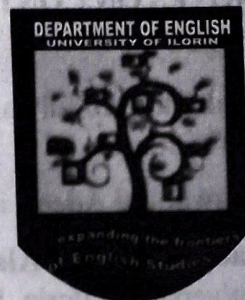
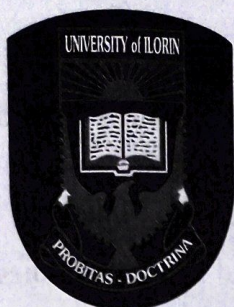


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STAND-UP COMEDY ACT AT FESTIVAL OF FIRE PROGRAMME IN BUEA CAMEROON

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the audience base of stand-up comedy in Africa has increased locally and internationally by leaps and bounds. This increase can be traced in part to the 'localised' languages employed in the acts of African comedy. Thus, it can be rightfully said that the acts of stand-up comedians are heavily influenced by the context of discourse or the whole entities which constitute common ground between the comedian and their audience. This paper attempted to examine the socio-pragmatic use of the language of Aboki4Christ's routine at Festival of Miracles Crusade, Buea, Cameroon in order to uncover how he is able to successfully deliver his joke considering the difference in his background context and that of his audience. Six randomly selected jokes which lasted for eighteen minutes, six seconds cumulatively were analysed using socio-pragmatic variables and Adetunji's (2011) pragmatic strategies. The study revealed that despite the fact that the discourse participants are not homogeneous, the overall, communicative intention can be said to have been achieved. The pragmatic features found in the data include: linguistic coding, stereotyping, call and response, self-deprecation, shared or open ridicule and face-saving strategies. The study concluded that there are considerable overlaps between the pragmatic strategies employed for a Nigerian audience as used by a Nigerian comedian and the pragmatic strategies used by a Nigerian comedian for a Cameroonian context.

Introduction

Humour according to Onyancha (2015, p.1) is defined as, a state of mind, as a quality of causing amusements, and as the ability to understand and enjoy, what is funny and makes people laugh. Humour is an aspect of man that is context-based. It serves affiliative and disaffiliative functions in the society just like all man's expressive functions. Although, humour is considered to be mere entertainment, it is a powerful resource for social commentary and transformation (Black, 2012, p. 87). One of the platforms for humorous discourse is stand-up comedy shows.

Stand-up comedy is a monologue performance by an actor often described as a 'stand-upper' to a seated audience for the main purpose of exciting them. Stand-up comedy involves both performance and material acts. The performance has to do with the stage persona of the stand-up comedian as he takes the stage and gives out performances similar to that of an actor. The material has to do with the text of his jokes, which according to Schwarz (2010, p.51), can take many forms, such as: narrative jokes, proverbial phrases, one-liners, knock-knock jokes or riddles, etc.

The performance and the material aspects of jokes are heavily reliant on the context of use. The audience of a stand-up comedy is usually prepared to be entertained and thus, the stand-upper tries to consider their ethno-linguistic background while preparing his routine. Clark (1996, p.101) states that "the comedian exploits a communal common ground to homogenise his audience as a 'cultural community' within which he belongs". Double (2005, p.116) corroborates Clark's assertion by saying that "much of what stand-up comedians do is about sharing shared feelings, shared experiences and creating a sense of community with the audience."

There are several stand-up comedy actors in Nigeria, most of whom are not only successful in the country but also of high renown internationally. One of these comedy actors is 'Aboki4Christ' who came to limelight in 2007. He is a Christian and he is usually invited to perform his routines in churches. The data for this study is derived from the YouTube video of the comedian's performance in Buea, Cameroon. This research endeavour sought to uncover the socio-pragmatic strategies used by Aboki4Christ in the delivery of his jokes.

Literature Review

Socio-Pragmatics

The concepts of pragmatics and sociolinguistics have been said to be interrelated fields of study. This is so because pragmatics aims at considering the effects of contextual pressure on word usage; it also tries to explicate meanings that are covertly expressed in utterances while sociolinguistics, on the other hand, focuses on how the society and its structures affect language use. Thomas (1995, p. 187) states that:

Sociolinguistics and pragmatics are both centrally concerned with the effect of context on language: the sociolinguist is primarily interested in the systematic linguistic correlates of social and contextual variables... how features of context systematically constrain language use. The pragmatist tries to show how speakers use language in order to change the situation they find themselves in.

Thomas (1995) further avers that pragmatics can be divided into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics components. Pragmalinguistics refers to the available means for communicating acts that are embedded with the interpersonal meanings. The second component was coined by Leech (1983, p.10). According to him, the term 'sociopragmatics' describes the study of the ways in which pragmatic meanings reflect 'specific local conditions in language'. Leech describes socio-pragmatics as the sociological interface of pragmatics which encapsulates the social perceptions underlying participants' performance and interpretations of communicative actions.

Schneider (2010, p.255) asserts that sociopragmatics studies culture-specific language situations with macro-social factors such as: age, gender, social class, ethnicity and regional affiliation and micro-social factors such as: power and distance. This current research employed the macro-variables and other pragmatic elements in the analysis of the data. The macro-variables essentially gave insights into the common shared ways of life of the Nigerian comedian (Aboki4Christ) and his Cameroonian audience. The macro-variables uncovered how the societal make-up or background of the comedian is in tandem with his Cameroonian audience and how this aided the successful deliveries of his jokes.

The Concept of Humour

The meaning of humour has been approached from different perspectives. Several scholars have posited that humour simply means the act of laughing at a thing said. The exception to this belief is that, it is possible to claim that something is humourous, even though no one laughs, but someone can claim "that's not funny" (Ross 1998, p.1). Humour, according to Ross has a high profile in our society. Humour is influential - from political satire to joking as a way of establishing friendships and excluding others. Thus, it can be deduced that humour can be affiliative or disaffiliative markers in discourse acts.

Ageli (2014, p. 415) citing the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, defines humour as the capacity to perceive, appreciate, or express what is funny, amusing, incongruous, and ludicrous. Schmitz (2002, p. 3) avers that "humour is a variety of texts but often with subtle differences: jokes, jests, witticisms, quips, sallies, cracks, gags, puns, retorts, riddles, one-liners and conundrums". This means humour can be found in texts or words that amuse, entertain, or/and elicit laughter from people.

Humour in jokes can be accidental or intentional. Ageli (2014, p. 415) submits that in intentional humour, communication is non *bonafide* and one or more of Grice's (1975) maxims is flouted to create a humourous effect. Intentional humour can be found in the performances of comedians and comedic dramatists. Accidental humour, on the other hand, is *bona fide* communication (earnest, serious and information conveying) in which the infringement of the maxim of the cooperative principles is spontaneous and unintentional.

The Pragmatic Strategies Employed by Nigerian Stand-up Comedians

Adetunji (2011, p. 1) states that the pragmatics of Nigerian humour as used in stand-up comedy involves: linguistic coding, stereotyping, formulas, call-and-response, self-deprecation, and shared expressions. These pragmatic interactional contexts of humour in Nigerian stand-up comedy, to a great extent, encourage the involvement of the comedians and their audience in humour production and consumption in a way that reduces the stage authority of the comedian to the barest minimum.

Linguistic coding according to Adetunji (2011, p. 16) involves the use of Nigerian indigenous languages, Standard/Nigerian English as well as Nigerian Pidgin English. He submits that due to the linguistic complexity of Nigeria, Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard/Nigerian English are preponderantly used in the deliveries of the jokes of Nigerian stand-up comedians.

Stereotyping is generally used to mean the popular shared opinion or meaning given to a person, thing, place, religion, etc. which often times carry negative connotations. For instance, the Igbo people of Nigeria are known for their business caninness/acumen and love for money.

Formulaic expressions are also one of the pragmatic features employed by Nigerian stand-up comedians in getting their audiences' participations in their routines. These expressions or verbalisations according to Adetunji signal the beginning or end of a joke.

Call and Response comes in the forms of question/answer, puzzle/resolution, and elliptical statements (whose completives are sought from the audience) (Adetunji 2011, p. 16). This pragmatic feature helps to involve the audience in the comedians' routine.

Self-deprecation is used by the comedians to ridicule themselves in the course of their presentations. Here, comedians make themselves the butt of the jokes. Their positive faces are threatened but that of their audience is enhanced and encouraged; the audience is aware that the comedian is ridiculing himself in order for them to appreciate his jokes. Also, the negative face of some members of the audience is saved as the comedian is not directly or indirectly making them (their religion, physique, state of origin, etc.) the butt of his jokes.

Shared experiences are always exploited by Nigerian stand-up comedians in the delivery of their jokes. This term is also referred to as communal common ground and it is usually revealed in the use of indexicals, implied messages, politeness principles and ideologies, among others.

This study deployed the above-listed contextual features to the analysis of Aboki4Christ's performance in Cameroon with the aim of assessing and examining to what extent they are applicable in the immediate context of use. In essence, this study investigated if these pragmatic features are employed by Nigerian comedians solely for

their Nigerian audience or otherwise, in their bid of achieving an interactional context. The next section is dedicated to the analysis of the six sampled jokes of Aboki4Christ's performance in Buea, Cameroon. The sampled data are performances of jokes which lasted for eighteen minutes, twenty-six seconds cumulatively. The contributions of the audience are capitalised and placed in brackets for ease of identification.

Data Analysis

Age

The audience of the stand-up comedy considered in this analysis are church members and as one would expect, people of different age groups come together to worship in churches. The fact that the audience (young and old) of Aboki4Christ are receptive to his jokes, reveals the mindset of Christians to comedy. It can be said that in the past, several old churches were not in support of comedians performing on the pulpits of churches. For instance, a Nigerian Drama Evangelist Mike Bamiloye cited in an online article - Premium Times Nigeria, asserts that jokes of scriptures, the Blood of Jesus, speaking in tongues, the throne of grace, are mockery of God. Despite these calls against gospel comedy, comedians are featured in programmes held by some Pentecostal churches. Thus, it can be said that gospel comedy is gradually budding in Nigeria and, by extension, Africa. Comedians like MC Abbey state that "gospel comedy is not unholy jesting and it has come to stay just like drama which orthodox churches seems to be against 30 years ago". Aboki4Christ's commercial success (even internationally) shows that churches are embracing the idea of gospel comedy.

The comedian is able to carry along the old members of the congregation especially when he mentions terms (verbal and non-verbal) which are peculiar to the youth. Thus, he was able to bridge the age gaps within his audience.

An instance in the joking situation which reveals the comedian's age is in the following:

"I will come back to Cameroon because I am already seeing some sisters in the choir".

The above extract suggests the comedian's youthful age and he uses it to excite the young unmarried ladies. In other instances, like: *"I no know say mummies can dance like that o!"*, he makes references to older people of the audience. By and large, these buttress the point stated earlier that Aboki4Christ's jokes cut across the different age groups within members of the audience.

Sex

The present members at the immediate context of the comedy are both male and female. The comedian's direct references are to females; he referred to single choir members in the extract: *"I will come back to Cameroon because I am already seeing some sisters in the choir"*. He also referred to mummies in the third joke: *"I no know say mummies can dance like that o"* (I did not know that mummies can dance like this). Other direct references are to present members in the audience: *"daddy, I appreciate you"*; *"I see he too was doing his style."* It can be inferred that Aboki4Christ referred

more to the present females in the audience than the males. Most of his references were aimed at appealing to the face of the audience.

Another deducible fact about gender as used by Aboki4Christ can be seen in the use of the masculine second person singular pronoun 'he' for pastors in his jokes. This reveals the common belief of people in Africa that pastors are usually male.

Social Class

In the last joke analysed in this study, the comedian suggests that people in churches are of different social statuses. The joke about a poor man who became possessed of an evil spirit which was cast out from a rich man indirectly celebrates the coyness of poor people.

Also, Aboki4Christ employs character footing (a dramatic strategy employed by comedians which involves playing different characters by a stand-up comedian) in showing the social class of Pastors. He delivers the roles of pastors in fluent Standard English, while he diverts to Nigerian Pidgin English when he acts the role of an active participant in the discourse. The knowledge of this is premised on the fact that in most African states, the use of Standard English by a person, often times, indicates that he belongs to the middle/upper class of a society. This can be seen in the following extracts from the data:

Aboki4Christ's roles

- I dey church one day... (I was in church one day)*
- Instead, wey pastor go begin dey preach he say... (Instead of the pastor to start preaching)*
- See clap; everybody dey clap in our hearts; sound no deycommot. (everyone was imagining the act of clapping)*

Character footing of a pastor

- Pastor said: "look at your neighbour and tell your neighbour you are Beautiful the way you are."*
- Look at your neighbour on the other side, tell him you are Beautiful the way you are.*
- I don't like the way you clap for me. They said you should welcome me; you are not clapping for me; clap for Jesus!*

The above instances reveal that pastors are not seen as those in a low social class in the African society as they are portrayed as being educated or learned. Thus, the use of the standard form of English while voicing the roles of pastor reveals the perceptions about the current status of pastors.

Ethnicity and Regional Affiliation

The established fact about the ethnic make-up of the participants in the joking situation is that the stand-up comedian is a Nigerian while majority of his audience are Cameroonian (essentially the English-speaking part). Thus, the participants are heterogeneous in nature even though they share borders and history. Despite the fact that the audience are not Nigerians, the comedians expect the audience to accommodate local common grounds peculiar to Nigerians. He does this by giving further explanation about personal and spatial deixis peculiar to Nigerians for the benefit of members of the audience who may not have prior common ground of the discourse.

"I attended a programme in Maiduguri; Maiduguri is in Borno state, North Eastern Nigeria where the thing is happening";

"Una know Igbo people of Nigeria?" (Do you know the Igbo people of Nigeria?)

"So, a pastor was invited from Port Harcourt; Port Harcourt we don't experience such a thing... now welcome pastor Chukuemeka Chukwumerije."

The comedian refers to the Hausa and the Igbo tribes of Nigeria. Port Harcourt is classified as Igbo, based on the name of the pastor: *Chukuemeka Chukwumerije* as the name is associated with the Igbo people of Nigeria. He mentions or refers to popular stereotypes of these groups with the aim of producing humour. The comedian also refers to some places in Cameroon such as 'Tiko', etc. in order to identify with the audience.

Linguistic Coding

Aboki4Christ makes use of a mixture of English, Nigerian Pidgin (NP) and a few French words in the data. This reveals that NPE cuts across the boundaries of Nigeria to her Cameroonian neighbours on the northern part of the country. The comedian's use of French words such as: '*mariage*' elicits cheers, claps, and laughter from the audience who are aware he is from an Anglophone country. Thus, the French words are used as solidarity markers. Below is a table showing the linguistic codes employed in the data:

Linguistic code choice	No. of occurrence (s) in sentence	Percentage (%)
English	145	53.70
Nigerian Pidgin	122	45.19
French	3	1.11
Total	270	100

Table 1: The frequency of linguistic codes in the data

English language is predominately used in the delivery of Aboki4Christ's jokes. This reveals that the audience belongs to the Anglophone part of Cameroon. Nigerian pidgin has the next highest number of occurrences. The usage of Nigerian Pidgin in Cameroon is intriguing due to the fact that Cameroon also has a functional pidgin called

"Cameroonian pidgin." The fact that Nigerian pidgin is understood in some parts of Cameroon, such as Buea can be traced in part to the geographical proximity of Buea to Nigeria and also, the 'close' structural similarity between Nigerian Pidgin and Cameroonian Pidgin.

The above chart shows a linguistically complex interaction between the comedian and his audience as it is evident that he engages in code-mixing. It can also be inferred that the paltry use of French words by the comedian is essentially aimed at showing affinity with the Cameroonian ways of life. This act (of shared language) in African settings is used as a positive politeness strategy which indicates brotherhood.

The comedian also makes use of vocal fillers such as: uh!, o!, oo!, etc. to show the intensity or degree of the seriousness of what he is saying. Others are used as vocal segregates (short non-lexical utterances) and they include: hmm, eh, etc. These vocal qualities are employed by the comedian to pass across implied (covert) messages. The fact that the audience receives and understands the vocal qualities as used shows, that to a large degree, they constitute common ground between the comedian and his audience and thus, largely between Nigerians and Cameroonians.

Stereotyping

In the data, Aboki4Christ reveals tribal stereotypes of the Igbo people of Nigeria as being business-minded and by extension, driven by money. This is revealed in the following extract:

Pastor say now do the craziest thing to possess your possession. Na him one Igbo brother, Igbo man, una know Igbo people of Nigeria?

CHEERS... The Igbo brother ran from the congregation came to the altar, carry offering basket. As he dey go pastor say ushers close the door (As he was going,) (LAUGHTER) amen... Pastor say usher close the door. (LAUGHTER). Amen! Pastor say usher close the door! I say you should do something crazy for the Lord; that one is madness.

The question "do you know Igbo brothers" is a *bona fide* co-operational maxim as used above as it is not only in the context of jokes that the Igbo people of Nigeria are stereotyped to be lovers of money. So, the question implicitly means that do you know the nature or character of the Igbo tribe? This question reflects that the immediate audience of the joke are aware of the Nigerian communal common ground on the nature of the Igbo people of Nigeria.

There is also a negative stereotype of Maiduguri. The comedian, humourously, in his joke, refers to Maiduguri as where "the thing is happening" (that is, the Boko Haram insurgency). The stereotype reflects on anyone who is dressed in certain ways like carrying a bag:

You don't trust anybody; this one that women are carrying bag to church; they don't carry bags to church there (referring to Maiduguri); you leave your bag in your house. Anybody seeing your bag, nobody will sit by your side."

A common ground on the fact that insurgency has been the order of the day in Maiduguri is exploited to express this stereotype. The stereotype on a particular way of dressing (especially with a bag) of suicide bombers is not only shared in the northern part of Nigeria but across the country. This Nigerian temporal or ethnic stereotype used in the delivery of jokes to a non-Nigerian audience (or largely non-Nigerian) can be said to have been well received and understood via the thunderous applause which followed the joke.

Formulaic Expressions

Kesckes (2014, p.110) submits that certain language sequences with conventionalised meanings used in predictable situations are known as formulaic expressions.

It is given information that the context of use, generally affects the choice of words employed in discourse. Aboki4Christ makes use of some expressions that are typical of Christendom. This type of expressions includes: 'amen', 'brother', 'sister', 'people of God', etc., and they are situation-bound expressions as they contextualise the physical set-up of the comedy acts. 'Amen' is used in the eighteen-minute, six seconds discourse ten times; their usages are to get the attention of the audience. For instance, in:

(LAUGHTER) Amen! Pastor say usher close the door! I say you should do something crazy for the Lord; that one is madness.

*... insteadwey pastor go begin dey preach, he say look at your neighbour on the other side, tell him or her you are beautiful the way you are. **People of God**, when I turned to that side, the sister weysiddon there (I turned to the side; the sister that sat there) (pauses) she no beautiful and she dey o; as I turn, (opens mouth and points) you are blessed o (LAUGHTER) Amen! Because the sister that sat there dey very many (the sister that sat there is fat) and see me here very few. If the sister catch me after service, pastor no go dey there o (If the sister meets me after the service, the pastor will not be there o!)*

In other instances, they are used as discourse or transitional markers:

Amen! Pastor say usher close the door! I say you should do something crazy for the Lord; that one is madness. Amen! The way we are shouting here, rejoicing and glorifying...

He said are you serious? So where are you come and continue the sermon. He said my brother I am in PortHacourt already o. Amen, Amen!! We are cracking jokes; nobody die....

Amen is also used in the text as call and response strategy. This is discussed in the following segment.

Call and Response

Call and response strategies used in the delivery of Aboki4Christ's jokes are question/answer; prayer/prayer. The answers to questions in call and response are usually a cross opinion of the audience which at times is definite (yes or no) and at other times, the responses are in form of laughter and cheers. The prayer/prayer call and response (for instance amen/amen; halleluyah/amen) as said in the above segments are employed to either get the attention of the audience or as a link to the next joke. These expressions fit the physical environment of the joke even though they are used in churches during worship service to praise God; call the attention of the audience to a fact; and also, to get a livelier audience.

Self-Deprecation

In the analysed eighteen minutes, twenty-six seconds discourse, an instance of self-deprecation is employed in the comedy acts:

"...because the sister that sat there, she dey very many and see me here very few. If the sister catch me after service, pastor no go dey there o!"

Here, he derides himself by implying that since the sister is bigger in stature than he is, she can easily beat him after the church service. Aboki4Christ made more use of open ridicule and shared ridicule than self-deprecation in the data. Open ridicule here refers to a situation where the comedian makes a present member of the audience the target or butt of his joke. An instance of this is in line 4 and 5 of the following:

You know people have asked, "Aboki, what is your problem?" "With all the money, why you still remain few?" "You no dey fat"? (You are not fat) "I say shut up!" "With this my size I am fulfilling the scripture!" Amen "the Bible says that many are called, only few are chosen". (LAUGHTER) Hallelujah...even that my sister wey be like mount Zion that cannot be moved, you dey follow them shout 'yes'." (my sister that is fat also shouted 'yes')

Before engaging in self-praise, the comedian derides himself by saying people's comments about his stature in the first two lines of the extract above. He subsequently, in line 4, derides fat people. The comedian engages in self-praising from the second line of the italicised extract. The bald-on-record politeness strategy in the extract may or may not be directed at a particular person but largely, it is directed at all fat people. The extract is

a shared ridicule as the comedian makes the issue of his physique and that of some people in the audience to create humour and achieve an interactional context of humour.

Shared Experience

Common or presumed common expressions are considered via Odebunmi's (2006, p.49) four aspects of situational level: shared knowledge of subject topic, shared socio-cultural and situational experiences, shared knowledge of the situation of utterance, and shared knowledge of word choices, referents and references.

- (a) **Shared knowledge of subject topic:** the comedian makes use of registers or jargons that are associated with Christianity; his focus is on what happens in the church. For instance, in the first joke, the topic of discourse is on the common request of pastors; the second is on the introduction of worldly dance styles/types into the church and the third is on a pastor's demand of his congregation to do something crazy for the Lord. While the fourth topic is on how the operations of Boko Haram in Maiduguri has affected church services, the fifth joke centres on the inability of some people in the church to laugh at the comedian's jokes; and the topic of the last joke is on casting out of demons.

All the topics above are on experiences in the church which the comedian has taken as common ground for any Christian. Thus, the fact that the audience were able to respond appropriately to the jokes shows that they have a firm understanding of the topics of the jokes.

- (b) **Shared socio-cultural and situational experiences:** there are several situational experiences which the comedians expressed in the jokes. The use (and the reception) of the physical acts of dancing by Aboki4Christ reveals that the audience have knowledge of different dance styles, even the ones that have their origins in Nigeria. Some of these dance styles include: 'shoki' and 'etigi' (kukere). This shared knowledge is exploited to create humour via conflict in what is expected to occur in the church on one hand and in the secular world on the other hand.

- (c) **Shared knowledge of the situation of utterance:** instances in the jokes that show shared situation of utterance are in the following extract:

...how many of you enjoyed the dance by the teenagers? Now before I start my ministration that woman that was just prayed for... that woman that just came.so, usher help, help me locate the woman. It is a seed that somebody sowed into my life; I am sowing it.

The above extracts are just some instances of what prompted some of the comedian's unrehearsed joke or it can be said that the italicised expressions helped the comedian introduce his rehearsed jokes.

(a) Shared knowledge of word choices, referents and references: instances of indexicals in the data are used in ways that suggest they constitute given information between the comedian and his audience. The following are examples of referents in the data:

- i. *"I am fulfilling the scripture; let the chosen one shout hallelujah".*
- ii. *"...he said ha! Man of God, you know the Bible says wisdom is profitable to direct. The Bible says the heart of the Lordgoeth to and fro seeking the heart and not the shout".*

There are several instances of person deixis in the jokes as can be seen instantiated above. The comedian uses the first person singular pronoun to refer directly to himself or to the current role he is playing and giving voice to. The use of the 'chosen one', 'man of God', etc., as well as, the reference and allusion to the scripture verse in the Bible helps the comedian to further contextualise his jokes and performance. The audience, being Christians, are familiar with these expressions and are able to rightly and appropriately consume the jokes. Instances of place deixis include:

- i. *"Maiduguri, Maiduguri is in Borno staté North Eastern Nigeria where the thing is happening".*
- ii. *"... this church is in Muyaabi? The guy is living in place like for example...let's say he is living at Tiko (SCREAMS AND CLAPS)... this brother commot from church begin dey trek, trek pass Mile 16 (this brother left the church and continued walking till he got past Mile 16) (SCREAMS, CLAPS AND LAUGHS). Pass...amen! Pass mile 17, deygo,deygo,dey go..."*

The place deixis in the above extract 'i.' cannot be said to reflect shared knowledge as the comedian produces more explanation on where Maiduguri is. Although, some members of the audience would likely know where Maiduguri is, due to its close proximity to Cameroon and more precisely, Buea, where the church is located. The comedian gives further explanation on the geographical location of Maiduguri in order to accommodate the entirety of his audience so that the information can be mutually shared and the subsequent humour in the jokes can be derived.

In the second extract, the comedian's ability to use existing locations in Buea, elicited a standing ovation and excitement from the audience who are aware of the ethnolinguistic background of the comedian. The success of the use of these referents can be traced to the fact that language is said to be an identity marker and in Africa, it signifies brotherhood. Thus, Aboki4Christ has been able to achieve a sense of solidarity with his audience by appealing to their positive face. This leads us to the next pragmatic strategy identified in the data.

Politeness Strategy

Aboki4Christ, in the sampled data, tries to integrate his audience and make them have a feeling of oneness. He does this by using the positive politeness strategy of deference which appeals to the positive face of the audience. Some instances of positive politeness strategies or what Leech (1983) refers to as 'modesty maxim' used by the comedian include:

- (a) "...I want to thank you; I want to appreciate you for this great opportunity. Ha! I feel like saying let's extend this programme".
- (b) ...but I have a consolation that I am coming back... so when I want to do my 'mariage' (French word for marriage), I will come back to Cameroon because I am already seeing some sisters in the choir. (LAUGHTER)
- (c) No wowo persondey for this church abi? (There is no ugly person in this church?)
- (d) Ha! I love this church; I love this church (SCREAMS)... this is one of the most exciting churches I have attended (SCREAMS)... listen, listen, I love the way we go crazy for the Lord

The extracts 'a-d' show how the comedian nurtures the positive face wants of the audience as he showers the church with praises and makes them feel appreciated and wanted. This pragmatic strategy helps the comedian have a receptive audience which subsequently made his routines have a successful completion as can be seen from the ecstatic responses or feedbacks of the audience. The few instances of face threatening acts have been explained under open and shared ridicule in the self-deprecation segment of the analysis.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the macro-social variables revealed that the audience is heterogeneous in nature with only religion or place of worship acting as the main connector between them. The ages of the interlocutors vary. The comedian made reference to his future which we can say is *nonbonafide* since the promise is made in a joking situation. On gender, the comedian made more references to the females present in the church. This can be said to be on the premise of the stereotype that females generally appreciate and thrive on compliments. The ethnic and regional affiliations of the audience also differ and this is shown by the comedian's use of terms from Nigeria and Cameroon.

The linguistic codes employed in the data are English, Nigerian Pidgin English and French. English sentences used constitute 53.70% of the total discourse; Nigerian Pidgin English sentences employed in the delivery of the comedian's performance was 45.19% while French had the least with 1.11% occurrence. English and Nigerian Pidgin English are predominantly used in the delivery of Aboki4Christ's Jokes in order to reach

a wider audience as Cameroon is multilingual in nature; the location of the church in Buea also necessitates the use of English as it belongs to the English-speaking part of Cameroon. The use of Nigerian Pidgin English shows an overlap in the delivery of jokes to Nigerian and Cameroonian audience. Aboki4Christ's employment of Nigerian Pidgin English shows that Nigerian Pidgin English has infiltrated Cameroon which shares borders and to some extent, ethno-historical backgrounds with Nigeria. This shows an 'almost' universality of Nigerian Pidgin English in West Africa.

Aboki4Christ's jokes are not exactly or totally in tandem with Adetunji's (2013) submission as only an instance of self-deprecation was observed in the data while he does more of self-praising, open-ridicule and shared ridicule. He also made use of positive politeness in his performance. That is, face saving act which is another strategy employed by Aboki4Christ. He exploited the need or desire of people to be appreciated, admired and ratified. These acts reduced the level of his imposition.

Formulas used by Aboki4Christ are peculiar to the Christian religion and they are in consonance with the physical setting of the church. The comedian took the role of a pastor and used these formulas almost in the way a church minister would. The most recurring formula is 'amen'. The comedian used it to transit to other jokes in his routine and also to get the attention of his audience when they seem to be getting carried away before he reaches the peak (punchline) of his on-going joke.

Adjacency pair of question/answer dominates the performance and material acts of Aboki4Christ. Just an instance of elliptical statement was found in the data: "*but there was this brother in church very poor, as in very, very, very*". The complete component of the sentence is sought from the audience. This strategy was employed to get the audience more involved in the discourse and it also helped contextualise the jokes as they are imitation of language use in Christian church services.

Stereotypes used in the jokes were on issues happening in Nigeria and the fact that the Cameroonian audience are able to understand the jokes embedded in these stereotypes revealed that the Cameroonians, to a great extent, are abreast of Nigerian societal happenings. This means that it is possible (achievable) to use a Nigerian material in a Cameroonian context.

Through the deployment of Odebunmi's (2006) four aspects of situational levels (shared knowledge of subject topic, shared socio-cultural and situational experience, shared knowledge of utterance, shared knowledge of word choices, referents and references), it was revealed that the material of the comedian is greatly influenced by what he presumed to be shared or common ground between his audience and himself. An instance where the comedian doubted what constitutes common ground in his routines can be seen in: "*I attended a programme in Maiduguri. Maiduguri is in Borno State North Eastern Nigeria where the thing is happening*". In the italicised expression, the comedian assumed that the referent 'thing' is given information, while 'Maiduguri' relatively new. He thus creates affordance (explanation) which is accommodated and immediately updated as part of the common ground.

Conclusion

The foregoing has revealed that the pragmatic features employed by Nigerian stand-up comedians while performing to a Nigerian audience as identified by Adetunji (2013) have considerable overlaps when performing in another context as can be seen in the routine of Aboki4Christ in Cameroon. Instances of varied pragmatic strategies were observed and they include: face-saving, self-praise and ridicule strategies. The comedian, Aboki4Christ, manipulates his material to accommodate French linguistic codes and abundant use of politeness strategies to entertain his Cameroonian context. Other pragmatic strategies (for instance, shared expressions) which are peculiar to the Nigerian context were cleverly used to make the audience see the world from the comic perspective of Aboki4Christ. It can thus be held that there are great pragmatic overlaps employed by Nigerian comedians while performing to Nigerians and neighbouring African states like Cameroon.

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