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Discourse issues in Ivorian stand-up comedy

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Abstract

Stand-up Comedy (SUC) is not meant for mere entertainment. Ivorian Stand-up Comedians do not just create humour but also jovially expose key socio-political issues in the society and suggest practicable solutions to mitigate them. This paper examines humour in selected Ivorian Stand-up Comedy (ISUC) with a view to determining the discourse issues in the routines. The work is situated in Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's Relevance theory. Purposive sampling was deployed for the selection of four Ivorian Stand-up Comedians (ISUCNs - Papitou, Agalawal, Les Zinzins de l'art and La Flamme de l'Estantuer) because of their deployment of humour. Excerpts of the routines, of the selected ISUCNs, from 'Bonjour' 2018 edition recorded on DVD were purposely selected because of their engagement of socio-political issues. The data were subjected to content analysis. Four discourse issues were identified: bad governance, unemployment, economic hardship and marital unfaithfulness. These discourse issues were to mirror the key socio-political problems in Côte d'Ivoire. Ivorian Stand-up Comedians engage socio-political issues while generating humour and make the audience infer the solutions to those problems from their routines.

Keywords: *Ivorian Stand-up Comedy, Ivorian Stand-up Comedians, Humour in Côte d'Ivoire, Discourse issues*

1. Introduction

Aside from music and theatre, Stand-Up Comedy (SUC) is also a form of entertainment which is common to every culture. However, the use of music and theatrical features in SUC cannot be overemphasized. Stand-Up Comedy (SUC) is still misconstrued by many. Majority often presume that everything about it is only laughter or mere entertainment. Notwithstanding the misconstrued ideas that many people have about SUC among other comic genres, some scholars who have interest in this field have begun to explore it through various approaches. Schwarz (2010) supports the claims

of Oring (2003) that 'humour is often considered to be trivial, and it seems that serious talk about humour is regarded as participating in that triviality'. Despite the fact that few contemporary researchers, in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, anthropology, have begun to explore humour in SUC; Schwarz (2010:9) still laments that though, 'research on humour in its numerous genres has been pursued for centuries, only scant attention has been paid to research on SUC'. Sameer (2011:5) also confirms that 'there exists a relative lack of study on SUC compared to other fields that figure into cultural discourse'. On his part, Adetunji (2013:1) reveals that 'research in the pragmatics of Nigerian humour is almost nil'. So many reasons could be accountable for this; it may be because SUC is a quite 'young' genre of humour. Researchers in this field concentrated majorly on linguistic and cultural aspects of Western and Nigerian Stand-up Comedy (W & NSUC). If researchers do not pay more academic attention to Francophone Stand-up Comedy (FSUC), especially Ivorian Stand-up Comedy (ISUC), our society will be deprived of a lot of acumen embedded in it. This study is expected to bridge the gap of lack of previous studies on ISUC. This study also aims to explore how the discourse issues in the routines of the selected Ivorian Stand-up Comedians (ISUCNs) were deployed to generate humour and deprecate societal problems.

Agalawal, Papitou, Les Zinzins de l'art and La Flamme de l'Estanguier (ISUCNs), selected for this research, have not been understudied by any researcher because most previous scholars in this field concentrated on W and NSUCNs. This study analyses the discourse issues employed by the selected ISUCNs to generate humour and deprecate socio-political issues in their routines. This study also examines how SUC, which is a misconstrued artistic form, can be applied to denounce educational, emotional, psychological, cultural, medical, marital, political, religious problems etc.

2. Background information on Stand-Up Comedy and humour

Stand-Up comedy is a work of art which permits a (single) performer to employ his oratory skills in front of a live audience to generate intentional verbal humour. Sunday and Filani (2018:2) see SUC as 'a genre of popular culture in which participants gather together to be entertained through the humour induced by the comedians' jokes'. Gonot-Schoupinsky, Garip and Sheffield (2020) also opine that humour is often deployed as a form of entertainment that causes laughter and joy among the audience. The assertion of Sunday, Filani, Gonot-Schoupinsky, Garip, and Sheffield is very true but one must note that SUC is not meant for only entertainment. Stand-up Comedy (SUC) is an art that requires active participation of both SUCNs and

audience(s) before notable success can be recorded. Ziv and Gadish (1989: 760) reiterates that, ‘... As with any communication, humour implies three elements: a communicator, a listener, and a message’. This means that, SUC is a source of intentional humour in which there must be a communicator - the SUCN or the joker; the listener - direct or indirect audience. Direct audiences are those present in the venue(s) where live SUC is being presented, while indirect audiences are those that are watching recorded SUC performances recorded on DVD, VCD, or any form of mediated SUC downloaded via YouTube, Facebook, Google+ etc. The SUCNs present any discourse issue of their interest as the message. So many SUCNs present contemporary (societal) issues, such as: marriage, politics, race, education, health, religion etc.

Humour is a universal phenomenon exhibited by most cultures. It has been defined in various ways. Romero and Cruthirds (2006:59) define humour as ‘amusing communications that produce positive emotions and cognition in the individual, group, or organisation’. The renowned French poet, Rabelais (2014), opines that ‘le rire est le propre de l’homme’ - laughter is human feature. Really, humour serves as a means of entertainment, and also reveals the reality of life experienced every day. A sense of humour helps the audiences to understand critically the circumstances of society around them. Apart of being a means of entertainment, humour is also a means of education because its presence can educate the audiences (and the society at large) to be more responsive and to see things that have been happening in the community. One of the ultimate goals of SUCNs is to generate humour through the deployment of relevant discourse issues and other linguistic resources that will mitigate socio-political problems.

3. Review of relevant literature

Schwarz (2010) explains that comedians (American SUCNs, Jerry Seinfeld and Steven Wright) develop a specific stage persona and create their own style of performing. However, his contrastive analysis of the comedy created by two performers of very different character affirms that successful humour in SUC depends neither on any specific type of stage persona nor on a specific performance style. Instead, it is created out of a comedian’s use of a chain of various linguistic aspects of joke telling. Schwarz (2010) is thus considered as an attempt to gain insight into the SUCNs’ work and the organisation of their material and performance. Schwarz explores only Western SUC but fails to examine FSUC. This affirms that this present study is highly necessary in order to fill the gap of lack of previous studies on FSUC especially ISUC.

Luis (2014:230) submits that SUC has the potential (and often a need)

to do basically the same as does the literature (coding experience, entertain, play with language, defamiliarise the ordinary) and the constitution of an author in both arts comes, above all, from style. Wright (1985:59) explains that the characteristics of SUC include honest portrayal of life and the treatment of its subjects in a lighter vein even though the subject may be a serious one. Ronny, Siti, Dadang and Dian (2024) emphasize that the purpose of humour in human life includes entertainment, conveying information, and even education to improve the quality of human life. This means that, most times, SUCs reflect private life of the SUCN or the happenings in the society. Though SUC has the aim of making the audience laugh, but in addition to this, truth or fact about the problems of the audience, and that of the society, is presented jovially in order to make the audience see some light about their matter or that of the society at large. Just as literature is said to be the mirror of the society, so also is SUC, because most times SUCNs present jokes that satirize the anomalies in the society. Following Ronny, Siti, Dadang and Dian (2024), this study confirms that SUC is not a mere entertainment; it is a means to mitigate socio-political problems. However, Ronny, Siti, Dadang and Dian fail to explore FSUC, a scholastic gap this study is set to fill.

Adetunji (2013) comes up with pragmatic strategies used by Nigerian Stand-up Comedians (NSUCNs) to involve their audiences in the creation of the interactional context of humour, such as: linguistic coding, stereotyping, formulas, call-and-response, self-deprecation, and shared experiences. He emphasizes code-alternation of Nigerian Pidgin (especially) and English Language. Deveau (2012) and Filani (2015) characterize stand-up performance as an activity type. Filani (2015) adopts Levinson's theory of activity types to study humour generated through SUC. Galiñanes (2000) works on humorous novels and asserts that, in humorous narratives, the humorist play on shared knowledge about moral, social and cultural beliefs. Nissenbaum and Freud (2021) argue that humour will be perceived and accepted by people if it is relevant to the cultural values and the rules that apply to the people who are used as humour targets. Ronny, Siti, Dadang and Dian (2024) explore how verbal humour can represent the identity of Sudanese people through cultural perspective. They used humour conversation data obtained from recording of humour show called "Canghegar" on Rama FM Bandung radio.

Several studies, like Ayakoroma (2013) and Adetunji (2013), Filani (2015), Kehinde (2016) got their data from extracts from routines of randomly selected NSUCNs in VCD of Nite of a Thousand Laughs (NTL). The NTL is a comedy show that is staged in major Nigerian cities on national holidays; it is the most popular and oldest brand of the Nigerian Stand-up Comedy (NSUC). Similarly, this study got its data from DVD of 'Bonjour' which

comprise of comic presentations of ISUCNs during an annual comic event to mark New Year celebration in Côte d'Ivoire. The above scholars concentrated solely on Western and NSUCs; that proves that research on FSUC needs more scholastic attention. Therefore, this study is set to fill the scholastic gap of lack of previous studies on FSUC, ISUC in particular. This paper has the aim of inferring from the discourse issues raised in the selected ISUC to denounce certain contemporary societal problems – an aspect that most researchers in this field neglected.

4. Theoretical orientation

This study adopts Relevance theory proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in 1986. Relevance theory is one of the leading theories applicable to researches in the field of cognitive linguistics and pragmatics. The theory elaborates details on one of Grice's Maxims (Maxim of relation) which emphasizes that human communication, verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions (Grice 1989:1-7). In Relevance theory, an input (a sight, a sound, a memory, an utterance, or an action) is relevant to an individual if its processing in a context of available assumptions yields positive cognitive effects (Sperber 1995:1-2). Relevance theory (RT) has two basic principles - Cognitive principle and Communicative principle of relevance.

Relevance Theory is a major theory in understanding comic stories because it concerns a basic component of all segments of human communication. Human communication is ostensive-inferential in nature. As such, it is based on the recognition of intentions (Grice 1975). SUCNs are able to provide humorous stimuli and the audience is able to interpret them because both the comedian and the audience adhere to the principle of relevance, Filani (2015). Once each member of the audience easily decodes the intention or the message of the performer (SUCN), application of such relevant coded message to issues of life will be very easy.

Following Yus (2004), Sunday and Filani (2018) apply RT to reveal how Nigerian Stand-up comedians (NSUCNs) joke with cultural beliefs and representations by foregrounding beliefs and representations which negate those found in the culture where their performances are situated. In this study, RT will be deployed to analyse the discourse issues raised by the selected ISUCNs in generating humour and deprecating societal problems.

5. Methodology

The descriptive design and qualitative approach were used for this

study. The SUCNs from Côte d'Ivoire were selected for this study basically because of easy accessibility and availability of different regular Ivorian comic platforms. Purposive sampling was deployed for the selection of four ISUCNs because of their deployment of humour, socio-political engagements and their acceptance by RTI (Radio-Television Station in Côte d'Ivoire) – the organiser and the audience of 'Bonjour'. Routines of four ISUCNs on DVD of 'Bonjour 2018' were selected for this study. The popular ISUCNs selected are Agalawal, Papitou, Les Zinzins de l'art and La Flamme de l'Estanguier. These samples are sufficient for this content and descriptive analyses because all they did in their routines meet up with the objectives of this study. The data were transcribed using Gail Jefferson's transcription notation and were subjected to pragmatic analysis.

6. Data analysis and discussion

The discourse issues employed by the selected ISUCNs to generate humour and to deprecate socio-political problems are analysed below using Relevance theory. Four discourse issues were identified in this study: bad governance, unemployment, economic hardship and marital unfaithfulness.

6.1 Bad governance

This is one of the problems that ravage not only Côte d'Ivoire but the entire African communities. It is paramount in almost all the routines of the selected ISUC. Though, the ISUCNs generated humour through this discourse issue, notwithstanding, the audience decoded the communicative intention (the message) of the ISUCNs which was to proffer solutions to the eminent problems of the audience and the society. The following excerpts reveal how the selected ISUCNs presented and suggested solutions to the problem of bad governance in Côte d'Ivoire.

Excerpt 1:

Agalawal: non, franchement 2017 est ↓passé, Dieu ↓merci, en tout cas je prie Dieu, faux plus on va croître 2017 sur notre chemin ↓encore. NON, MOI, JE PRIE ↑HEIN. ((...)) CHIÉ! LA CÔTE D'IVOIRE A SOUFFERT ↑HEIN, ah, wei, weh, weh- 2017 non, on a trop ↓souffert. ((...)) mais ça va un peu? ~les dioulas vous êtes là ↑encore~? ça ↑va? ah, applaudissez les ↓dioulas.

Audience: ((AC))

Agalawal: vous êtes ↓forts. vous êtes ↓forts. vous travaillez ↓bi:::en. c'est bien vous travaillez. °vous aidez le ↓pays c'est↓ bien°. mais ↑eh, vous-↑là, votre caution est en train de finir ↑hein. il reste deux h ↓ans. ((CL))

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: pays-↓là, c'est comme maison à louer ↓hein. quand ta caution finit ↓là, mon ↓frère, il faut ↓partir. ((01.83 ...))

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: ((...)) il paraît qu'à un moment donné °on a connu les commandants (h) invisibles° - C.I.

Audience: h ((PAL, ASt))

Agalawal: C'ÉTAIT UNE SITUATION ↑COMPLIQUÉE ET ↑INEXPLICABLE.

Audience: C.I. ((AR))

Translation

Agalawal: No, honestly, thank God 2017 is gone. Anyway, I pray to God that 2017 must not cross our ways again. No, me, I pray hein! ((...)) Chié! Ivory Coast suffered hein! Ha, wei weh weh! 2017 no, we suffered a lot ((...))

Audience: AL

Agalawal: The Dioulas you are still there? Are you fine? Ah! Clap for the Dioulas!

Audience: AC

Agalawal: You are strong. You are strong. You are working well. It is good that you are working. It is good that you are helping the country. But eh! You there, your rental fee is about to finish hein! It remains two years.

Audience: AL

Agalawal: The country is like rented apartment hein! My brother when your rental fee lapses please leave. (...)

Audience: AL

Agalawal: (...) It seems that at one time we knew the invisible

commandants - C.I.

Audience: PAL, ASt

Agalawal: It was a complicated and inexplicable situation.

Audience: C.I. (AR)

While applying Relevance Theory, a communication is said to be successful and effective if it contains relevant message(s) that the audience could process, interpret and understand with little mental effort. The issue of bad governance is a problem that is highly relevant to Ivorian nation and it reflects in the routines of some of the selected ISUCNs. Agalawal asked this question ‘~les dioulas vous êtes là ↑encore~? ça ↑va?’- because he was intentionally referring indirectly to the Ivorian incumbent President, Alassane Ouattara, a Dioula, who happens to be in office for the second term. He praised him for doing well and asked the audience to clap for him; this was highly satirical because he later suggested that he should leave office for another person after his own tenure ‘**il reste deux h ↓ans. ((CL))**’ He emphasized that it remains just two years for him to go. He should not make move for third term at all because in almost all the African countries, incumbent long serving political leaders are fond of rigging elections. Most African leaders are not actually ready to serve the populace. Due to their greediness, they use all crook means to remain in power.

Excerpt 2:

La Flamme de l’Estanguer: ESPRIT DE L’ARGENT QUI NE CIRCULE ↑PAS, TU ES ↓VAINCU. ESPRIT D’AUGMENTATION ABUSIVE DES FACTURES DE ↑COURANT, TU ES ↓VAINCU. ESPRIT D’ESCLAVAGE EN ↑LIBYE, TU ES ↓VAINCU. **ESPRIT DE TROI::SIÈME ↓MANDAT.** (0.02)

Audience: h ((0.02 PAL, ASt))

La Flamme de l’Estanguer: [j’ai dit quoi_

Audience: h TROISIÈME ↑MANDAT.] ((AL, AR, ASt))

La Flamme de l’Estanguer: [↑pardonnez, j’ai dit quoi_

Audience: h ((AL, AR)) troisième mandat.]

Translation

La Flamme de l’Estanguer: Spirit of money that is not circulating, you are defeated! Spirit of high crazy electricity bills, you are defeated! Spirit of slavery

in Libya, you are defeated! Spirit of third term.

Audience: PAL, AST

La Flamme de l'Estanguer: What did I say?

Audience: Third term.

La Flamme de l'Estanguer: Please, what did I say?

Audience: Third term. AL, AR

La Flamme de l'Estanguer also confirmed the reality and gravity of political problems in Côte d'Ivoire by identifying the cause as 'ESPRIT DE TROISIÈME MANDAT' 'SPIRIT OF THIRD TERM'. The prolonged audience laughter and shout after La Flamme de l'Estanguer mentioned 'third term' portrayed that they really frowned at third term pursuit of Alassane Ouattara. Agalawal also reminded the audience what the pursuit of third term ambition could still result into 'il paraît qu'à un moment donné on a connu les commandants (h) invisibles' - C.I.'. The audience quickly decoded that he was referring to the post-electoral cum civil conflicts they experienced in 2010. Agalawal and La Flamme de l'Estanguer identified political problems ravaging Côte d'Ivoire and many African countries; whereby the incumbent government seeks to re-emerge, by all means, as winner at elections for the second, third, fourth, fifth etc term. This re-occurring issue is causing a lot of chaos between different political parties and ethnic groups.

With the aim of exposing and proposing solution to the problem of bad governance in Côte d'Ivoire, Agalawal said a nation is like a rented apartment, so he suggested that when the rent paid by the current president lapses he should leave. The way Agalawal said '**quand ta caution finit là, mon frère, il faut partir**' is satirical. This buttressed the fact that most Ivorians do not expect Alassane Ouattara to embark on his third term venture. The audience attested that they deduced the communicative intention of Agalawal by responding with prolonged laughter, claps and shout. The audience also comprehended that La Flamme de l'Estanguer was deriding the plans of the Ivorian incumbent President, Alassane Ouattara, (and other African leaders) who wanted to remain in power through constitutional manipulation. He raised the issue of deep democratic problems in Côte d'Ivoire (West Africa) because there is no workable platform for stable political transitions in most African countries. The Ivorian President, Alassane Ouattara and the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, through constitutional reforms wanted to remain in power beyond two-term limit. The audience quickly processed, interpreted and understood the jokes of Agalawal and La Flamme de l'Estanguer because

all they presented were relevant to them and the discourse issues presented in the jokes were ostensive stimuli which gave room for audience's spontaneous claps and laughter to show that they grasped the intent of the SUCNs with little mental efforts.

Excerpt 3:

Kaboré: ((...))↓alors nous souhaitons que cette ↓année 2018_

Lucas: notre pays la Côte d'ivoire soit un pays qui malgré ses problèmes emmer::des et non un pays dont les problèmes nous submer::gent.

Audience: h ((AL, AC))

Kaboré: un ↓pays avec un ↓gouvernement et une ↓armée qui se ↓démérde et non un ↑pays avec un ↓gouvernement et une ↓armée qui nous ↑EMMERDE. ((CP – (0.3),

Audience: AL

Kaboré: >parce que matin midi soir ↓mutinérie, matin midi soir ↓mutinérie.< ↓attention, de la ↓mutinerie on peut passer à la ↓moutonnérie.

Lucas: ↓hei::n, on ne dit pas ça ↑ici.

Kaboré: ↓ha, ↓non, ↓non, je ne parle pas de la Côte d'ivoire ↓ha, je parle du↑sudan, koré du nord là- h ↓bas.

Lucas: ↑là, tu as très bien ↓parlé.

Kaboré: si ↑non, ↓ici tout va ↓bien.

Translation

Kaboré: ...Hence, in this year 2018:

Lucas: We wish that our country, Ivory Coast, would despite his bugging problems be a country whose problems will not overwhelm us.

Audience: AL, AC

Kaboré: A country with a government and an army that can manage well and not a country with a government and an army that bore us.

Audience: AL

Kaboré: Because morning, noon, evening, mutiny. Morning, noon, evening, mutiny. Note! From mutiny one can graduate to being sheepish.

Lucas: Hein! You don't say that here.

Kaboré: Ha, no, no. I am not talking of Ivory Coast. Ha, I am speaking of Sudan, North Korea over there.

Lucas: You have spoken well that way.

Kaboré: Everything is going on well here.

These duo ISUCNs, Lucas and Kaboré also known as Les Zinzins de l'art also talked about the happenings in Côte d'Ivoire ironically. They prayed that from 2018 there would no longer be bad governance in Côte d'Ivoire. They wished that Côte d'Ivoire would be a country whose problems will not overwhelm the citizens. They prayed that Côte d'Ivoire would be a country with a government and an army that can manage well and not a country with a government and an army that would become oppressive to the citizens. They wanted the Ivorian government to ensure that military men do not work against the civilians. These confirmed what Agalawal said in his jokes that the Ivorians suffered seriously in 2017. According to Kaboré (Les Zinzins de l'art), 'unrest every now and then will truncate the flow of true democracy and the citizens would become sheepish'. For Lucas to say '↓hei::n, on ne dit pas ça ↑ici' – 'we don't say such things here' reveals there is really no freedom of speech in Côte d'Ivoire and in most African nations where the citizens are not free to express their displeasure about the government. For Kaboré to reply that: '↓ha, ↓non, ↓non, je ne parle pas de la Côte d'Ivoire ↓ha, je parle du↑ Sudan, Corée du Nord là- h ↓bas... ici tout va ↓bien' – 'ha, no, no, I am not talking of Côte d'Ivoire ha, I am talking of Sudan, North Korea over there... everything is fine here' confirms the limitation to right of freedom of speech especially against the government. Kaboré later used his professionalism to cover-up that he was not talking of Côte d'Ivoire but of Sudan and North Korea. Their audience easily processed, interpreted their jokes and inferred that they were actually satirizing the situation of things and indirectly appealing to Ivorian government to embrace good governance and policies that will alleviate citizens' problems.

6.2 Unemployment

Another problem ravaging Côte d'Ivoire is unemployment. Some of the selected ISUCNs exposed this problem in their routines and educate the audience on how to get out of it. The excerpts below reveal their contributions.

Excerpt 1:

Lucas: ↑oui, ↓eh, mon ↓ami.

Kaboré: ↓oui.

Lucas: nous, on est ↓parti à l'↑école, on est ↓rentré en ↑classe.

Kaboré: ↓oui mai::s c'est ça qui m'↑étonne chez toi-↓là.

Lucas: ↑oui.

Kaboré: tu as le ↓BAC, au lieu d'aller chercher du ↑boulot, tu viens te ↑pointer ↓ici devant Monsieur le ↓gouverneur, devant Madame ↓Kandia, devant les joueurs-↑là, et les ↓Gerhvinos, et tu ↓insultes les ↓femmes.

Lucas: ↓hein, calme-↑toi mon ↓ami, tu as dit ↓quoi, j'ai le ↑BAC?

Kaboré: >MAIS TU AS LE BAC.<

Lucas: ce mot-↓là, ça existe encore dans ce pays-↓là?

Kaboré: >ÇA EXISTE, LE BAC.<

Lucas: DANS CE PAYS-↑LÀ?

Kaboré: ↓OUI.

Lucas: >tu sais ce que BAC ↑signifie?<

Kaboré: ça signifie ↑quoi?

Lucas: BAC – B-A-C- <°bien↑venu au ↓chômage°>

Audience: h ((AL, PAC, ASt)) (0.6) ((1.73 ...))

Translation

Lucas: (...) Yes, eh my friend.

Kaboré: Yes.

Lucas: We, we went to school, we went back to school.

Kaboré: Yes but that is what surprises me about you.

Lucas: Yes.

Kaboré: You have A level certificate, instead for you to go and get a job, here you are in front of the Governor, in front of Mrs Kandia, in front of the players, the Gerhvinos and you are insulting the women.

Lucas: Hein, relax my friend, you said what, I have (BAC) A level?

Kaboré: But you have (BAC) A level.

Lucas: Does that word exist again in this country?

Kaboré: There is (BAC) A level.

Lucas: In this country?

Kaboré: Yes.

Lucas: Do you know what (BAC) A level means?

Kaboré: It means what?

Lucas: BAC – B-A-C- Welcome to unemployment.

Audience: AL, PAC, ASt

Les Zinzins de l'art (Lucas and Kaboré) presented a relevant discourse issue that does not only concern Côte d'Ivoire but the entire African community. They presented the issue of unemployment whereby students with A level certificates and other higher degrees have no employment opportunity. The audience interpreted the above cited joke fast because it reflects one of the current challenges many graduates are facing. They exhibited their accurate conception of the comedians' intention through their prompt prolonged claps, laughter and shout.

Les Zinzins de l'art sarcastically condemned the way the Ivorian government has not been able to fight the problem of unemployment among the graduate youths. This is really the unpalatable experience most youths are having. Despite that they have studied hard while at school with the hope of securing a befitting job after A level and tertiary education. Due to this incessant challenge, many youths have been discouraged and frustrated out of school. The fear of tomorrow is making many youths to commit suicide.

While applying Communicative Principle of Relevance the audience decoded that the intention of Les Zinzins de l'art here was to persuade the Ivorian youths not to be discouraged with their academics; also to emphatically expose the youth to the realities of life. That is, if at all they were unable to secure white-collar-jobs, they must have entrepreneur's mind and always think of other legitimate and profitable business they can do. Kaboré said: 'tu as le ↓BAC, au lieu d'aller chercher du ↑boulot, tu viens te ↑pointer ↓ici devant Monsieur le ↓gouverneur, devant Madame ↓Kandia, devant les joueurs-↑là, et les ↓Gerhvinos,...'

Youths are encouraged to find out their talents or learn certain skills so

as to alleviate the problem of unemployment that is ravaging Côte d'Ivoire and other African countries. For les Zinzins de l'art to mention 'Monsieur le ↓gouverneur,' was deliberate. Through their jokes, they appealed indirectly to the Ivorian government to make more efforts in creating jobs opportunities for graduate youths.

Excerpt 2:

Agalawal: enfin je vais parler un peu de la Côte d'Ivoire parce que cette ↑année comme vous le ↓savez, le thème qu'on nous ait ↓imposé c'est l'union, discipline, travail_ et c'est très important parce qu'il faut qu'on connaisse notre ↓devise, mais moi, quand j'ai ↓réfléchi, et que j'ai regardé la devise = je me dis, la devise de la Côte d'Ivoire c'est bi:::en ↓hein. **l'union, discipline, ↓travail.** mais je dis ↓oh. Vraiment il y a un problème de disposi↓tion et d'↓organisation quand même du, du, de la ↓devise. vous même regardez où l'union ↑est et où travail ↓est.

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: on dirait qu'ils sont pas dans même groupe-↓là.

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: c'est-à-↑dire, moi je pense que dans la ↓vie tout doit commencer par le ↓travail. et c'est parce que, parce que c'est quand on ↓travaille qu'on ↓mange. et quand on ↓mange on est ↓tranquille, on est en ↑paix = maintenant on va chercher à être ↓discipliné. **MAIS QUELQU'UN QUI N'A PAS ↓MANGÉ, QUI TRAVAILLE ↑PAS, TU VEUX QU'IL SOIT ↓DISCIPLINÉ. À QUEL ↑MOMENT?** ((CP)) (0.7)

Audience: h ((PAL, AC, Ast))

Agalawal: ↑non, je pense qu'on doit ↑réorganiser, en disant peut-↑être ↓travail, ↓discipline, >maintenant que tu as ↓travaillé, que tu es ↓discipliné, si tu veux va faire ↓association, maintenant union on s'en fou de ↓ça.< ((0.8 ...))

Translation

Agalawal: I'm going to speak a little about Ivory Coast because this year, as you know, the theme we have been asked to talk about is 'union, discipline, work'. And it is very important because we need to know our motto. But me,

when I thought, and I examined the motto. I told myself that the motto of Ivory Coast is good huh! 'Union, discipline, work'. But I say oh, really there is a problem of wrong disposition and arrangement of, the, the, the motto. You too, look at where union is; and where work is.

Audience: AL

Agalawal: It looks as if they are not even in the same group.

Audience: AL

Agalawal: That is, I think in life everything has to start with work. And that is because; because it is when we work that we eat. And when we eat, we are restful, and we are at peace. Then, we will be disciplined. But someone who did not eat, who is not working, you want him to be disciplined. At what time?

Audience: PAL, AC, Ast

Agalawal: No, I think we have to rearrange it, maybe like this work, discipline, now that you have worked, that you are disciplined, if you want to do association, now union we do not care about that...

The above excerpt reveals the effects of unemployment on the society. Agalawal suggested that the Ivorian motto should be re-framed from 'Union, discipline, work' to 'Work, discipline, union'. According to him, work should come first before any other thing. If somebody has worked well, he/she would also eat well, he/she should be at peace and be disciplined and would then be able to relate well (be united) with others in the society. Agalawal emphasized that whoever is jobless will be lawless; that is, he/she would not be tamed at all. He would certainly be a burden to the society. All what Agalawal said in his jokes was full of cognitive effects because the audience was able to process them fast because they are relevant issues. So, they responded with laughter, prolonged laughter, claps and shout.

The communicative intention of Agalawal here was to frown at the problem of unemployment that is rampant among the youths in Côte d'Ivoire. The audience inferred from his jokes that unemployment is the root of all evil such as lack of discipline, lawlessness, robbery, fraud, terrorism, kidnapping, depression and even suicide. For Agalawal to suggest that the motto of Côte d'Ivoire be re-formed from 'Union, discipline, work' to 'Work, discipline, union'; the audience inferred that he wanted the government to prioritize job creations. Also, individuals should embrace hard work which will help

everyone to be disciplined and maintain healthy relationship with others in the society.

6.3 Economic hardship

Epileptic economy characterises Africa today. Most of the sectors in Africa are upturned. Some selected ISUCNs presented this issue in their routines and suggested possible solutions. The excerpts below reveal the details.

Excerpt 1:

La Flamme de l'Estanguer: ESPRIT DE L'ARGENT QUI NE CIRCULE ↑PAS, TU ES ↓VAINCU. ESPRIT D'AUGMENTATION ABUSIVE DES FACTURES DE ↑COURANT, TU ES ↓VAINCU. ESPRIT D'ESCLAVAGE EN ↑LIBYE, TU ES ↓VAINCU. ESPRIT DE TROI::SIÈME ↓MANDAT. (0.02)

Audience: h ((0.02 PAL, ASt)) (Bonjour 2018)

Translation

La Flamme de l'Estanguer: Spirit of money that is not circulating, you are defeated! Spirit of high crazy electricity bills, you are defeated! Spirit of slavery in Libya, you are defeated! Spirit of third term.

Audience: PAL, AST

La Flamme de l'Estanguer presented certain common problems in Africa such as: poor economy and high crazy electricity bills. The issue of poor economy or poverty is ravaging not only Côte d'Ivoire but the whole of Africa. Poor electricity and high crazy electricity bill is affecting almost everybody and every business in Côte d'Ivoire because everyone cannot afford solar power.

The intention of La Flamme de l'Estanguer surpasses creating verbal humour. The major message he communicated through his jokes was to correct the anomalies in the society. His intention was to ridicule most of the systems that are epileptic in Côte d'Ivoire which are also applicable to most African communities. He derided the economic status of Côte d'Ivoire whereby money that could help to fight poverty is not in circulation. He rated high crazy electricity bills to be a huge problem because it is affecting many

businesses. The audience easily got his intention and deduced that La Flamme de l'Estanguier wished the Ivorian economy be boosted so that the rate of the people living in abject poverty could be reduced. They decoded that he wanted the Ivorian government to subsidize electricity bills so as to reduce its burden on households and entrepreneurs in Côte d'Ivoire. This will in return affect the Ivorian economy positively.

The audience processed and interpreted all the discourse issues that La Flamme de l'Estanguier raised through his jokes and responded with laughter, prolonged laughter and shout. These reactions were strong feed-backs for the comedian to confirm that aside that his jokes generated verbal humour, the audience also easily got relevant points he communicated to them.

Excerpt 2:

Agalawal: non, franchement 2017 est ↓passé, Dieu ↓merci. en tout cas je prie Dieu, faux plus on va croître 2017 sur notre chemin ↓encore. NON, MOI, JE PRIE ↑HEIN. faux jamais on va croître ça ↓encore. on n'a qu'à continuer 2018, ↓2019. faux jamais 2017 va ↓rapparaître. on a trop souffert dans 2017-↓là. CHIÉ! LA CÔTE D'IVOIRE A SOUFFERT ↑HEIN, ah, wei, weh, weh- 2017 non, on a trop ↓souffert. ((...))

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: ça c'est en ↓2017. ((0.19 ...)) ↑non, ↑non, pour comme on n'est pas là pour ↓ça, on va faire shap, ↓shap. ↓non, ↓2017, on a trop ↓souffert et ↓puis, il y a eu ↓<agrobusiness>.

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: oh ↓agrobusiness. mon hévéa.com. ha! ça fatigue les gens ↑hein. du ↓coup, tout le monde est rentré dans ↓business, ↓business, ↓business, ↓business. dès qu'ils ont créé ↓agrobusiness, le lendemain il y a d'autres qu'ils sont créées pour ↓eux, <°ADO ↓business° >

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: monfusil. ↓com.

Audience: h ((AL))

Agalawal: quand tu souscris là-↑bas le même jour tu as douze (h) ↓millions. ((CL))

Audience: h ((AL))

Translation

Agalawal: No, honestly, thank God 2017 is gone. Anyway, I pray to God that 2017 must not cross our ways again. No, me, I pray hein! We are not going to experience 2017 again. 2017 is never going to come back. We suffered a lot in that 2017. Chié! Ivory Coast suffered hein! Ha, wei weh weh! 2017 no, we suffered a lot ...

Audience: AL

Agalawal: That was in 2017... No, 2017, we suffered a lot and then, there was agribusiness.

Audience: AL

Agalawal: Oh agribusiness! Mon hévéa.com. Ha! It tired people hein! Suddenly, everybody went into business, business, business, business. As soon as they started agribusiness, the next day there were others that were created for them: ADO business,

Audience: AL

Agalawal: monfusil.com.

Audience: AL

Agalawal: When you subscribe there, the same day you will have twelve million.

Audience: AL

Agalawal emphasized the level of sufferings the Ivorians experienced in 2017. He also narrated series of problems the Ivorians witnessed in 2017, such as creation of different business platforms such as agribusiness, monhévéa.com; ADO business; monfusil.com etc. Agalawal intentionally used ADO business from the initials of the incumbent president, meaning Alassane Dramane Ouattara's business. According to him, all the business platforms created by the Ivorian government to alleviate sufferings of the masses did not work out at all. The audience was able to process and interpret his jokes because they reflected what the Ivorians went through in 2017.

Agalawal's jokes were so real to the audience, so they later responded with claps and laughter. For him to mention ADO (Alassane Dramane Ouattara) business, the audience got his communicative intention that he was

not just presenting the happenings in Côte d'Ivoire, but was soliciting that the Ivorian government find a lasting solution to economic challenges the citizens are facing. The audience got to know that, it is very true that, all the get rich quickly business platforms whereby you subscribe and get paid like Penny wise, MMM, Mega wealth, Crime alert, CBEX and PCEX in Nigeria cannot add long life relief and value to economy.

6.4 Marital unfaithfulness

This is another key problem in Côte d'Ivoire as seen in the studied data. Negative effects of marital unfaithfulness on individuals and the society at large are enormous. Below are the excerpts that expose the effects of marital infidelity and suggest how to caution such illicit act in the society.

Excerpt 1:

Papitou: ~maman, ↓tiens. hu:::p, e:::h h ↑MAMAN, à cause de ↓ça mon papa sort PLUS~ (h).

Audience: h ((AL, ASt))

Papitou: ~mais malgré ça ↑là, **mon papa a maîtresse dehors** ↓là-bas~.

Audience: h ((AL, ASt))

Papitou: ~moi je n'aime pas les papas infidèles ↓là. et mama fait ↓tout. mais eux, ils ont maîtresses dehors là↑bas.

TOUS LES GARÇONS INFIDÈLES, SI DIEU POUVAIT LES TUER MÊME ÇA VA ME FAIRE PLAI↓SIR~.

Audience: h ((0.04 PAL, ASt))

Translation

Papitou: Maman, take! Hup, eh mom, because of that my dad goes out more. (CL)

Audience: AL, ASt

Papitou: But despite that, my dad has mistress outside there. Me, I don't like those unfaithful dads. And mama does everything, but they, they have concubines outside there. I will even be happy if God could kill all the unfaithful men.

Audience: PAL, ASt

Being a lover of children, Papitou acted and spoke like a child to reveal

his mind on matrimonial unfaithfulness. This is not only relevant to the Ivorian couples/families; it is common to all African communities. Through his jokes, Papitou narrated the great effects of matrimonial unfaithfulness on the woman and her children. The audience did not waste time to deduce the interpretation of Papitou's joke so far it portrayed the common phenomenon in the society. So they responded through laughter and prolonged laughter.

The communicative intention of Papitou was to reveal the emotional, financial and psychological problems of wives and children whose husbands and fathers are playing unfaithful games outside wedlock. The woman alone would not be able to cater for the needs of her children. As a result, such children may grow to become nuisance in the society. Considering the great havoc marital unfaithfulness causes on the wife, the husband, or even the children, Papitou does not want any man or woman engaging in marital unfaithfulness to get away scot-free. He wished God would kill all the unfaithful men (unfaithful women inclusive). His wish sounded like a great caution for any member of the audience that might be engaging in such an unfaithful act. His intention was to frown at marital infidelity and make the audience ponder on Yoruba adage that says 'B'òdè o dun, b'igbè nilu rì'; meaning, 'once there is no happiness in the home, the entire community will be out of order.' He wants them to infer that it is when the family is united in perfect harmony that the society can experience peace and development educationally, socially, culturally, economically etc. The audience responded with claps, laughter, shouts and prolonged claps to indicate that they comprehended the message of the communicator (Papitou).

7. Conclusion

Majority of extant studies explored the linguistic and cultural aspects of W & NSUC. Ronny, Siti, Dadang, Dian (2024) affirm that in addition to being entertaining, humour can also be a representation of the identity and characteristics of a society with elements of attitudes and cultural values contained in the humour. This study also reveals that Stand-Up Comedy is not solely for entertainment because it is not only characterised by humour creation. Just as literature does, Stand-Up Comedy is a mirror of the society because it presents its true reflections and denounces societal problems. The Stand-Up Comedians (SUCNs) have the ability of saying what a common man cannot say in their routines. Thus, with their professional skills, they can challenge the sacred cows. Ivorian Stand-Up Comedians (ISUCNs) employ discourse issues that are relevant to the audience. The socio-political engagements of ISUCNs are all about education, family affairs, child abuse, unemployment, agriculture, politics, economy etc. Almost everything going

on in the lives of members of the audience and in every sector of the society is presented through jokes. In Côte d'Ivoire, most members of the audience are experiencing a lot of societal upheavals (marital, educational, political, ethnical, emotional, psychological and religious problems) which are indeed common to most African communities.

The discourse issues deployed in Ivorian Stand-Up Comedy are ostensive stimuli which add cognitive effects to the jokes. In every communication, relevance is all we need. The relevant discourse issues presented also help the audience to easily process and interpret the jokes and respond appropriately with laughter, prolonged laughter, claps and shout. The ISUCNs jovially present serious prevailing issues with the aim to generate humour, satirize the anomalies in the society and educate the direct and indirect audience, the government officials and the general public on the practicable solutions to those socio-political problems. The SUCNs can be likened to soothsayers. In order to achieve positive personal and socio-political transformation indeed, it is important to note that SUCNs are emphasizing that a (small, jovial, direct or indirect) word should be enough for the wise. Suggestions, to mitigate socio-political problems, given jovially in the routines of SUCNs should henceforth be considered seriously by individuals, government officials and every key player in the society. Further scholarship explorations of FSUC are needed to unfold the richness of humour in SUC.

Appendix

Gail Jefferson's Transcription Notation

(.)	A micro pause - a pause of no significant length.
↑Word	Rise in intonation
↓Word	Drop in intonation
>word<	Arrows showing that the pace of the speech has quickened.
<word>	Arrows showing that the pace of the speech has slowed down.
(0.7)	A timed pause – long enough to indicate a time.
=	At the end of a sentence and beginning of the next. It

indicates there was no pause between them.

Wo::rd Colon indicates prolonged vowel or consonant.

Word [first letter underlined] Underlining indicates emphasis.
Placement indicates which syllable(s) is/are emphasised.

WORD Upper case indicates syllables or words louder than the surrounding speech by the same speaker.

owordo Degree of sign indicating the syllables or words more quieter than the surrounding speech by the same speaker.

hhh Inbreath. Three letters indicate normal duration. Longer or shorter inbreath is represented by fewer or more letters.

Hhh Outbreath. Three letters indicate normal duration. Longer or shorter outbreath is represented by fewer or more letters.

Whhord Indication of aspiration/breathness within a word (not laughter).

W(h)ord Laughter in word while talking.

£word£ Pound sign indicate a smiley voice or suppressed laughter.

#word# Hash sign indicates creaky voice.

~word~ Tilde sign indicates shaky voice (as in crying).

(()) Double parentheses contain analyst comments or descriptions.

(.) Final falling intonation.

(,) Slight rising intonation.

(_) Level/flat intonation.

(?) Sharp rising intonation.

Abbreviations in the transcription

AC	–	Audience Clap
AL	–	Audience Laughter
AR	–	Audience Response

ASt	–	Audience Shout
CL	–	Comedian Laughter
CP	–	Comedian Pause
CR	–	Comedian Response
PAC	–	Prolonged Audience Clap
PAL	–	Prolonged Audience Laughter
PCL	–	Prolonged Comedian Laughter

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