sum of ₦50,000 which her mother had told her to use to buy a piece of clothing, ankara. The following conversation happens between Ronke and Tao:

Ronke: *What about the ankara that I sent you? Iya Adeola say you di'no' reach her side o.*

Tao: **Ma?**

Ronke: **Mademoiselle**

- I should never listen to people again

On the one hand, 'Ma?' as asked by Tao is not because she did not hear what Ronke said; rather, it is really an avoidance or delay strategy. This is because Tao has fallen victim of fraudsters whom she paid the money to but have now refused to send the cloth. Tao is now petrified about her mother's reaction when she realises that both the Ankara and the money are unavailable. On the other hand, Ronke also knows that it could not have been that Tao did not hear her question, that is why she retorts with 'Mademoiselle', a French word for 'Miss'. There are three syllables in 'mademoiselle', the first one ('mad') shares the first two segments with 'ma', as said by Tao. 'Mademoiselle' has nothing to do with the ongoing conversation, yet, Ronke supplies it, not just as a response, but as a retort. This is an obvious but benign violation, thus it qualifies as humour. Tao is not the character who can classify the violation as benign because it is a form of threat to her, on the part of the viewers, however, the violation is benign, and humour is enjoyed. Also, the flaws of online purchase are depicted here; unsuspecting buyers are swindled of their money.

The second instance of this category of phonological joke involves the Yoruba language. The mother of the family, Ronke, is found soliloquising about her husband, Kunle's, infidelity. She has somehow found out that Kunle is having an affair with a woman called Cassandra. She blurts out the following:

Kunle went to meet one idiot Cassandra, o wa ka s'ara, ah! o ka mi l'ara.

'Kunle went to meet some idiotic Cassandra, and wrapped himself all around her, ah! It's so hurtful'.

In Yoruba language, the name Cassandra rhymes and shares some syllables with the interpretation above. Taaoma's choice of Yoruba language to complete Ronke's soliloquy is no accident because it is a phonological match for the noun 'Cassandra' /ka'sandra/. 'Ka s'ara' /kàásàrà/ phonologically matches the name, and the pleasantness of the rhyme is quite contradictory to Ronke's upset state because of her husband's promiscuity. The choice of words from both languages is ingeniously matched to achieve meaning, rhyme and humour. Here, the emotional turmoil of people whose spouses are cheating on them is depicted.

6.5 Implications of the phonological jokes

Taaoma uses her comedy skits to create humour and address some of the socio-cultural and economic issues that Nigeria is faced with. Some of these skits are also used to advertise products and project messages about health and general well-being too. Specifically, the skits imply the unfavourable economy of the nation through the high cost of food, people resorting to desperate means to make money online, burglary and daylight robbery by restaurants. The skits also project the infamous challenges in spousal relationships such as telling half-truths, infidelity, and money problems. The skits imply that there are consequences for promiscuity. There is also the depiction of wives' financial self-sufficiency outside of allowances from husbands.

Some common social vices are also portrayed such as artisans' irresponsibility to their jobs; hooliganism is also rightly portrayed in a negative light. Virtues such as patience and tolerance are encouraged, while rough and dangerous lifestyles are discouraged.

The harsh treatment of daughters by their mothers in the name of upbringing is also subtly disclaimed in the skits. However, the importance of the family unit in the social education and uprightness of the society is displayed over and over again.

7. Conclusion

The study set out to explore the phonological jokes in Maryam Apaokagi's comedy skits. Twenty of these skits were used as data and the phonological jokes in them were identified, categorised, and described using Distinctive Features Theory and Benign Violation Theory. Also, the implications of the jokes in terms of their societal functions were discussed. Four categories of phonological jokes were identified, and these are minimal pairs, phonological ambiguity, phonological restructuring and phonological extension. It was discovered that the phonological jokes thrive greatly on the shared background knowledge between the artist and the audience. Also, meaning and humour are often retained throughout the course of each comedy through the artist's exploration of phonological and linguistic interventions such as tone, stress, phonemes, and other language resources.

References

Adenusi, R. A. & Onifade, O. S. (2020). 'Exploring the stereotype of the African parent in selected Nigerian comic skits'. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 20 (6), pp. 47-59.

- Adesoye, R. E. (2018). 'Phonological distortion as a humorous strategy in Folarin Falana's comedy skits'. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 6 (4), pp. 60-74.
- Adesoye, R. E. (2021). 'Memes as interventionist strategy in the euphemisation of national public issues', in Osunbade, N. et al. (eds.), *Pragmatics, Discourse and Society, Volume 2: A Festschrift for Akin Odebunmi*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 251-278.
- Africa Polling Institute (2021). 'Skit economy: an assessment of digital content creators in Nigeria'. *Press Release*, January 28, 2021.
- Akpah, B. C. (2018). Satire, humour, and parody in 21st century Nigerian women's poetry. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 6 (4), pp. 133-144.
- Alabi, O. S. (2021). 'An exploration into the satiric significance of abuse in selected Nigerian drama'. *Alicante Journal of English Studies* 35, pp. 143-162.
- Attardo, S., Wagner, M. & Urios-Aparisi, E. (2013). *Prosody and Humor*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Bamgbose, G. A. (2019). 'Beyond rhythm and lyrics: pragmatic strategies of verbal humour in Nigerian hip-hop'. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 7 (4), pp. 16-31.
- Bamgbose, G. & Ehondor, B. (2021). 'Pragmatic and discourse functions in "Jenifa's Diary"'. *Linguistik Online* 108 (3), pp. 19-32.
- Chomsky, N. & Halle, M. (1968). *The Sound Patterns of English*. New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Dauvin-Gutiérrez, G. et al. (2018). *Humour and Language: an Analysis of Linguistic and Extralinguistic Features Used in Jokes*. Department of Linguistics. University of Chile, pp. 1-75.
- Filani, I. (2015). 'Discourse types in stand-up comedy performances: an example of Nigerian stand-up comedy'. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 3 (1), pp. 41-60.
- Filani, I. (2016). 'Humorous meaning strategies in Nigerian stand-up comedy: an example of I Go Dye performances'. *Papers in English and Linguistics* 17, pp. 193-220.
- Filani, I. (2017). 'Politics of humour and political humour in Nigerian stand-up comedy'. *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 6 (1), pp. 93-109.
- Filani, I. (2018). 'Editorial: dis laf fit kill person – an overview of Nigerian humour'. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 6 (4), pp. 1-9.
- Glick, D. J. (2007). 'Some performative techniques of stand-up comedy: an exercise in the textuality of temporalization'. *Language and Communication* 27, pp. 291-306.
- Helliwell, J. et al. (2021). 'World happiness report'. United Nations. Retrieved September, 2 2022 from <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/>.
- Inya, O. (2016). 'Pragmatics of humour in a Nigerian university's departmental chat rooms', in Taiwo, R., Odebunmi, A. & Adetunji, A. (eds.), *Analyzing Language and Humor in Online Communication*, Hershey PA: Information Science Reference, pp. 190-206.
- Lew, R. (1997). 'Towards a taxonomy of linguistic jokes'. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* XXXI, pp. 123-152.
- McGraw, P. A. & Warren, C. (2010). 'Benign violations: making immoral behavior funny'. *Psychological Science* 21 (8), pp. 1141-1149.
- Muñoz-Basols, J., Adrjan, P. & David, M. (2013). 'Phonological humor as perception and representation of foreignness', in Gurillo, L. R. & Ortega, M. B. A. (eds.), *Irony and Humor: From Pragmatics to Discourse*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 159-190.
- Ojomo, O. & Sodeinde, O. A. (2021). 'Social media skits: reshaping the entertainment experience of broadcast audience. *SAGE Open*, pp. 1-13.
- Sen, A. (2012). 'Humour analysis and qualitative research'. *Social Research Update* 63, pp. 1-4.

- Soneye, T. (2019). 'Na joke o: voice in Nigerian standup comedy jibes'. *Limits and Prospects of African Humour*. ECAS 2019 Africa: Connections and Disruptions.
- Sunday, A. B. & Bangbose, G. A. (2021). 'Pragmatic analysis of humour strategies and functions in "Jenifa's Diary" and "Professor JohnBull"'. *The European Journal of Humour Research* 9 (4), pp. 20-34.