

Exploring Semiotic Remediation in Performances of Stand-up Comedians in Post-Apartheid South Africa and Post-Colonial Nigeria

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PHD (LINGUISTICS) UWC

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for Doctorate Degree of
Arts**



In the Department of Linguistics

University of the Western Cape

**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

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November 2018

Abstract

This research has been conducted by focusing on the trajectories of semiotic ensembles from various contexts that stand-up comedians exploited for aesthetic and communicative purposes. I apply the social semiotic theory of multimodality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006), and the notions of semiotic remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1996, 2000) and resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) to selected audiovisual recordings performances of Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola from South Africa; and Atunyota Akporobomeriere (Ali Baba) and Bright Okpocha (Basket Mouth) from Nigeria. I explore the trajectories of semiotic resources that the comedians used across modes, contexts and practices. I also trace the translation and interpretation of socio-cultural and political materials by South African and Nigerian stand-up comedians' performances. The idea is also to examine the extent to which the socio-cultural and political contexts of both countries have differential effects on the choices in the semiotic resources used in the reconstruction of meanings, including cross socio-cultural taboos. The study reveals that combinations of various semiotic materials ranging from political, socio-cultural, religious and personal lifestyles are remediated (repurposed) for comic and aesthetic effects. This involves translating and re-interpreting the semiotic resources across contexts and practices. In this regard, the study showed how the artists rework verbal language, images, socio-political discourses and other semiotic material for new meanings. It also reveals that although the choices of materials are similar, there is a tendency of localizing semiotic resources to particular localities and audiences, so that each artist's performance comes out as unique to the person. The study concludes that language alone is not at the core of communication as other semiotic modes (in addition to languages) are integrated interweaving resources to make meaning. The direction of the modes or resources is multidimensional. All the spoken texts, all the non-linguistic modes: gestures, stance, movements, running on stage, postures, mimicking and others, perform vital roles to re-contextualize meanings in stand-up comedy performance. Therefore, the study opens up new perspectives on social semiotic approaches to multimodality, as well as on language social semiotic and to theory and media studies. The contribution also answers the call to expand the understanding and research on the theory of 'multimodality' and the various concepts such as semiotic remediation and resemiotization associated with it. The study makes a contribution to this call through drawing on stand-up comedy in Nigeria and South Africa. Thus, it contributes to sharpening and popularising not just multimodality or multisemioticity,

but also notions of semiotic remediation (repurposing), resemiotization as discourse practice – which have come to fore due to massive developments in media and information technology. Besides, the study contributes to literary studies (drama and comedy, etc.), and the ‘materiality’ of multimodal communication and thus helps in widening and operationalizing notions of ‘texts’ and contexts using stand-up comedy as backdrop.



KEYWORDS: Communication, Stand-up, Comedian, Modes, Semiotic resources, Remediation, Performance

DECLARATION

I declare that *Exploring Semiotic Remediation in Performances of Stand-up Comedians in Post-Apartheid South Africa and Post-Colonial Nigeria* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Idowu Jacob Adetomokun

November 2018

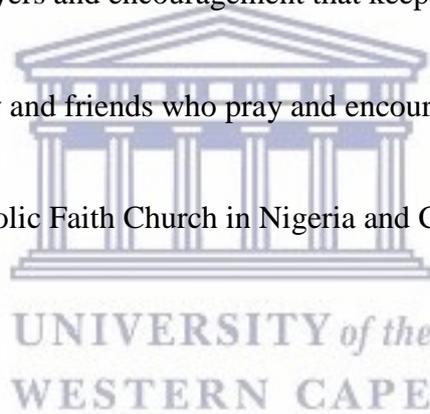
Signed: Idowu Adetomokun



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

- The National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) that funded my research for two and a half years
- My supervisor, Professor Felix Banda for his excellent guidance, professional input that contribute to the success of this research work
- My co-supervisor, Professor Bassey Antia for his excellent guidance and input that make this research work possible and successful
- My wife, Mrs Omolayo Ogungbemi-Adetomokun, for her prayers, loyal support, encouragement and patience throughout the writing of this thesis
- My mother for her prayers and encouragement that keep inspiring me to continue and conclude this study
- Members of my family and friends who pray and encourage me during the process of doing this research
- Members of the Apostolic Faith Church in Nigeria and Cape Town for their moral and prayer support



DEDICATION



I dedicate this thesis to the Almighty God
UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN CAPE

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CHAPTER ONE

Background to the study

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the background to the research, address the history and development of comedy, discuss the aims and objectives of the research, and the significance of the research. In addition to introducing comedy as a genre, I introduce the comedians whose performances are used in this thesis, an outline of chapters of the research, and ethical consideration.

1.2 Overview

Comedy is part of our everyday life and it features distinctively across cultural and linguistic domains. What appears funny in a particular culture may not be funny in another culture. In other words, we view phenomena through the lens of our cultural orientation, and comedians are well aware of such cultural lenses while they are performing for specific audiences. Stand-up comedy is a prevalent communicative genre in our contemporary society as comedians (comics) stand in front of an audience to humorously demonstrate talk and action, thereby transmitting messages to the consciousness of the society. In today's global village, comedians have an almost inexhaustible source of materials for capturing the attention of the audience while provoking thoughtfulness amidst the atmosphere of laughter. Indeed, they use the contents from other past performances where they have been part of the audience and rework them before a new audience for different purposes (Wilson, 2011). In many Western countries, for instance, comedy is an upwardly mobile art, having considerable cultural prestige and attracting diverse audiences (Friedman and Kuipers, 2013).

There are different accounts of what stand-up comedy is. For instance, "Stand-up comedy is an encounter between a single, standing performer behaving comically and/or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle" (Mintz, 1985: 71). This definition implies that stand-up comedians employ more than language to drive home their points. They are therefore able to capture the attention of the audience through the use of other non-linguistic modes of

communication, for example, they may behave comically. When they are performing, comedians play with words, invert word order, and use different forms of bodily movements, pauses, gestures, and facial expressions (Oliar and Sprigman, 2008).

Stand-up performers usually express memorized talk in a spontaneous conversational manner, as if they were speaking to friends. However, they often augment verbal content with “a range of embellishments such as special costumes and props, grunts, snorts and howls, bodily movements and facial gestures” (Stebbins, 1990: 3). Indeed, comedians weave these communicative resources together during performances in order to delight, teach, and keep the society informed. As such, stand-up comedians have a tradition of ridiculing moral, social, and political conventions because they analyse these conventions, poke fun at them, and question them in ways that amuse audiences (Gilbert, 2004). Such comedians are, as Mintz (1985: 75) puts it, “spokespersons and anthropologists for contemporary society.” In their typical style, comedians twist the truths of everyday life, they joke with everything that constitutes experiences of life (Gilbert, 2004), and they make a japing mockery of the moral principles that preserve society (Wood, 1988).

Comedians relish inundating their performance routines with distinctive pieces or series of jokes. At times, they add some commentaries to clarify the true meaning of their jokes and they present the commentaries in another performance for different expectations. Wilson stresses that humour in its mediated form is radically temporal, re-emerging and changing with each new context and thus, it can be re-judged. Also, the humorous routine is inconsistent, inviting re-judgment and can never be ultimately decided (Wilson, 2011). Stand-up comedians do not just tell jokes in the sense of a series of discrete units, but with an explicit set-up which culminates in a punchline. Instead, they interweave material into a routine which may run for hours. The routines are inexorably linked with the performance venue, the composition of the audience, the perceived relationship between the teller and the audience, the technological medium (beyond amplification) in which it is being transmitted, and the personality of the comedian (Brodie, 2008: 170). Though comedians retain the prerogative of performance, stand-up comedy is a genre that requires someone apart from the performer to interpret, develop, and shape it, and this makes it distinct among professional solo performance genres (Brodie, 2008: 176).

In addition to being one of the significant sources of social commentary in the twenty-first century, stand-up comedy is also becoming one of the most lucrative jobs. In America, for instance, stand-up comedy has earned the reputation as a branch of entertainment called ‘Comedy clubs’ where stand-up comedians perform on the stage to entertain audiences, usually in the evening. Stand-up comedy is also enriching and inspiring the American mass media in the films, the radio, the record industry and television (Mintz, 1985: 71). A prominent American television channel is ‘Comedy Central’ which carries comedy programming and it has expanded globally with localised channels. In Africa, it is known as ‘Comedy Central Africa’ where African comedians showcase their talents. As such, the genre of comedy (humour) is attracting and encouraging a pool of talent who relish exposing the contradictions and/or ambiguities of the society (Afolayan, 2013) and also to earn a living. Therefore, an intricate scholarly examination of the trajectory of semiotic resources used by stand-up comedians to deliver punchlines is warranted.

1.3 Historical background of stand-up comedy

There is an extensive body of research on the development of comedy (Lowe, 2007; Moelywn, 1983; Shershow, 1986; Brodie, 2008; Wright, 2007; Gordon, 2009). The catalyst for the study of comedy is widely said to be Sigmund Freud’s (1905) work on jokes (Limon, 2000; Mitchell, 2003; Moelwyn, 1983; Shershow, 1986; Gilbert, 1997 among others). Moelwyn (1983: 9) postulates that “it is customary to begin an examination of the relation between laughter and comedy with Freud’s work on *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*”. In Mitchell’s (2003) view, “the most compact theatre of fun is that of the joke, which according to Freud requires only a teller, a spectator, and a third, often absent subject: the victim of the joke” (Mitchell, 2003: 69). Here, the victim could be an individual, an institution, a community, an object, or just anything that comedians choose to ridicule for the amusement of the audience. Mintz (1985: 71) considers the performance of stand-up comedy to be the oldest humorous form of communication that has social and cultural relevance in every society, even in present times. Now, I want to go over to the discussion of the development of comedy.

Beginning with the etymology of the word ‘comedy’, Lowe (2007) discloses that it is from the Greek word *komoidia* and it is a word with a complex cultural history. In its usage, *komoidia* is a form of dramatic comedy and it literally means “party (*kom-*) song (*-oid-*) by which revellers (*komastai*) sang songs (*oidai*) to mock spectators or public figures (Damen, 2012). Comparing the present time to the olden times, comedy includes all the humorous performances, either written or conjectured, group or solo, and may be in form of theatre performance, television, radio, music, etc., and even a mixture of these features.

Furthermore, comedy consists of other non-performance texts having theme, plot or tone that are related to the classic tradition of comic drama. However, comedy is “restricted to works with a *narrative line*; thus sketch shows, stand-up, and variety acts can be ‘comedy’ but not ‘comedies’” (Lowe, 2007: 1). Lowe’s study on the definitions, theories and history of comedy shows that comedy was already old at the time of its first official performance in Athens at the City Dionysia of 486 BC, and that new plays were still being written in Latin over five centuries later (Lowe, 2007). Gordon (2009) writes that comedies were first written and staged in Athens, Greece, during the 5th century BC, in which only the works of the dramatists, Aristophanes and Menander, survived out of the dozens of Greek comedies written at that time. Gordon explains that Aristophanes’ comedy plays were known for their unique blending of “realism (in character), fantasy (in dramatic premise), and obscenity (in language and physical depictions of ribald behaviour).” Accordingly, the plays consist of loose episodes satirising life’s predicaments and lampooning the feverish arena of Athenian politics, philosophy, and art of that time; it was also called *Old Comedies* (Gordon 2009). I shall expatiate on the description of *Old Comedies* in the subsequent section.

1.3.1 Old comedy and Aristophanes

In the *Old Comedy*, Aristotle (in the *Poetics*) was aware that comedy’s origins were more complex, diverse, and contested, perhaps due to a shortage of documentation of developmental history. Like tragedy, Aristotle believed comedy unfolded from “a pre-dramatic form of performance that set apart the chorus and soloist” while “Attic vases were already starting to show costumed choruses that strikingly anticipate those of fifth-century comedy from the mid-sixth century” (Lowe, 2007a: 21). For Lowe, tragedy is an invention of Athens, but he was imprecise about the genealogy of comedy. Thus, the origin of comedy

was scattered more than tragedy, and to a certain extent, it can be visualized beyond Athens. Perhaps, comedy was older than tragedy and the similarities they shared in the period of the surviving scripts were probably the result of less common origins than of a long process of mutual influence and convergence. Moreover, whatever their ancient history, comedy and tragedy are in a contradictory “state of mutual segregation” (Lowe, 2007: 23). Both tragedy and comedy featured at the same festivals, in the same theatres, in front of the same audiences, and apparently on the same days, but they had no formal interaction between them. To a greater degree, tragedy was restrictive in what it could do with the form and medium of theatre, but the performance of comedy transgressed the boundaries or limits set in the performance of tragedy as a medium of theatre (Lowe, 2007). Consequently, long before comedy became an independent dramatic form, it was incorporated into tragedy. In the past, comedy featured in the literal way as comic relief, unsettling tragedy. While tragedy deals with real serious problems, and the pains and sufferings of life, comedy serves as a palliative alternate reality. So, genuine tragedy and comedy cannot occupy the same space (Westwood, 2004: 785). At this point, it is worth looking at some of the ways that comedy flouts the boundaries set in tragedy.

1.3.2 Distinctions between comedy and tragedy

By virtue of freedom comedy enjoys, Lowe (2007) indicates how comedy transgresses the limits of tragedy in the following ways: While tragedy was confined to myth with telling the same stories repeatedly, comedy was not confined to myth and that is why comedy’s creative lifetime outlives that of tragedy. Tragedy could not refer to issues of contemporary Athenian life at that time: on the other hand, comedy satirized the life, culture, and politics of Athens with no difficulty. Indeed, comedians caricatured real people on the stage, commented on current affairs, and constructed plots around matters of topical concerns. Another distinction Lowe (2007) highlights is that tragedy could present a mythological story to envisage pointed parallels with contemporary events in a roundabout way that raised the question whether they were touching contemporary events but comedy delights in exploring magic and the supernatural while suspending the laws of physics, logic, and representation based on accurate details. Also, he reveals that the masks and costumes of actors in tragedy were dignified and naturalistic, but the costumes of comic actors were “distorted and deliberately

grotesque, with leering masks and exaggerated belly, buttocks, and phallus” (Lowe, 2007: 24–26).

Furthermore, Lowe (2007) points out that comedy entails the use of “gutter obscenities at one extreme to high-flown tragic parody at the other, with a license to soar beyond existing lexical horizons to invent exuberant new words, usages, and expressions of its own” (Lowe, 2007: 26). In this sense, comedians explore their verbal styles at liberty to treat factual representation of life with disdain, but tragedy uses practically the same, highly artificial poetic language. Additionally, Lowe highlights that the production of a tragedy was more expensive than the cost of producing a comedy; a single comedy required double the budget of a single tragedy. Also, he points out that the characters in tragedy never overtly “acknowledge the audience directly or refer directly to the fact that they are watching a play” (Lowe, 2007: 27). On the contrary, characters in a comedy are not restrained from acknowledging the audience, as Aristophanes’ characters are known to be making jokes about individuals in the audience, and referring to themselves as characters during performance. Lowe also makes it clear that tragedy avoids scene changes and presents action with the pretence of real-time continuity, but comedy freely permits scene changes and the action can skip ahead days in time if it happens to suit the story.

The final difference is that comedy has a much more elaborate formal structure than tragedy, with even the shared elements used in different ways. However, both comedy and tragedy normally begin with a *prologue* (simply the opening scene before the chorus arrives) and *parodos* (a big entry song where the chorus first arrives), and end with an *exodos* (mass exit of all characters, including the chorus, by one or more routes off stage) (Lowe, 2007: 27). Notwithstanding their fundamental and conventional differences and separation, comedy was influenced by what was going on in tragedy (Lowe, 2007: 28). Significantly, all the differences outlined above contribute to the next phase in comedy called ‘New Comedy’, which I shall discuss next.

1.3.3 The new comedy

By the 4th century BC, another variety known as *New Comedy* replaced the harsh cultural critique of Aristophanes. The new comedy was developed by Menander and it is a departure from parodying public figures and events. Rather, it creates a make-believe world of

stereotyped characters, such as astute slaves, irrational masters, thwarted infatuated lovers, greedy pimps, and pure-hearted prostitutes (Gordon, 2009). This ancient Greek performance stands as the first spoken stand-up comedy and the modern monologue in theatres takes a cue from the prologues presented in Greek dramas. In the prologue, one of the performers comes forward to warm up the audience before the drama proper starts (Stebbins, 1990: 6). On the basis of this development, Roman playwrights of the 2nd century BC, Plautus and Terence, adapted Menander's Greek comedy by characterizing their writings with boisterous characters, bawdy subplots, sharp repartee, Roman mimes, and a southern Italian tradition known as Atellan farce (Gordon, 2009). Thus, the Greek New Comedy was replaced with the ambiguous and moralising Roman *New Comedy* presented before Roman audiences.

Besides, the history of comedy during the 'Middle Ages' (fifth to fifteen century AD) reveals plays that featured biblical characters and saints which were popular throughout Europe. Gordon explains that the so-called ambiguity and miracle plays were performed by local clergy or travelling actors, and interestingly, there were comic interludes that held the attention of the illiterate masses (Gordon, 2009) unlike the diverse sophisticated audience of our present time. Hence, by incorporating biblical plays into the middle ages comedy shows, comedy was developing in society, and this sophistication influenced subsequent writers. For instance, the English playwrights of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also adapted a great amount of the medieval blending of comedy and tragedy. Also, comedians turning things upside down and using intrigue featured actively in historical dramas and tragedies as well as formal comedies. In this sense, comedians performed unwritten joke routines and other modes of low comedy to connect directly to their audiences; this, of course, irritated William Shakespeare and other playwrights of that time. Although Shakespeare enjoyed using elaborate and elevated language, there is still a densely ironic, and sometimes obscene, wordplay in his works (Gordon, 2009). The classical theatre's association of comedy with tragedy was made very familiar by Shakespeare by the interpolation of comic scenes immediately before or after moments of extreme tragic tension. It has been described, with unconscious critical irony, as 'comic relief' (Moelwyn, 1983: 16). Comic relief has also been literally defined as "a relief from the bounds of mundane reality, from the imposition of order, limits, and seriousness that have come to occupy paramount reality" (Westwood, 2004: 788). Thus, comic relief is a performance that comedians present to provide temporary relief

to the audience watching a tragic drama and it lessens the aura of despondency that usually characterises tragedy.

1.3.4 Comedy from the 16th century to the 21st century

From the 16th to 17th centuries, a type of spontaneous Italian comedy delighted audiences with weird characters, called the ‘Commedia dell’arte’. What we can call modern comedy of the subsequent centuries emerged from the weird characters of *commedia dell’arte* such as “the gullible merchant Pantalone, the infantile servant Arlecchino, the vain Captain, the lusty serving woman Columbine, the idiotic Doctor, and the monstrous rascal Pulcinella” (Gordon, 2009) as dramatic personas who are extremely poor, performed degradation, itinerancy, destitution, hunger, and begging (Henke, 2007). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, comedy mutated to stage performances in the form of minstrel shows, vaudeville, burlesques and musicals (Gordon, 2009; Oliar and Springman, 2008: 1842) in which they mocked serious matters in incongruous way through song and dance. Burlesque is “an incongruous imitation; that is, it imitates the manner (the form and style) or else the subject matter of a serious literary work or a literary *genre*, but makes the imitation amusing by a ridiculous disparity between the manner and the matter” (Abrams and Harpham, 2011). These nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the time of rapid urban development and comic writers had freed themselves from the aesthetic restrictions and audiences of high dramatic literature (Gordon, 2009). The modern performances of stand-up comedy in the United States takes its influence from vaudeville and burlesque (Greengross and Miller, 2009).

Furthermore, the silent motion-picture comedy developed naturally from these non-literary sources of low comedy in the first quarter of the 20th century. At this time, live comedy performance on stage had separated from the electronic media entertainment of radio, films and television. By the 1930s, Hollywood, which is the centre of the film industry in the United States, had created an internationally recognized style that is similar to the techniques and comic types of ancient Greece and Rome (Gordon, 2009). On the basis of this development, after the Second World War (1939-1945), situation comedy (or *sitcom*) boomed in the United States on television shows and it deals with issues around families. Also, “*black*” or “*sick humour*” gained prominence in urban nightclubs, where performers attack societal values through the use of invective words and offensive imagery in the manner

of Aristophanes. In the 1980s and 1990s, the boundary between both the situation comedy and black humour blurred as they merged together in the absence of censorship and the fading away of the scope of American taboos (Gordon, 2009). This was, of course, the beginning of stand-up comedy, which is the focus of this research. During the 20th century, the level of stand-up comedy has become a more sophisticated and popular form of entertainment, both in the media and comedy clubs (Greengross and Miller, 2009). Without a doubt, stand-up comedy has attained some level of social respectability; therefore, some of its social relevance will be discussed next.

1.4 Stand-up comedy as social commentary

Part of what makes comedy a unique and powerful form of communication in our contemporary societies is the ability of comedians to avoid inflaming reactions though they make biting remarks about ‘others’, but they get away with such remarks. I shall briefly discuss below some of the areas they garner materials from to subject to ridicule.

1.4.1 Comedians and their self-ridiculing humour

Stand-up comedians perform an edited version of their autobiography which makes them intimate with the audience. They tell their life stories to create up the audience and that is one of the factors which makes the performer unique and also brings a foreknowledge of this persona to the audience (Brodie, 2008: 174). As characters in their own narratives, comedians reframe their history as legends. As such, Brodie shares the view of scholars that “stand-up comedy is occasionally looked upon and classified as our contemporary storytelling tradition” (Brodie, 2008, referring to Koziski, 1984: 73; Price 1998: 263; 1997: 234). In addition, comedians perform their personal opinion, and they astutely perform sarcasm to the extent that it deflects criticism, rather, their flagrant subjectivity is seen in a refreshing light (Timler, 2012: 52). One significant aspect of comedy is that it reflects incongruities and twists of life, but when comedians perform life reflections jocularly, comedy goes beyond just reflecting life indulgences. They are actually reinforcing reality and their performances cannot be “dismissed as just a laughing matter”, but must be “treated seriously” (Sturges (2010). Unlike anthropologists who aim to “give accurate accounts in which every contextual perspective is explored, stand-up comedians positions their own opinion and personality as

central” (Timler, 2012). For instance, a study the comedian ‘Okala’ in Ghana shows that he used his humble birth and how he rose to fame to portray himself as an everyday person under the cloak of his stage personae (Donkor, 2013: 268). Thus, it is not incongruous that comedians relay their personal life events that are known to the public as a technique to maintain mutual intimacy with the audience. As such, they are characters in their own narratives and their experiences and opinions are “intended to be regarded as true” and the audience make a determination of the truth behind them” (Brodie, 2008). The technique of engaging in self-mockery adds weight to comedians’ performances before the audience; thus, the sarcastic statements they make about ‘others’ appear to keep them off rebuttal.

1.4.2 Comedy as a medium of scorning politicians

By standing in front of a vast audience, comedians expose political deficits by using satire to rail, mock and spoof political officials, their policies, and symbolically portray their jokes as a way of getting back at the elite management (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 33). Satire is “the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation. While it may contain comic elements, satire differs from comedy because it uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt that exists outside the work itself” (Bogel, 2001: 1; Abrams and Harpham, 2011), to derogate the powerful by evoking the public’s contempt. During stand-up performances, comedians reinforce political messages as linguistic materials for ridicule and they skilfully present them before the audience in such a way that it does not lead to argument or criticism among the audience (Santa Ana, 2009: 26).

Moreover, Santa Ana points out laughing at the powerful takes them down a notch and relieves the audience’s tensions about important public figures such as senators, governors, and presidents whose actions are beyond the audience’s control. In a society that honours celebrities, those individuals who live life on the public stage are also fair game for comedians’ derision. In fact, by laughing at these powerful or celebrated individuals, the average person feels better about himself or herself because the reputation of such influential person or celebrity is being cheapened to mockery. These serve as “bread and butter of jokes” (Santa Ana, 2009: 37). Besides, comedians form relationships with their audiences

based on friendship, mutual antagonism, fear, flirtation, and many other qualities – or more often on a unique combination of these qualities. For instance, scholars reveal that Valentin’s comedy skills involve using exaggeration as he covers his face with facial hair, pulls his face into grimaces and wears outlandish hats, and long pointed noses (Double and Wilson, 2004).

Stand-up comedians weave their storylines in non-literal ways, but in an intrinsic manner to persuade their audiences to see a particular view of the world. They adopt the classical principle of *ethos*, by which they create a comic authority; the principle of *kairos*, which helps them to be flexible and adjust their performances to the requirement of the present moment; and the model of *pathos*, which stimulates them to situate themselves as an authoritative “voice on cultural dictums, social mores, and political agendas” (Greenbaum, 1999: 45). It is interesting to discover that stand-up comedians assess their own materials and performances. In this regard, Sturges (2010) carried out a study in Britain in 2008, based on four sources: the literature of comedy, current reportage of specific controversies, and the observation of comedians in performances, and interviews with comedians. He indicates that comedians do make clear and conscious selections of materials and choices of modes of expressions. In particular, comedians shrink away from introducing personal abuse towards politicians. However, religion was frequently satirised because the idea of a god and body of faith was considered inherently comic. There was also a powerful sense that religion was not a force for good, and that its leaders, priests, practices and beliefs deserved to be ridiculed; however, the human body was both celebrated and deplored (Sturges, 2010: 7).

Sturges (2010) suggests that, just as comedians take trouble to calculate the effect of their materials by exercising decorum, information professionals also have to devote careful thought to how they report societal problems. Thus, it is common for comedians to take source materials from what others have said or done and re-enact them in front of a devotee audience who respond in hilarious laughter. In that process, they usually create communicative effect and sometimes reactions follow their performances. Nevertheless, comedians are cynical about making commentaries on politics, contrary to the general expectation that comedy should carry strong political messages. With this in mind, some comedians seldom consider it worthwhile to direct personal abuse towards politicians, an area considered too risky for comedy (Sturges 2010: 6). Comedians are also mindful that issues related to race must be touched on with sensitivity and to avoid offending parts of the

audience or community at large. As such, some comedians consciously steer completely clear of it (Sturges, 2010: 8).

1.4.3 Exposing inconsistency in religion

Comedians do touch on religion, possibly because they find relevant materials to satirise in the idea of religion and religious adherents. Wood (1988) has contended that there is no easy linkage between comedy and the Christian faith because the viciousness and use of sexually arousing symbolism in comedy have been a source of considerable consternation to Christians. Sturges (2010: 7) believes that “there was a powerful sense that religion was not a force for good, and that its leaders, priests, practices and beliefs ought to be subject to deserved ridicule”. Wood further contends that comedians’ licentiousness and exuberance are suspect because they implicitly deny that there are any realities beyond earthly reality (Wood, 1988: 24), which is contrary to the Christians’ belief in the transcendental. Thus, in the performance of a Ghanaian comedian, Bob Okala, he conveniently used the church as grist for his comedy because he navigates the ridiculing of ‘men of God’, and the Christian religion through spurring controversy by bringing discrepancies between parody and original religious worship (Donkor, 2013: 272). However, stand-up performances that exploit religion as semiotic resource are considered in this present study.

1.4.4 Stand-up comedy on deformity and gender

Comedians also celebrate and deplore the human body by targeting distinctive features such as ugliness, drunkenness, gluttony, being overweight, etc., despite the risk that the audience might find such jokes deeply offensive, while diseases like cancer and AIDS are regarded as risky areas which should not be subjects of jokes (Sturges, 2010: 7). Significantly, it appears comedians draw a red line when making jokes about sex as they tend to avoid the subject of rape (Sturges, 2010). However, gender stereotype features as another prominent issue in stand-up comedy. In this sense, stand-up comedy is one of the areas where male dominance is being challenged. For example, Sturges (2010) notes that some comedians explore materials that are prejudiced against the opposite sex. In his view, stereotypes are played with in a way that challenges the audience, but he discovers the female comedians tend to disparage the opposite sex more than men. Similarly, Gilbert (1997) observes female comedians reverse the traditional stand-up comedy setting that pitched male performers as top major players. As

such, both male and female comedians exchange subject-object positions as the hierarchy is turned upside down and female comics become capable of insults of their male counterparts (Gilbert, 1997: 325). For instance, Russian female stand-up monologues are pervasively marked by highly negative, men-denigrating motifs (Mesropova, 2003: 430). Scholars have attributed this gender differences to societal norms that allow men and boys greater leeway in public humour (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006), but female comedians are also challenging the norms. In short, the genre of stand-up comedy has increased in scale and sophistication throughout the twentieth century and comedians have become increasingly popular in both the media and in comedy clubs. These developments make stand-up comedy a subject of academic interest (Greengross and Miller, 2009: 79).

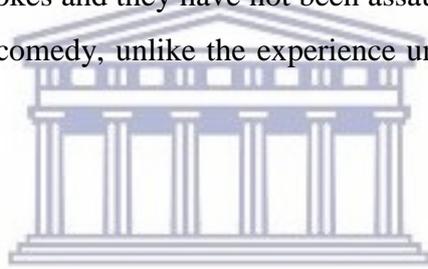
1.4.5 Comedians mocking real-life situations

In the course of their performances, comedians flagrantly cross socio-cultural taboos and boundaries with little or no social sanctions. They reframe everyday topical issues, re-enact the talks or deeds of others and sometimes generate reactions. In fact, comedians easily draw on issues involving politics, education, religion, poverty, fashion, marriage, and other life issues (Sturges, 2010; Gilbert 1997; Stebbins, 1990) to satirise societal shortcomings. As such, they subject nearly every aspect of human behaviour to ridicule, such as: body movements, fashion, eating, sexual desire, quarrelling, dancing, courtship, the procurement of money and social position, exaggerated violence and punishment, religious piety, racial and social differences, vain presentations of self, physical shortcomings, cheating and lying, and gender reversal (Gordon, 1999), among others. By hiding under the cloak of freedom of expression, comedians critique the practices of individuals, institutions and communities. Interestingly, when stand-up comedy is placed side by side with the mainstream media, stand-up comedians are thriving and appear promising with a bright future in Africa. In the following section, I will discuss stand-up comedy in South Africa.

1.5 Stand-up comedy in South Africa

Post-apartheid democracy promotes freedom of speech which has brought about the increased popularity of stand-up comedy in South Africa from the 1990s. Comedians have been featuring at many festivals annually in South Africa where they perform to reflect and

challenge the shortcomings of the society (Parker, 2002). Once the comedian and the audience establish a relationship, an unwritten social contract, the laughter elicited appears harmless (Parker, 2002: 11). Another point is that comedians may be involved in engagement and confrontation with the State, as invectives are central to the works of some comedians (Seirilis, 2011). Any student of history will believe Bimha's opinion that freedom of speech was cruelly suppressed for a long time for the large population of South Africa (Smith, E., 2013). As Parker (2002) points out, laughter is bringing audiences back to the theatre society because fear forms a large part of the national psyche; people are prepared to laugh at situations as a form of release. Bimha regards the spark of stand-up comedy in South Africa as "awakening a sleeping giant". This is because South Africans have an invigorating and refreshing hunger for joy and happiness and stand-up comedy fills the gap (Smith, E., 2013). Seirilis (2011) explains that the end of apartheid, its brutal restrictions, and the enthronement of democracy, are the fundamental reasons for the boom of stand-up comedy in South Africa. Comedians perform piercing jokes and they have not been assaulted by the police, arrested or held without charge for their comedy, unlike the experience under apartheid (Seirilis, 2011: 526).



Despite the efforts of South African society to tackle race and embrace multiracial country symbolized by their rainbow national flag, comedians do not shy away from sourcing race as material for comedy. David Smith, in his article about South African comedians, writes:

Race is inevitably a rich source of material, Lediga said. It's our therapy coming out of our history. I don't know if it's entrenching or breaking the stereotypes. But black people are getting into historically white spaces so there is always something to say. In a comedy club, making fun of the ANC, it was assumed those are white laughs. But it's general: it's also a middle-class exercise. The middle class bitch about the same things (Smith, D., 2013).

It seems from this extract that South African comedians are intelligently navigating the racial divide to squeeze in or blast the uncomfortable truth into their performances while making the audience laugh. However, as indicated in an online article, Pieter Dirk Uys writes: "From the post-apartheid South Africa, stand-up comedy has grown from being separatist and shallow to being responsible and informed. Sure, there are still many racist jokes, but the

objective of many comedians is to probe society and provide intelligent commentary in unexpected ways” (Dirk Uys, n.d.). Here, Uys believes that comedians tackle race, class, crime, corruption and the political elites. As court jesters tweaking the nose of the powerful, they are quite possibly helping to keep the South African nation sane. Though South African comedians enjoy a constitutional right to free speech compared to other African comedians, there are some restrictions pertaining to the materials they explore for comedy. For example, Parker notes that they do not dwell on the issues of paedophilia, religion and rape (Smith, D., 2013). At this point, it is necessary to introduce the two South African comedians whose video performances are used for analysis in this research; they are Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola.

1.5.1 Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah was born on 20 February 1984 in Soweto in South Africa. He is of mixed race; his mother is a black South African woman while his father is a Swiss. He jokes that he was ‘born a crime’, growing up in Johannesburg’s Soweto Township during the apartheid years when interracial relationships were illegal. He is a sharp, witty stand-up comedian and the most sought-after stand-up performer on the South African comedy scene. Trevor Noah has been an actor with a short role on the Soapie ‘Isidingo’ on SABC3, radio presenter, hosted a youth radio show on Yfm called ‘Noah’s Ark’, and has performed at various comedy festivals in South Africa. He hosted his own talk show ‘Tonight with Trevor Noah’ on M-Net in 2010, for which he received South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTA) for best Television Show. He now hosts ‘The Daily Show’, succeeding Jon Stewart in 2015¹. Trevor Noah is the most successful comedian in Africa. He joined The Daily Show with Jon Stewart in 2014 as a contributor, and has become the first South African stand-up comedian to appear on ‘The Late Night Show’ (Fereira, 2015). Trevor Noah is also the first recipient of the “South African of the Year accolade” after becoming a breakout star of Comedy Central Africa, launched in late 2011, as a branch of the American Cable Channel that provides a platform for comedians in Africa to demonstrate their talents to the African audience (Smith, E., 2013).

Moreover, as contained in an online newspaper, Trevor Noah is a leading light for many South African stand-up comedians who are providing both entertainment and comments on

¹ <http://whoswho.co.za/trevor-noah-5571>

the problems facing the country. He is renowned for one of his shows ‘That’s Racist’ in which he lampoons the ‘road tolls’, ‘shark attacks’, ‘the Marikana massacre’ and the private life of the president of South Africa. Also, he is not afraid to touch on issues of terrorism, islamaphobia, corruption, and other issues of political and social aspects of life (Smith, D., 2013).

1.5.2 Loyiso Gola

Loyiso Gola is a young man from Gugulethu Township in Cape Town who has become a professional comedian. He gave his first stand-up turn in 2001 and he has toured with a show entitled “Professional Black” (Smith, D., 2013). He has performed on stages all over the world, anchors his own groundbreaking satirical news show and is recognized as one of the most gifted comedians South Africa has ever seen. Some of his awards include: Breakthrough Act – South African Comedy Awards 2007, ‘Breakthrough Award’ in September 2017 for elevating South African comedy into the world sphere (Smith, D., 2015). He has boosted his career with performances at all the major comedy events on the local comedy calendar as well as performances in England, Scotland, Canada, the US, Dubai, Nigeria, Mauritius, Swaziland and Botswana. He remains apolitical, unapologetic and socially aware with his commentary – making him one of South Africa’s most outspoken and important comedians. He has several television and movie credits to his name, including being on the cult comedy sketch series the *Pure Monate Show*, co-hosting a television show with comedy legend Pieter Dirk Uys, as well as enjoying cameos on MTV Films’ *Bunny Chow* and Comedy Central Africa’s buddy cop movie *Blitz Patrollie* (Smith, D., 2013).

In recent times, it is with his television programme – ‘Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola’ (an equivalent of Jon Stewart’s *The Daily Show*), which is South Africa’s only satirical news show – that Loyiso has changed the local television as well as the socio-political landscape. Most notably, he has contributed in making the youth of South Africa engage with politics in a way they have not done since the fall of apartheid. Late Night News with Loyiso Gola has also received the honour of being nominated twice for an international Emmy Award in the international comedy category (Comedy central Africa, 2015). He draws on his poor background to perform before the audience. David Smith writes what Loyiso Gola says about himself in the following manner:

“Sometimes it was very evident my parents were trying to make ends meet” In 11 years I’ve seen the changes. In Durban I did 10 people, I went back and did 80, then went back and did 1,000. I don’t think it’s a passing fad”. The audience demographic is changing too. “When we started it was mainly white audiences; now 20% white would be surprising. There’s a growing black middle class so it makes sense”. Gola, 29, has toured with a show entitled “Professional Black”. He added: “We’re talking about these things on stage and at dinner tables, whereas if I go to the UK, race is barely touched on. It stops a lot of dialogue. Culturally, we’re dealing with race much better” (Smith, D., 2013).

Loyiso Gola is stressing the level of growth of stand-up comedy in South Africa and also distinguishing between two different societies which are quite understandable. He equally notes that South African comedians are not so comfortable with satirising religion like comedians from other parts of the world. The freedom that comes with democracy has offered comedians the liberty of expression but they have a goal in mind. Also, David Smith attributes the piece below to Loyiso Gola:

“In politics, however, there are no sacred cows and lampooning the president is a formality. South Africa is one of the few places where we can. If we and the press keep doing it, it will be normal. Satire has to become a normal thing. Then we’ll go in the right nation” (Smith, D., 2013).

Interestingly, the above information reveals that the South African comedians exploit many cogent issues in the society as materials for performing stand-up comedy. Thus, I shall explore the issues they raise in their performances for analysis in this present study. I now turn to stand-up comedy in Nigeria.

1.6 Stand-up in postcolonial Nigeria

Stand-up comedy has a long history in Nigeria, dating back at least to the days of village spokesmen, especially at ceremonial occasions. The performers usually added colour to social occasions, to the admiration of the audience at such events. Such was the quality of the performance that people in the audience regularly showed appreciation by giving such

spokesmen ‘dash’ money. Sometimes, they even solicited such dash, threatening not to talk again, unless somebody ‘opened’ their mouths. Their performances were so recognised that people ‘chartered’ them (as the term is used in the sense of ‘hired’) for their events. The absence of such village Master of Ceremonies (MCs) would mean very dull programmes because people could not be entertained with rib-cracking jokes and punchlines. Stand-up comedy genre advances as a veritable medium of live artistic entertainment in Nigeria due to the serious neglect suffered by the professional theatre practice for lack of facilities, government support, funding, negative publicity and insecurity (Ayakoroma, 2013: 522). Nigerian stand-up comedy remains a hugely important instrument of artistic rebirth, occasioned by the return to a democratic system of government, in the sense that it has provided comedians the ambience to say it as it is, as well as how they want to say it without fear of intimidation.

The twenty-first century has seen a growing interest in stand-up comedy performance and consumption. Following other general entertainment media, inter alia television, radio, music, film, cinema, video, drama and theatre, stand-up comedy has become one of the thriving enterprising industries in Nigeria. The most popular comic materials that feature in Nigerian comedy comprise the political, religious, ethnic, and also educational contents, as well as the common experience of poverty (Ayakoroma, 2013). Consequently, the market for humour merchants started to grow. Little wonder then that the need for the conscription of laughter into TV show segments, parties, ceremonies, campaigns, and even concerts, further led to the rise and development of the stand-up comedy genre in Nigeria in the last twenty years. The regular feature of comedy programmes on Nigerian television stations has enhanced the comedy industry in Nigeria with the introduction of ‘The Comedy Club’ from the stable of M-Net, premium content provider for DSTV (Odulaja and Medeme: Daily Independent, 16 April, 2010).

Nigerian comedians source materials from every imaginable aspect of Nigerian life, and dissecting them “with a knife dipped in the light-hearted fluid of comedy”, and the instructional import of its assertions never escapes the alert mind of the sensitive Nigerians (Ayakoroma, 2013). Very importantly, Nigerian comedians, in their creative outputs, have

evolved into their very colourful and versatile acts by making use of the adulterated version of English widely spoken in various countries and popularly known in Nigeria as ‘Pidgin’, most of the time. Also, their performances even come alive more when they are spiced with the mimicry of the various indigenous Nigerian accents (Odulaja and Medeme, Daily Independent, 2010). Interestingly, the art of stand-up comedy is growing and comedians are receiving invitations to functions, and then gradually, their reputations are rising and attention is being drawn to the prospects of stand-up performance. I shall briefly discuss the two Nigerian stand-up comedians whose video performances are used for analysis in this research, namely: Atunyota Akporobomeriere (stage name – Ali Baba), and Bright Okpocha (stage name – Basket Mouth).

1.6.1 Atunyota Akporobomeriere (stage name – Ali Baba)

Atunyota Alleluya Akporobomerere was born in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria on 24 June 1965. He began his professional career by performing at corporate events and appearing on television shows. He defied all odds of negative public perceptions to have a breakthrough in comedy by registering a company, *Ali Baba Hiccupurathird*, in 1998 by erecting billboards in conspicuous locations in Lagos with the inscription: *Ali Baba – Being Funny is Serious Business* (Ayakoroma, 2013). His initiative marks the transformation in the business of stand-up comedy in Nigeria. At that time, he had no precedent to follow in stand-up comedy, though he worked with very funny men who were not into full-time comedy. He performed for audiences at corporate and non-corporate events, at some point, becoming one of the most sought after masters of ceremony. In his performances, he makes the rules, breaks them and sometimes even discards them depending on how effective they were. He has been a professional stand-up comedian for the past twenty years and has in the last ten years received several awards. He is also a Special Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps (Gabufather, n.d.).

It is true that radio and television, as forms of electronic broadcasting, also contributed to the development of contemporary stand-up comedy in Nigeria. However, comedy did not become serious business until Alleluia Atunyota Akporobomeriere, alias Ali Baba, came on the scene. Ali Baba is known to have made comedy a serious business in Nigeria. In fact, he

is regarded as the father of all comedians in Nigeria (Ayakoroma, 2013: 8). Interestingly, the many awards credited to Ali Baba for his contributions to the entertainment industry are enumerated by Gistmarket (30 December 2016) – an online entertainment news site. Being a professional comedian for the past twenty-two years, here are some of his awards: (1) Laughter Awards – Bazik Theatre Abuja Outstanding performance (2001); (2) 1st Nigeria Entertainment Awards – Icon of Comedy (2004); (3) The News – For turning stand-up comedy into a valuable business (2008); and (4) Comedy for change – In commemoration for his twenty (20) years on stage (2010)². Having introduced Ali Baba, I shall proceed to introduce Basket Mouth.

1.6.2 Bright Okpocha (Basket Mouth)

Bright Okpocha was born on 14 September 1978. He is one of the top stand-up comedians in Nigeria. He has performed alongside other comedians on a tour of higher institutions around Nigeria. He featured his own show ‘hanging with the home boys’ in Lagos, and has also featured in the popular comedy show in Nigeria called “Nite of a 1000 laughs”. Moreover, he has won the National Comedy Award for Best Comedian of the year, and Best Stand-up Comedian on the year (2005/6). Bright Okpocha is currently one of the brand ambassadors of one of the leading telecommunications companies in Africa (Globacom). He stands out as one of the names to reckon with in the entertainment industry (True celeb media, 2016). He started out in comedy in 1990. At that time, Nigerians were familiar with what was called “yabbing” (ridiculing and poking fun at people).

There is likelihood that at any gathering in Nigeria, a performer would stand before an audience to taunt people with ‘words’. It was not categorized as stand-up comedy then. Bright has performed at various international shows in the UK, USA, Europe and South Africa. He is one of Nigeria’s biggest comedy brands and he is revered on the African continent and the world. He made history when he was contracted to host “Comedy Central Presents...”, a television comedy show in April 2013, live at Parker’s in Johannesburg, South Africa (Ayakoroma, 2013: 10). He has over 7.6 million followers on social media and won

² <https://gistmarket.com/video/alibaba-atunyota-alleluya-akporobomerere/>

the Savannah Pan-African Comic of the Year (2017), held in Johannesburg in South Africa (Trevor Noah named South African of the year, 2015). Without doubt, he is among the several stand-up comedians who have carved a niche for themselves in the growing comedy industry in Nigeria today (Ayakoroma, 2013). He has featured on international concerts platforms and anchored gigs that included the likes of Joe, Boyz II Men, Sean Paul, Wyclef Jean, Kool and The Gang, Akon, Dru Hill, Busta Rhymes, Jay-Z, Beyonce, Fat Joe, Snoop Dogg, Ciara, Chris Brown, and many more. He also performed at various international shows in the UK, USA, Europe and South Africa. In 2010, he became the first African comedian to host a comedy show - *Lord of the Ribs* - at the O2 Arena. Basket Mouth also hosts the biggest TV show in Nigeria today: the MTV Base Big Friday Show³.

1.7 Problem statement

The modalities, through which comedians link pleasure of comedy to the production of knowledge and the practice of social commentary, rather than exclusively to the consumption of entertainment, are of academic interest. Studies have explored how comedians twist the truths of everyday life by subjecting every component of human behaviour to comic treatment; and how they make a japing mockery of the moral principles that preserve society. Also, scholars have compared the storylines of comedians across cultures, and how comedians exploit disability to make jokes. Furthermore, comedians have been studied from the standpoint of how they expose the menace of gender inequality, and how they use ‘dirty words’ to create humour. However, the focus of the current study is not merely on how humour is produced and consumed, but critically, on how comedians cross socio-cultural taboos and boundaries with little or no social sanctions. In essence, the communicative trajectory of the reframed everyday topical issues and how comedians semiotically refashion events and activities, others’ talks or deeds and the like, have not been addressed.

From the foregoing, we do not know the intricacies of the twists, exaggerations, impersonation, language modifications and all other embellishments inherent in stand-up

³ <http://www.comedycentralafrica.com/comedy/artists/basketmouth/#bio>

comedy performances that make them to generate reactions. Thus, the main research question therefore relates to how stand-up comedians remediate other people's verbal and non-verbal languages, images, social discourses, events and activities, and other semiotic resources for communicative effect. Essentially, there is a need to explore the choices comedians make of semiotic resources at hand, as well as to examine the trajectory of the semiotic materials (including designs, the themes), and recontextualisations in the production of humour. To address these issues, I shall apply the framework of multimodality, the notions of semiotic remediation, and resemiotisation to the selected audiovisual recordings of stand-up comedy performances by Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola from South Africa; and Atunyota Akporobomeriere (Ali Baba) and Bright Okpocha (Basket Mouth) from Nigeria.

1.8 Aim and objectives



The aim of this study is to examine how semiotic resources, as described above, are remediated by stand-up comedians for communicative effect. Specifically, I shall analyse selected stand-up comedy performances by two South African stand-up comedians and two Nigerian comedians, as mentioned above, in order to:

1. explore the trajectory of semiotic material used across modes, contexts and practices (and their effect on production and consumption)
2. trace the translation and interpretation of semiotics from one form to the other across modes, contexts and practices
3. examine the reconstruction of verbal language, images, social discourses and other semiotic resources such as gestures, actions, music and sound in the videos for aesthetic and communicative effect
4. examine the extent to which the socio-cultural contexts of South Africa and Nigeria have a differential effect on the choices in the semiotic resources used in the reconstruction of meaning
5. explore how comedians cross cultural taboos and boundaries with little or no social sanctions.

1.9 Research questions

1. How do stand-up performers reconstruct language, images, gestures, actions, music and sound in videos for communicative effect?
2. What are the modes that stand-up comedians exploit in South Africa and Nigeria for socially meaningful communication?
3. How do comedians link humour to social contexts and the worldview that shape their production for public consumption?
4. How does stand-up performance move beyond re-exploiting scenarios for humour to providing intricate social reflection?

1.10 Scope of the study

This study focuses on how stand-up comedians utilize sociocultural and political materials for communicative and aesthetic effects. The data is limited to performances of the chosen two comedians each from South Africa and Nigeria because they are among the leading comedians in their countries respectively. Besides, their performances cover a wide range of issues across Africa and the world in general and they have won local and international awards. The analyses is done using the social semiotic theory of multimodality and the analytical tools of resemiotization and semiotic remediation with the focus to contribute to understanding how the social semiotic theory can be applied to analysing genres from other media.

1.11 Significance of the research

In the light of scholars' notions, comedians are blatantly offensive, perpetuating stereotypes because they push local boundaries with narratives that are offensive, but which meet with agreement from the audience. Also, they encrust content with humour like coating bitter medicine with sugar, and the laughter takes away the sting. In this way, comedians are social critiques and they can instigate social transformation in a way that makes many audience members wanting more (Cohen and Richards, 2006). From the ancient to the avant-garde, comedy has been the in the business of biting subjecting every subject to the comic game. The hedge anchored on the free political landscape of freedom of speech enjoyed by

comedians propels them to spike at anything as they perform before the audience. As it is common knowledge, for stand-up comedians, there are no holds barred in the materials they present to the audience. In many instances, they pick on members of their audience and ridicule them in their presence and such individuals cooperate with the comedians without bitterness.

However, we have had shocking reactions to comedic performances in some parts of the world. For example, in 2014, the Egyptian authorities were angered by the comedian, Bassem Youssef, whom they claimed was ‘insulting national symbols’, but the world considered Egypt’s action as a violation of freedom of speech. Also, in the same year, Bright Okpocha (Basket Mouth), whose comedy performance forms part of the data for this study, came under fire for turning rape into a joke. Thousands of people condemned him on social media and called on the Nigerian telecommunications giant, Globacom Limited, to terminate his deal as an ambassador of the company until he apologized to have used such a subject for jokes (Basketmouth under fire over rape joke – No author, 2014). Also in 2015, there was a violent reaction to a French satirical weekly newspaper ‘Charlie Hebdo’ for making jokes about Islamic leaders and twelve people were killed while some others were wounded in the attack. As we have seen in the Egyptian’s reaction to Youssef’s comedy, the aftermath of Charlie Hebdo’s comedic cartoons, and people’s comments of Bright Okpocha’s rape joke, it is indeed true that jokes can seriously backfire because comedians are “holding up a mirror and forcing the society to confront realities we would prefer to ignore” (Cohen and Richards, 2006).

Consequently upon the above, this research is significant because it tracks the performances of comedians and reveals how their performances are inherently informative while they comfortably entertain their audiences. This study shows our understanding of comedians’ contributions to correcting the ills of our society. The synthesis of semiotic theory of Multimodality and its offshoots of Resemiotization and Remediation enables me to discover that the comedians desensitise matters that are too sensitive to speak about in society. In their performances, it seems the society is anesthetised, because they usually support comedians with approval nods, claps, laughter, whistles, and in some instances, standing applause. As such, they serve as signposts to the societal diseases in our contemporary world as they

perform their brilliance and ingenuity. In essence, the notions of multimodality, which account for more than language in use during communication; resemiotization, which concerns how one semiotic translates to another during social processes; and semiotic remediation, which shows how different media recycle one another, are now being extended as tools in social semiotics practice. Thus, by analysing the trajectories of semiotic resources and modes that the comedians exploit to perform, I am trying to contribute to the theories using stand-up comedy.

1.12 Ethical issues

Since this study is ‘text’ based, there are no ethical issues.

1.13 Chapters outline

Chapter one deals with introducing the background to the research, and addresses the history and development of comedy, the aims and objectives of the research, the significance of the research, and an outline of chapters that form part of the research.

Chapter two presents the literature review, and gives insight into scholarly contributions to stand-up comedy and highlights the gap that this research will attempt to fill.

Chapter three presents the social semiotic theory of multimodality and its extension of resemiotization and semiotic remediation.

Chapter four describes the research methodology.

In chapter five, the analysis of the data from the standpoint of how multimodality re-emphasizes the multi-semiotic nature of representation, was done.

Chapter six considers how in the data resemiotization functions to underscore the material and the historicized dimensions of representation.

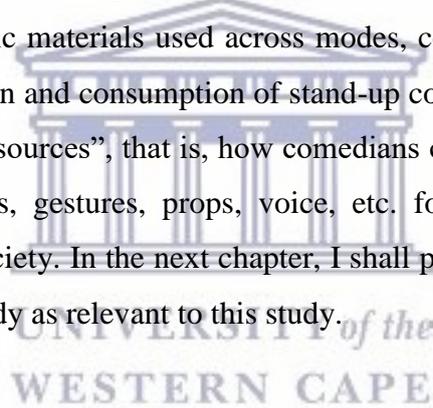
Chapter seven focuses on how semiotic remediation accounts for the ways in which stand-up comedians re-perform ideas from other media for extended new meanings in the context of comic production and consumption.

Chapter eight contains the discussion on the interconnectedness of multimodality, resemiotization and remediation, portraying stand-up comedy as a social communicative practice.

Chapter nine highlights the conclusions of the analyses and suggests future research.

1.14 Summary

This chapter has provided the background to this study and showed the passion of comedians to subject life situations to ridicule. More than making society laugh, comedians contribute to disseminating knowledge. Hence, this thesis is concerned with the sociological importance of comedy in an African setting. Specifically, this research focuses on the semiotic resources explored by the comedians from South Africa and Nigeria in order to compare the choice of semiotic resources embedded in their performances and to draw conclusions. The aim is to show the trajectory of semiotic materials used across modes, contexts and cultures and how they have effects on production and consumption of stand-up comedy in Africa. As such, this thesis focuses on “semiotic resources”, that is, how comedians create dynamic positions with their body, facial expressions, gestures, props, voice, etc. for communicative effect and sometimes reactions in the society. In the next chapter, I shall present the review of literature to the genre of stand-up comedy as relevant to this study.



CHAPTER TWO

Review of Relevant Literature on Stand-up Comedy

2.1 Introduction

A great deal of studies in late modernity lends credence to stand-up comedy as an integral part of society. Much of the available research on the subject was conducted in the United States and Britain (Limon, 2000; Harbridge, 2011; Ciccone, Meyers and Waldmann, 2008; Bore, 2010; Freidman and Kuipers, 2013; Rutter, 2000; Wells and Bull, 2007; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Gilbert, 2004; Mitchell, 2003), among others. Stand-up comedy, as an art, was initially developed in the United States, as humorous dialogue presented before an audience (Stebbins, 1990; Wilson, 2011). This interaction between comedians and the audience shows that communication is asymmetrical, as comedians construct and lampoon ideologies of every subject of human existence usually for audiences' response. In this chapter, I shall review the contributions of scholars to comedy as a genre of intimacy and how stand-up performances straddle every manifestation of human activities across cultures, education, politics, gender, religion, disability, and the media.

2.2 Comparison of stand-up performance across boundaries

It is a common knowledge in our societies that comedians are becoming important public figures, and this development is drawing the attention of scholars to investigate the styles of comedians' performances across cultures. For instance, Katayama (2009) uncovers and illustrates commonalities and differences between humour in American and Japanese cultures. He finds that in the American context comedians create an in-group sphere and invite the audience to join the sphere. Humour emerges within this in-group sphere and as the laughter occurs, the distinction between the comedian and the audience decreases. In contrast, Japanese comedians reinforce the performer-spectator distinction which produces a certain degree of distance between the comedians and the audience (Katayama, 2009: 137). In this

sense, stand-up comedy shows the presence of distinct social cultures to which people acculturate. One would believe therefore that as societies differ in linguistic and cultural identities, the performance of stand-up comedy will also differ from one culture to another.

Differences in comedy taste can translate into marking an individual's cultural capital and how they differ cross-nationally, as Friedman and Kuipers (2013) discovered in Britain and Netherlands. Drawing on their previous studies (Friedman, 2011; Kuipers, 2006a, 2006b), they already discovered strong cleavages in comedy taste in Britain and the Netherlands where people in upper middle class with higher education and more cultural capital generally exhibited tastes for highbrow comedy and rejected anything lowbrow. Those in the working and lower middle classes prefer more lowbrow comedy and have conflicting feelings about highbrow comedy. This means that comedy taste can establish a sense of personal worth because people establish rapport with those they can create positive emotional energy with, and laughter is crucial to the way we establish this bond (Friedman and Kuipers, 2013). Therefore, humour strengthens social bonds, dissipates tension, and brings about emotional intimacy and expectation, but the failure to share humour implies not being connected. Friedman and Kuipers note that people with high cultural capital use comedy taste as a key tool in claiming social distance, exhibit a sense of superiority and consider those lacking knowledge to decode highbrow comedy as inferior to them (Friedman and Kuipers, 2013: 14). During communication, humour serves as an opening factor of acquaintance, trust and closeness. Indeed, the absence of humour may indicate social divide and constitute the notions of 'us' and 'them' in everyday life (Friedman and Kuipers, 2013: 15). Moving from this point, I shall proceed to the discussion of stand-up comedy as a genre of intimacy.

2.3 Stand-up as genre of intimacy

One of the passions of stand-up comedians is the tailoring of their performances to connect directly to their audiences. As such, stand-up comedy is a form of talk; and also a genre of intimacy (Brodie, 2008). In Brodie's view, the audience forms part of the mediation of humour by their participation and reaction. Hence, stand-up comedy is not a one-way presentation; rather it is a form of performance in which both the performer and the audience are co-constructors. During performances, comedians use a variety of techniques to create the *illusion* of intimacy, thereby decreasing the distance between the stage and the audience (Brodie, 2008). Brodie states that one of the techniques to draw the audience's response is a

comedian's dexterous use of the microphone, which is critical to the amplification of the verbal display of comedic antics. Brodie notes that a comedian without a microphone contends with the possibility of the audience overwhelming his or her performance because the use of pauses, rhetorical questions, digressions, diversions, distractions, and long descriptive passages all are opportunities for the audience to react in an unanticipated manner and to shift (or pull) focus away from the performer (Brodie, 2008).

On the other hand, the performer using a microphone merely has to speak and her voice becomes amplified as loud as that of the whole crowd taken together. Through this, the performer's use of the microphone helps to create the illusion of a small group discussion, irrespective of the group's actual size. Thus, we can see that the amplification allows the comedian's voice to be heard audibly and supersedes the sounds from the audience. The reaction from the audience may not be entirely laughter; it may be a proposition put forward and the performance assumes intimacy between performer and audience (Brodie, 2008: 160), though the power to control the show resides with the stand-up performer.

In Wilson's (2011) study, he examines the underlying logic that illuminates how audiences understand their role in the consumption and creation of humour. He compares Sarah Silverman's 'chink' joke (2001) to that of Stephen Colbert's speech at the White House Correspondents' Dinner (2006); and Stephen Colbert's speech before Congress (2010) to the Jon Stewart/Stephen Colbert's 'Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear' (2010). Wilson employs a reading strategy he calls 'critical rhetoric' (acknowledging Biesecker, 1992; Phillips, 1996; Wilson, 2008). Following from the theories of Michel Foucault and Jean François Lyotard, critical rhetoric seeks out instances that result in a proliferation of discussion (i.e. discussion splitting into parts). Wilson looks at the underlying logics of how audiences relate with humour. He notes two things: (1) the audience interprets humour through its laughter, and (2) the context affects or adjusts the anticipations of the audiences. Wilson therefore argues that "humour is not an involuntary reaction to a pre-existing, self-same, inherently funny subject or discourse, rather, humour is a complex relation of discourse and power, a discourse formation" (Wilson, 2011: 277). Here, the audience is actively involved in the production of humour.

Stand-up comedy is not just made up of a comedian performing before the audience, it takes the orderly collaboration of the trio: compère, comedian and audience, to make the humour.

Unlike the linguistic and structural approaches that believes the audience is only responsive to comedians, Rutherford stresses that the way stand-up performance is arranged makes it interactive and the opening sequence of a stand-up performance exemplifies this collaboration (Rutherford, 2000: 481). Prior to the entry of a comedian, the compère introduces the comedian onto the stage at comedy venues. The “audience also supports collectively with laughter and applause and demonstrate an unplanned, but unproblematically negotiated addition to the interaction of the opening sequence” (Rutherford, 2000: 465). Rutherford finds out in some British stand-up venues that the compère organize the performance and maintain continuity by announcing and appraising the oncoming performers through the following six techniques. The first technique is by ‘contextualization’ by which the compère will give a piece of biographical background information about the comedian to the audience. The next one is by ‘framing response’ in which the compère will suggest some enthusiastic requests such as ‘go wild, go crazy, please welcome’, etc. to the audience to welcome the comedian to the stage.

Another technique is ‘evaluation of a comedian’ in which the compère will express the quality of the comedian by building up expectations for a comedian’s entry. Also, the compère will tend to be satirical and encouraging when evaluating a comedian that is poor or one that is not liked (Rutherford, 2000: 468). The fourth one is ‘request for action’ to elicit certain contributions, especially applause from the audience. In these ways, the compère co-opts the audience into the creation of humour which is crucial for the successful organization of stand-up comedy. Introduction sequence is the fifth technique and it concerns the point of revelation in the sequence in which the identity of the performer is revealed as the compère announces the comedian’s name (Rutherford, 2000: 469–471).

The last stage is when the compère summons the comedian to get onto the stage. At such time, the audience’s applause accompanies the performers’ entry onto the stage regardless of the performer’s status, talent or reputation (Rutherford, 2000: 476). Thus, Rutherford argues that “jokes performed by stand-up comedians cannot be seen as isolated texts because they are located within, and part of, the developing interaction of stand-up” (Rutherford, 2000: 481). In this way, comedians can be seen as distinctive performers and not as generic performers. Indeed, stand-up comedy is not just a collection of funny bits; rather, it is sharing edges with the context and texture of the humorous performance. Thus, stand-up performance is a collaborative act (Brodie, 2008).

Furthermore, by teasing out the dynamics of the performer/audience relationship in live stand-up, the conditions of the audience's agency, and exploring the pleasures of the medium, Harbidge (2011) claims that stand-up comedy is dialogic, affording both the performer and the audience the opportunity to share the performance because both the audience and the comedian are sharing the same sphere in which the performance occurs. In this manner, the stand-up performance is more than what the performer does on the stage, it also comprises of the whole activity that unfold at the meeting of both the audience and the comedian (Harbidge, 2011: 129). Harbidge examines jokes in the comedy of Steve Martin to show how non-laughter moments unveil the productive role of the audience during stand-up performance. This is because such moments contribute intra-audience dynamics and function to accentuate the satisfying sense of belonging among the members of the audience (Harbidge, 2011: 130). Harbidge notes that Steve Martins deliberately refers to the audience in the second person plural 'you', urging them to participate in the performance, and they become affiliates to the comedian, just like at a music concert when the audience sings along with the musician when the musician extends the microphone to them. Furthermore, Steve Martin initiates the colloquial assertion 'you know' to draw in the audience, but he leaves them puzzled and isolated as he continues to perform the comedy. Steve Martin's jokes and gags, unrestricted like in film and TV narratives, find an expecting audience and their point of contact reveal the interaction of comedians and audience. Martin's comedy shows that laughter is an instantaneous analytical tool and also a pointer of audience delights, because by the enjoyment of laughter, the intricate workings of comedy will be known (Harbidge, 2011: 142)

2.4 Significance of contexts to humour

The psychological and physiological context in which comedy takes place is crucial to understanding the essence of stand-up performance (Brodie, 2008; Povenda, 2005; Gilbert, 1997; Katayama, 2009; Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009; Perry *et al.*, 1997; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Donkor, 2013; Mintz, 1985; Gilbert, 2004). Also, the verbal or non-verbal communicative practices and other resources of the physical arrangement of the natural and mediated environment in which humour emerged are germane to the success of comedy performance (Mintz, 1985; Povenda, 2005; Greenbaum, 1999; Seizer, 2011; Brodie, 2008;

Glick, 2007). Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) focus on the practices deployed by stand-up comedians to build the interaction with the audience during performance. This is in order to understand why jokes that make use of swear words, target the audience, and are likely in other circumstances to be considered sexist or racist, can overcome the risk of rejection and be embraced with affirmative responses. As Brodie opines, stand-up comedians assemble small scripts that are comparably similar to classic folkloric genres, such as riddles, jokes, narrative of legends, tall tales (greatly exaggerated stories), toasts, dozens (exchange of insults), and the forms of rhetoric and polemic (Brodie, 2008: 154).

However, an important element of humour's psychological context is the thought to separate the humorous space from the space of serious discourse (Bergson, 1914). Thus, the issue of acceptability concerns the possibility that certain subjects such as rape, physical deformity, sickness, etc., are not considered as acceptable humorous materials. By examining four stand-up comedy shows performed by African-American comedians in Los Angeles in front of black audiences and white audiences respectively, Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009) explored the teamwork practices of comedians, from the opening introduction overlapping with audience applause to the time when the comedian and the audience start working together for subsequent jokes. Pragmatically, the African-American comedians used audience-referred jokes frequently, but more often in black rooms, while in the white rooms, the comedians resorted more frequently to self-referred jokes or to audience-referred jokes positioned in the joke expansion; that is, after a first self-referred punchline already obtained the audience affiliation (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009). Also, the comedians become acquainted with the audience through greetings, requests, questions, and tag questions. The audience contributes with answers, laughter, and applause provided at relevant places. Interestingly, the comedians move from one joke sequence to another through fillers, and by expanding punchlines that receive affiliative responses into long series of punchlines.

Very importantly, the environment where jokes are presented is crucial to the acceptability of the humour, as the interactional context in which humour is invented is significant to the delivery of the punchline (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009). In a situation where humour develops from a casual conversation, such humour, based on personal matters, everyday life, physical needs, etc., will be acceptable by the audience because laughing makes the audience not only allies in the creation of the humour, but also co-responsible for the humour. The shortened physical space between stage and audience in the clubs hosting the shows

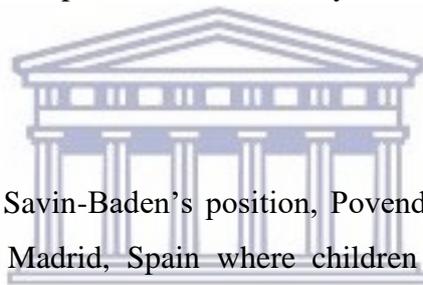
epitomizes a distinctive feature of informality of stand-up comedy performance (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009).

As comedians connect with the audience, they also inherently use rhetorical discourse, not only to entertain, but also to persuade and perhaps convince their audiences to look at the world through their comic vision (Greenbaum, 1999: 33). In his article, Greenbaum (1999) explores how stand-up comedians use Aristotelean notion of ethos, Socrates' concept of *kairos* and Isocratean discourse paradigms of natural talent, praxis and *theoria* in their narratives to persuade the audience to adopt certain ideological positions. The rhetorical discourse also concerns how professional and amateur comedians hone their comedy craft in front of the audience for communicative effects. Greenbaum shares the notion of Bakhtin (1968) that "stand-up is not only a cultural form of resistance but a linguistic one as well". By exploring the works of two comedians, Gray and May, Greenbaum (1999) discovers that Gray establishes and maintains comedy through mixing voices, questioning authority, embracing class distinctions; but Gray aligns himself with the lower classes while seemingly making fun of them though they have paid him to make them laugh.

On the other hand, May connects with the audience by using self-downgrading humour with unattractive attire that draws attention to her. May jokingly cajoles the audience when the response she receives from them is uninspiring to her, therefore she engages the audience in dialogue. Gray's performance style also involves discourse with the audience, but he makes use of sexually explicit jokes to sustain connection with the audience by exploring television shows, events, commercials and rock music to create humour (Greenbaum, 1999: 39). Thus, by drawing on the occurrences that his audiences are familiar with in his performance, Gray cleverly connects himself with the audience and assumes a comic authority by altering that which is ordinary. Thus, Greenbaum believes that comedians adopt stage personas by employing narrative tools of incongruity, exaggeration, sexual hyperbole, mockery, reversal, mimicry and punning to control the rhetorical dimensions of their speech. Also, they progress from reflection to transcript, and to the presentation in a regular condition of revision, deflecting the disposition of the audience (Greenbaum, 1999: 34). From these contributions, it is clear that comedians employ diverse techniques to connect with their audiences.

2.5 Stand-up as pedagogy to engenders critical thinking

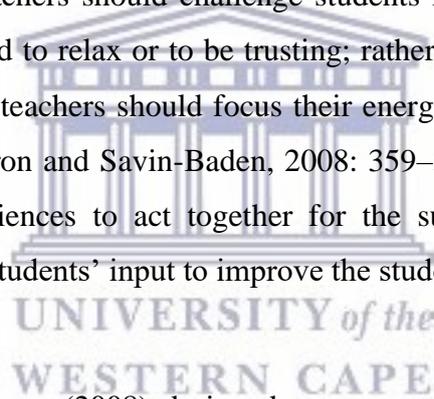
The technique(s) and material(s) of stand-up can be used to teach critical thinking. Scholars have revealed that stand-up comedy is of educational and marketing significance (Sturges, 2010; McCarron and Savin-Baden, 2008; Poveda, 2005; Mesropova, 2003; Greenbaum, 1999). The fact is that comedians perform before audiences by combining their internal self-reflection and external engagement with various discursively available social issues. Scholars believe that the interactive process in stand-up comedy can be successfully incorporated into seminars in higher education. On this view, just as stand-up comedians rely on the continuous interaction with the audience in front of them, for seminars to be successful, students need to respond, to contribute, so that they help shape the dynamic and the direction of the seminar (McCarron and Savin-Baden, 2008: 358). As such, it will enhance students' ability to think for themselves, just as comedians provoke audiences by irritating them, insulting them and thereby forcing them to think.



Corroborating McCarron and Savin-Baden's position, Poveda (2005) examines a primary school classroom activity in Madrid, Spain where children incorporate humour through language play. He focuses on the interplay between socio-emotional concerns and the manipulation of different metalinguistic dimensions in the classroom interaction. He notes that the teacher's evaluative and control powers can be threatening to children's social position and presumed competence. As both children and teacher tend to establish and protect certain identities during classroom interactions, Poveda believes humour may be useful in maintaining such identities and alignments. He suggests that teachers can apply humour to modulate their teaching activities while students will also be able to avoid face threatening exchanges. In fact, he discovered that when the teacher and the children incorporated humour through language play, the face threatening situation was lessened. In essence, the plain language exercises may progress to important socio-emotional experiences that enhance children's practical, language and cultural behaviours beyond what formal learning offers (Poveda, 2005: 92).

Also, McCarron and Savin-Baden (2008) examine some of the techniques used by stand-up comedians which can be incorporated into teaching students of higher institutions. They

argue that laughter is the result of comedy and the laughter generated by stand-up comedy stems from the interactive nature of stand-up performance. That is, there is interaction between stand-up comedians and their audience and this interactive style could be incorporated into seminars in higher education to enhance students' learning process (McCarron and Savin-Baden 2008: 356). Unlike actors who only perform for their audience, the teacher and stand-up comedian maintain continuous interaction between them and their students. They are of the opinion that the success of a seminar depends upon the responses and contributions of students as they shape the dynamics of the seminar. Also, stand-up comedians acknowledge their audience, and in this way, the work of teachers and stand-up comedians is unique (McCarron and Savin-Baden 2008: 358). McCarron and Savin-Baden suggest four ways to prevent the development of co-dependent relationships, over-engagement and collective cocooning. The suggestions are: (1) students should be provoked to think for themselves just as comedians provoke, irritate, insult their audience thereby forcing them to think; (2) teachers should challenge students rather than support them; (3) students should not be allowed to relax or to be trusting; rather, they should be working and thinking all the time; and (4) teachers should focus their energies and priorities on what the students are learning (McCarron and Savin-Baden, 2008: 359–326). Thus, just like stand-up comedians involve their audiences to act together for the success of their performance, teachers also should bring in students' input to improve the students' learning experience.



Ciccone, Meyers and Waldmann (2008) designed a course to motivate some students by moving them from simplicity toward complex thinking by challenging them to develop and articulate their own theory of what is essential to understand comedy. The scholars perceive that building a theory on comedy and laughter may be problematic because of inconsistencies that will arise in such theory. For these scholars, seminar instructors in the humanities have quite a substantial number of 'habits of mind' or protégé to guide and model. This is because seminar instructors are analytical in the use of sources, repetitive of uncertain explanations, perfecting conclusions, and have the proficiency to grasp the essence and forms of complex ideas (Ciccone *et al.*, 2008: 310). As such, they will guide fresh students to accurately understand complex ideas to which they are not yet exposed because they are still naïve, have dualistic discernment of some ideas and forms of expressions that are interestingly complex. By making the students examine comic texts and asking themselves how they would

understand comedy and laughter if they only had some samples before them, the students learned the following lessons:

The students recognized that comedy showed them how to be open-minded and be flexible to function in society. Also, comedy helped the students advance in the direction of more intricate reasoning and their thinking about comedy migrated from a surface level to a deep-rooted, more problematic level. Additionally, the students became increasingly aware that their habits of learning were also changing because they recognized in a much larger sense what it means to learn and that content is crucial to understand the self or to understand others (Ciccone *et al.*, 2008: 313–314).

The students' thinking about society also changed, having found that humour is a vital technique/ingredient for bonding. Humour also opened them to new ideas in their educational processes and made them more refined (Ciccone *et al.*, 2008: 315). Indeed, there was a drastic change in the students' perception about comedy since they started the course. This was because they did not just watch comedy programmes or thought about it on the surface level, but they thought of theories and techniques to analyze the comedy. As a result, they developed insight to reflect deeply on everyday issues in society. The scholars submit that "asking students to think about comedy and laughter through a process similar to John Dewey's – experience, observation, hypothesis, experimentation – problematizes learning for them, thus leading them to a more complex understanding of the concepts and a more complex process of thinking in general" (Ciccone *et al.*, 2008: 320). From their findings, one could argue that stand-up comedy can serve as a valuable catalyst to intellectual excellence.

Woolard (1987) considers how comedians create the impression that one cannot tell the language a comedian is speaking and what social message the comedian's code manipulations create. He identifies the orderliness and meaning of code-switching that combines linguistic and social concerns in the stand-up comedy of Eugenio in Spain. The data was obtained from a tape of Eugenio stand-up performances containing jokes recorded before a live audience, and laughter, applause, and other audience responses. Woolard analysed aspects of the phonology of Catalan and Castilian which are closely related Romance languages but differ in phonology. He found that by speaking Castilian, Eugenio showed the influence of Catalan in the vowel system. Eugenio tends to reduce unstressed vowels, to make monophthongs of Castilian diphthongs, and to use 'open' versions of [o] and

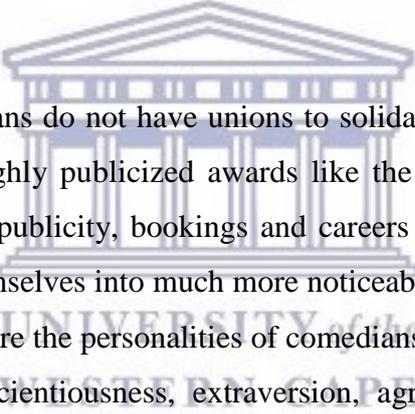
[b] where they would be found in Catalan equivalents of Castilian words. The findings show how Catalan influence leads Eugenio to velarize [l] before back vowels and how Eugenio forms characteristic Catalan liaisons between words in Castilian utterances by eliding unstressed vowels and assimilating voiceless consonants to following voiced segment prosody. Eugenio uses certain tell-tale Catalan intonation patterns in his jokes even when speaking Castilian, as in the typical high-falling tone of yes-no questions. Eugenio also uses loanwords by introducing single lexical items of Catalan origin into Castilian clauses. He also uses morpho-syntactic interference which makes it difficult to know what language he is speaking.

In addition to the above, Woolard finds that code-switching in Eugenio's performances occur at inter- and intra-sentential levels. Though they are clear at central points, the borders are often fuzzy and it is sometimes possible to know that a codeswitch has taken place, but difficult to identify where it began. As such, Eugenio used codeswitching for boundary-leveling rather than boundary-maintaining purposes. Woolard argues that "the use of the two languages in a way that doesn't obscure critical information for any listeners eases rather than emphasizes group boundaries in Barcelona and allows the widest possible audience to participate" (Woolard, 1987: 117). This is because Eugenio created a fictional world which is modelled on the peaceful coexistence of two languages – Castilian and Catalan – side by side with no battle line between them as in the real world. Thus, Woolard asserts that "communication across group boundaries is not only possible but worthwhile" (Woolard, 1987: 118).

2.6 Comedians and other vocational groups

Comedians are cognizant of the fact that they are going to perform on stage, unlike other creative writers who usually do not perform their creative texts on stage. In this direction, Greengross and Miller (2009), in their study, demonstrate the uniqueness of stand-up comedians in comparison to other vocational groups. In their view, the results of comedians' performances are seen almost immediately because comedians could also adjust appropriately to the situation, but the results of writers' works are not that instantaneous. Notwithstanding, other entertainers like actors, musicians and other performing artists can also adjust their performance to some extent. It is the massive flexibility that comedians enjoy that accounts

for the success of their performances, because interaction with the audience is crucial to the success of stand-up performance (Greengross and Miller, 2009: 82). On the other hand, actors, musicians and other performing artists enjoy legal protection (copyright) of their creative properties unlike comedians. Owing to this, stand-up comedians find some means of assessing and protecting their own materials and performances. Oliar and Springman (2008) believe that making a living in stand-up comedy takes hard work, as it involves writing and re-writing materials, playing with words, changing word order, weaving pauses, gestures, and facial expressions to please the audience by being funny. Though stand-up comedians have little legal recourse, they operate within a system of social norms that regulates their operation and awards sanctions as they deem fit. They are of the assumption that social norms can also regulate other creative practices as well (Oliar and Springman, 2008). This will allow the norms to function alongside formal law, thereby obtaining efficiencies of censoring while avoiding the costs of doing so through law.



Furthermore, stand-up comedians do not have unions to solidarise with, they are not trained formally and they have no highly publicized awards like the Oscars or Grammys awards. Hence, they devise their own publicity, bookings and careers though they have little or no social status; they develop themselves into much more noticeable celebrity status. Greengross and Miller (2009) further explore the personalities of comedians based on five characteristics: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. They note that stand-up comedians need to be innovative and stay relevant before their audience, therefore comedians tend to be high on openness. Secondly, comedy writers scored significantly higher than comedians on openness, suggesting that openness is most crucial for writing. Also, comedians, like other creative people, are low on conscientiousness because “comedians’ performances are often perceived as vulgar and crude, especially in comedy clubs, where there are no restrictions on the language they can use” (Greengross and Miller, 2009: 82). Also, comedians’ quest for fame and recognition place them high on sociability, although they do not seek fame in the same way like actors, but they are perceived as ostentatious though they use their performance to disguise their real life.

Also, comedians are slightly low on agreeableness in comparison to writers, actors and politicians, who desire their audience to love them. Greengross and Miller believe that stand-

up comedy is a competitive business; hence, comedians are secretive and also suspicious that the materials they perform before an audience may be stolen and this may account for why they are low on agreeableness (Greengross and Miller, 2009). Although great comedy requires a nasty streak that pushes people out of their comfort zone, if audience's laughter response is not robust, it is an indication that the joke is non-felicitous. Therefore, comedians' performances differ from other vocations in the sense that the interaction with the crowd is the key to their success in every show. Not only do comedians get instant feedback from the audience, they also refine and adjust their acts, and that adjustment is crucial for their on-stage survival. Nevertheless, one limitation discovered is sex differences in stand-up comedy as there are a low number of female stand-up comedians (Greengross and Miller, 2009: 83). In the next section, I will discuss the issue of gender in comedy.

2.7 Stand-up comedy and gender

Scholars have attributed gender differences to societal norms that allow men and boys greater leeway in public humour (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006), but female comedians are challenging the norms. These scholars examined the variation in conversational humour in 59 scripts of naturally occurring conversations of mixed and same-sex groups among friends and/or siblings at the University of California between 1987 and 1991. Specifically, they considered whether speakers were likely to show high-cost forms of humour such as self-targeting and teasing in contexts where a listener's recognition of pretense would be relatively low. They looked at how men tease women and women tease men, and the expectations of both genders in relation to power, aggressiveness and self-disclosure when interpreting humour used in a playful mode of talk where gender roles impact on the interpretation of humour. Also, they observed that the differences in humour of men and women have been attributed to societal norms that allowed men and boys greater leeway in public humour than women and girls. They proposed that men and women will tend to vary their humorous remarks largely because the role expectations of men and women in interaction shaped their sense of whether their joking remarks will be understood primarily as humour (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006: 57). Indeed, they found that in young European Americans, the dynamic of gender influenced the types of humour in sociable conversations. Some mitigating tactics such as exaggeration, fantasy, and placing risky humour in long bouts of humorous performance, featured because of the risk of misunderstanding among

mixed groups. Consequently, humour is deployed in sociable groups of equals for the purposes of expressing emotions, common values and perspectives and for displaying and building rapport (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006: 69).

Similarly, Mesropova (2003) discusses how Russian female stand-up monologues are pervasively marked by highly negative, men-denigrating motifs. He explores the performances of Russian female stand-up comedians. Women comedians generally do not use their own materials. Russian men write and shape the comedy scripts for the comedienne who perform it on stage (Mesropova, 2003: 429). He argues that the female comedians' performances are characterised by highly negative scorn by denigrating Russian men as sexually inept, and lacking the nerve to engage in sexual infidelity like their American counterparts who are romantic, caring, financially successful and sexually potent (Mesropova, 2003: 431–432). He discovers that women comedians form performances around the powerlessness of women in the public and in family lives. By denigrating men during performances, Russian female comedians conspire with and remind the women in the audience about the distribution of power in the matrimonial home. Thus, they boost the self-esteem of females in the audience, thereby using humour to empower women. Mesropova explains that Russian men dominate humorous discourse. Women are constrained from performing humour and regarded as inferior intellectually.

Sequel the above, The Russian society fostered the myth that women talk too much and “since joke telling requires brevity, high levels of linguistic and rhetorical skills, someone who does not possess a rational thinking cannot be a good joke teller” (Mesropova, 2003: 434). Thus, Russian men believe that women could not and should not get involved in performance of comedy on the stage. It is discovered that women are likely to violate social and cultural taboos and be unrestrained at using sexual or rude language during performances, which the Russian patriarchal society consider inappropriate for women to do. As such, certain barbs narrated by women can fall short of humour and result in irritation. Female comedians mitigate the norm breaking by employing grotesque voices and accents in their performances. They refer to it as “voice as costume” to laminate their performance and distance their personality from their comedienne character or hide behind the mask of a different persona (Mesropova, 2003: 436–437).

Furthermore, Bore (2010) examines the construction of gender distinctions in focus group discussions about TV comedy. His work is contextualized by studies on the marginalization of women on humour and comedy but which reinforced the dominance of masculinity in TV comedy. The data analysed came from 25 focus groups which were run in Cardiff in the United Kingdom and Stavanger in Norway in 2006. He discovered that the jokes centred on women was presented as less salient than comedy centred on men through the construction of hierarchy of quality in which male comedy performers were positioned over female ones. Comediennes were devalued both on the basis of their perceived lack of skills, and more frequently, the perceived preoccupation with women's issues which had little relevance to male viewers. Bore argues that gendered constructions can be related to a patriarchal opposite between comedy and appropriate feminine behaviour (Bore, 2010: 152).

Interestingly, humour could provoke gender effect in television programmes and commercials. For example, Perry *et al.* (1997) co-opted 99 undergraduates (60 females and 38 males, one did not indicate gender) into their study and discussed how humour leads to success on television programmes and commercial adverts. They explored the effects of humour levels in commercials and also the effects of gender on the perception of humour and product image. It was found in the male context that low-humour programmes lead to greater negative evaluations than high-humour programmes. This implies that some humour stirred negative or neutral feelings instead of positive ones, but this is gender determined (Perry *et al.*, 1997: 34). Moreover, when the males were always affected by the increased level of humour in programmes, the females were not. The scholars believed that men recognized the level of difference in comedy as evident between stand-up comedy and late-night talk more than women, and the perceived level of humour in the programme contributed to this difference. This is because the brand of sexual and aggression-related humour in the programme is more appealing to men than women. Yet Perry *et al.* speculate that “genders may have responded differently because women perceived a program such as *The Tonight Show* to be more humorous than men did”, it could also mean why men consider products more negative after viewing low-humour program than women did” (Perry *et al.*, 1997: 35).

Likewise, Perry *et al.* (1997) find not much difference in the rating of men and women concerning levels of humour in stand-up comedy; rather, they believe that “sexual humour used in stand-up comedy may have been more offensive to women than men” (quoting Whipple and Courtney, 1981). In high comedy programmes, men are inclined to use or recommend a product whose commercial has comedy. However, the comedy used in stand-up comedy programmes may account for no increase in women’s purchase intention. In low-humour programmes, women are more inclined to increase their purchase intention of such products, but men are inclined otherwise because they found the comedy programme dull and thus inhibited their purchasing intention. Thus, the authors submit that “higher level humour in commercial increase overall purchase intention though negative aspect of the program seems to negate the positive effect of increased commercial humour on purchase intention” (Perry *et al.*, 1997: 36). Therefore, the more humorous a programme is, the more dangerous for advertisers to include their humorous commercial in the programme. The commercial must boast of higher humour than necessary in order to be recalled after exposure to a high-humour programme. In all, specific types of comedy programmes may be appropriate for targeting men or women (Perry *et al.*, 1997).

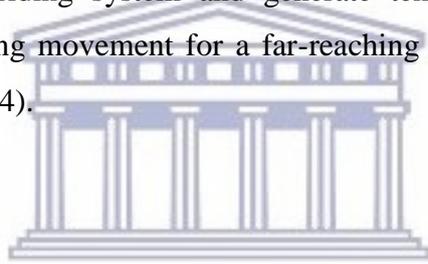
Gilbert (1997) examines the politics of “performing marginality” by focusing on the humour of two female comedians, Phyllis Diller and Roseanne Barr, in order to determine how they construct themselves and others in their jokes. Gilbert indicates that the ways female comedians stylistically present and perform their marginality on stage make them sensible examples of using one’s real-life to perform comedy. In such instances, they are performing both self and culture, thereby showing the connection between personal and social identities (Gilbert, 1997: 317). Of course, female comedians stereotype themselves in belittling ways, but at the same time humorously question the stereotype. However, this style of women self-deprecatory humour has been criticized as strengthening stereotypes and reproducing patriarchy (Gilbert, 1997: 318). Gilbert discovered that Diller makes fun of herself to the delight of the audience, but also mocks the unreasonable society’s set standard of beauty and behaviour. Gilbert discovered that female comedians emphasize and capitalize on their marginality or “difference” from the mainstream to perform a unique and important social function. As such, they hold up a mirror to the culture, showing their frailties and fables, thereby eliciting the laughter of recognition (Gilbert, 2004: xiii).

2.8 Comedians as social commentators

Double and Wilson (2004) examine the comedy of Karl Valentin (a Bavarian comedian) who employs “deviation from the expected order” in his performance by using statements to arrive at highly unexpected conclusions. As Double and Wilson note, Valentin’s jokes deviate from the meaning of language and traditional logic as a way of unmasking what has been taken for granted in normal and natural settings (Double and Wilson, 2004: 206). Also, the scholars show that Valentin deviates from accepted values by presenting himself as the basest one among those confined to a much lower step on the ranking of social decline. In this way, Valentin tailors his jokes to the audience’s reactions by being able to incorporate the unexpected into the performance (Double and Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, Double and Wilson indicate that Valentin shares the disorder of breaking the rules of language and logic with the audience during performances, thereby the audience will not look down on him. Even if the audience was insecure and conformist, his skill gives him the license to share his anarchic worldview with them. Thus, Valentin’s comedy is subversive in outlook and he sharply transgresses restrictions imposed on comedy because he challenges conservative values by directly satirizing them (Double and Wilson, 2004: 210). Also, he possesses the ability to criticize bourgeois convention and deliver subversive social comment often implicitly (Double and Wilson, 2004: 213).

A study by Westwood (2004) investigates how comedy can “be considered as *part of a subversive movement*”, that is, comedy can expose failures in organisations and its diagnosis may be further exploited to effect a change. By exploring the subversive potential of comedy in organisational contexts, Westwood discusses the video recordings of comedy performances by Marks who relishes ridiculing those in authority. He notes that Marks engages in increasingly absurdist commentary and behaviour until the audience begins to realize that the role cannot be authentic and then hoax becomes manifest. The humour comes from the hoax and tension that Marks generates, because without the hoax the humour is missing or dissipates. Also, Westwood notes that Marks makes three interrelated claims for his comedy: (1) he jokes on the jargons, pretensions, and absurdities of contemporary management and business practices and their esoteric theoretical language. In this way, he often satirizes the particular organisation and its managers, parodying or insulting authority figures and experts in the company; (2) Marks exposes and punctures the expert and expertise

by positioning characters as experts and fashions his performance to reveal the flimsiness, presumptiveness, absurdity, and impertinence of the expert. Marks performs a babble of jargons through which the emptiness of the language of expertise is exposed. As such, his comedy serves as a weapon and revenge against authority figures to convey the arbitrariness of power and authority, the accident of status, and the sham of ‘guruhood’ (Westwood, 2004: 779 – 780). Therefore, in the view of Westwood, comedy is not that rebellious to the extent of undermining or overrunning a social system; rather, comedy may indicate the absurdities, limitations, and partialities of the social system, but it cannot effect change in that reality. In this sense, comedians do not create humour by being rebellious or flagrantly interrupting into the everyday occurrence/experience as an otherwise bottled-up urge, immature or resurfacing of that which is primitive; instead, “it is just to ensure that the threat to dominant reality, the interruption of an alternative reality is avoided and only temporary” (Westwood, 2004: 788). They create awareness of another manner of representativeness that allows the possible challenge to a supreme/overriding system and generate tension. Of course, the radical reflection may spur a liberating movement for a far-reaching change by other means apart from comedy (Westwood, 2004).



On the premise that comedians deal with taboos and sensitive thematic elements safely within the comedic space, Kelsey Timler (2012) explores how comedians, as ethnographers, become excellent social critics. He discovered that through the use of hyperbole, reflexivity, and de- and re-mystification of the normative aspects of culture, comedians verbally create alternative standards of representing the ‘other’. In Timler’s view, comedians can be seen as anthropologists’ and ethnographers’ subjects. He suggests ways that anthropologists can engage with comedians (Timler, 2012: 50). Anthropologists, by their training, are “sympathetic outsiders”, while comedians by temperament are “cynical insiders” (Timler, 2012, emphasizing Koziski’s (1984) position on differences between anthropologists and comedians). While anthropologists remain reflexive and consciously biased, the stand-up comedians’ intense subjectivity performance can bring about change into the insight of reality and behaviours in society. Since comedians’ performances concern their own views about phenomena, the “intense use of humorous sarcasm ward off the critical reactions their rude performances may engender” (Timler, 2012: 52). As Timler explains, sarcasm emboldens comedians to frankly direct their words at people. They require no ethical review or academic

qualification to do so, and their use of sarcasm gives people more space to reflect on issues when compared to issues offered through ethnography studies. Thus, “humour is therapeutic as well as an effective agent for change” (Timler, 2012: 53).

Put differently, comedy can serve as a stress reliever. Ordinarily, we laugh at situations as a form of release (Parker, 2002) and in Freud’s view, “jokes are fundamentally cathartic: a release, not a stimulant” (Gordon, 1999). Stevens (2011: 61) explored humour in the lives of older people with dementia, who were taught how to perform stand-up comedy and creativeness. Stevens showed that the stand-up comedy and improvisation workshops provided an activity for people with mild dementia that was enjoyable, age and dementia appropriate, and potentially therapeutic because mild dementia did not prevent the participants from laughing a lot. The data suggests that mild dementia does not have to be an impediment to developing skills in performing stand-up comedy and improvisation (Stevens, 2011: 69). The programme stimulated a high level of sociability and communication. Therefore, stand-up comedy and improvisation workshops have a positive effect on memory, learning, sociability, communication and self-esteem for people with mild dementia, because it does not rely on memory to produce successful results (Stevens, 2011: 71).

2.9 Comedy and the crossing of social boundaries

Comedians are notorious for commenting on issues that are regarded as publicly trivial; as such, they brazenly cross the boundary of taboos. One of the areas society may not regard as funny and expect comedians to veer away from is disability. However, comedians dip into this area to perform what scholars call ‘disability humour’. Hence, disability humour can be defined as “any humour that centres on disability or is offered by disabled persons” (Reid, Stoughton and Smith, 2006: 631). For instance, Reid *et al.* (2006) write on how stand-up comedians view, represent, or stereotype disabled people in the United States. Though jokes have always been performed by able-bodied people, disabled comedians are challenging the status quo by also exploring disability related jokes for emancipatory purposes (Reid *et al.*, 2006: 366). Reid *et al.* stress that comedians who are disabled gun for entertainment as they do not always joke about disability; however, some jokes use disability figuratively but with a denigrating effect on disabled people. On the other hand, jokes that are positive about disability induce affinity and empathy. As such, Reid *et al.* (2006) argue that disabled

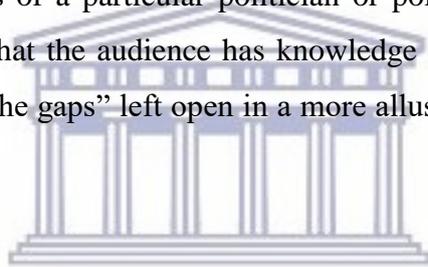
comedians “use self-deprecatory humour positively to dissolve and recreate disability; by shifting from victim to perpetrator, they undermine the power of people who laugh at them and emerge as capable people who find life’s predicament amusing” (Reid *et al.*, 2006: 635). Surprisingly, disabled comedians interact and take cues from the audience and weave such cues into their performances to create images of disability that are obliterating the predominant negative assumption about disabled people (Reid *et al.*, 2006: 637). Thus, disabled comedians provoke dialogue about solidarities and commonalities that people have one with another. In view of this, the scholars believe that comedy educates by re-presenting disability, thereby leading to changes in social behaviour and even social policy (Reid *et al.*, 2006: 639)

Another area comedians are expected to exercise restraint in is the use of dirty words, but comedians offensively use dirty words in live stand-up performance. In the view of Sturges (2010: 3), the prospect of a joke being offensive is considerable because of the way comedians celebrate disrespect and show derision for the common restraints and courtesy of life. Against this background, Seizer (2011) examines how comedians artistically use the words *fuck* and *shit* to connect to the audience. Seizer finds out that comedians use dirty words in non-denotational ways on the stage by treating bad words as big words. She argues that “obscenity in stand-up performances serves to heighten and intensify the expression of the speaker’s perspective, affect, and experience” (Seizer, 2011: 230). As comedians are not bound by rules of formal public speech, they freely use swear words which allows them to exhilarate their audience and themselves (Seizer, 2011). Therefore, we can say this is what makes stand-up comedy unique compared to other forms of communication, because comedians relish shoving aside decorum of speech during their performances.

2.10 Comedy as radical political commentary

It is not surprising that the ubiquitous laughable nature of many democratic governments in our contemporary societies provides cogent comic materials for comedians to descend on politicians during stand-up performances. For instance, by exploring aspects of the relationship between comic performance and civic culture in the UK media and the discussion of respondents’ comments, Corner, Richardson and Parry (2013) note that the

rampant undemocratic practices among partisan politicians motivates comedians to lampoon them. They note that in many modern societies, comedians lambast politicians by exploring raillery, mockery and spoofing of the officials. In this way, comedians strongly activate emotions and symbolically get back at the leaders, thereby temporarily rebalancing the feeling of power relations through considered disrespect (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 32). Moreover, in the view of these scholars, comedians deliberately perform “self-conscious exaggeration and the fancifully imaginative, to connect with the more serious, critical thinking about public space; or they can work essentially as regular inputs of ‘fun’ against the background of what is primarily a distant, acquiescent, or even resigned perception of the dominant order”. One method is that comedians embellish the gestures and speech of politicians to ridicule them, i.e. by being imitative. The scholars believe that comedians descriptively play down the seriousness of situations by portraying serious events or scenarios in the dimensions of the absurd and the entertaining. Also, comedians may amplify specific shortcomings of a particular politician or political act or circumstance. In this sense, comedians imply that the audience has knowledge of the subject they scoff, and invite the audience to “fill in the gaps” left open in a more allusive mode of delivery (Corner *et al.*, 2013: 33 – 34).



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Santa-Ana (2009) focuses on the immigration jokes with which Jay Leno placated his audience’s concern about a new social movement. Leno’s late night comedy show attracted millions of viewers in the United States and it had great political impact. Santa Ana argues that Leno “engages in political humour more than his peers and his comedy about immigration qualifies as political issue” (Santa-Ana, 2009: 26). Santa-Ana finds that Leno intentionally lies to deliver his jokes but the audience does not regard him as a liar. Also, any politically charged utterance from Leno is taken as “just a joke” because different rules guide telling jokes and news reporting. In this sense, comedians can shut down audiences’ critical judgment or “discourage viewer’s critical engagement” (Santa-Ana, 2009: 27). Having noted how Leno makes his audience laugh at President George W. Bush, thereby relieving the conceptual tension he set up by juxtaposing the semantically incongruous scripts, Santa-Ana argues that Leno is a partisan comedian, an equal opportunity insulter who fabricates falsehoods, concocts punchlines, and gives his audience what they want, making him a master of the comedic monologue (Santa-Ana, 2009: 38). Indeed, Leno’s audience grants him license to distort the facts on their behalf, to casually perpetuate stereotypes, and to cunningly

evoke deep-seated prejudices, and by their shared laughter, they signify their chauvinism on a network television programme that is sponsored by reputable organisations.

2.11 News in late night comedy shows

In this 21st century, stand-up comedy is becoming more pronounced as it advances beyond reaching a limited population gathered at a particular setting. As evident in the media, comedy shows have grown to be veritable sources of news for millions of people. In this regard, scholars have investigated the effects of comedy shows on live television. Most prominent of the research concerns how *The Late Night Comedy Show* in the United States has been a source of political news. Comedy programmes on TV are categorized as ‘soft’ news while the traditional news media are regarded as ‘hard’ news (Baum, 2002: 99). Markus (2003) explores how the preference for information and entertainment directly impact on people’s favourite news formats. He examined people’s knowledge of several “hard” and “soft” political topics from a web-based survey of 2,358 randomly selected United States residents. The formats classified as soft news are: talk shows and so-called “infotainment” programmes which primarily report on lifestyle, wardrobe, and scandals of Hollywood stars and the more glamorous politicians (Markus, 2003:151). Markus noted though that soft news seems to be loved by some, hated by others; however, traditional hard news formats remain far more popular than soft news. Yet, soft news programmes appear to be almost as widely watched as hard news programmes (Markus, 2003: 152). Markus discovered a diversification of the news audience, not an across-the-board decrease in hard news viewing. Though soft news is not as popular as hard news, it still attracts millions of viewers and ranks among the top three news formats for about a third of the population examined (Markus, 2003: 154). Therefore, Markus, like other scholars, see soft news as a way to reach audiences that would otherwise not watch, read, or hear news. To such people, soft news informs and entertains at the same time since such people are unwilling to give up on entertainment while watching the news (p. 155- 156).

Markus’ findings complement those of Baum’s (2002), who demonstrated that people who watch a lot of soft news reported following news stories about foreign crises and domestic scandals just as much as regular hard news consumers (Baum, 2002: 158). Indeed, people

who prefer hard news tend to be more knowledgeable about questions about sex, drugs, missing interns, and the war on terrorism than those with a preference for soft news whose knowledge increases in the domain of domestic political scandals (Baum, 2002: 160). However, few people want the mixture of news and entertainment that soft news has to offer, because people might claim that they follow particular stories but still do not learn anything about the political matter at hand, but this does not mean that soft news is bad news. Markus submits that a more efficient market for news does not promote democracy by simultaneously entertaining and informing people (Markus, 2003: 168).

Niven, Lichter, and Amundson (2003) investigated the subjects of humour, namely political bigwigs in the United States from 1996 to 2000. They explored about 13 000 jokes on late night comedy talk shows such as *The Late Show*, *The Tonight Show*, and *Late Night* from 1996 to 2000, and every joke told on *Politically Incorrect* from 1998 to 2000. They found that the late night comedy programmes targeted important politicians and also the specific features of such individuals (Niven, Lichter, and Amundson, 2003:125). They also noted that “there is little room for issue positions in late night comedy”. For example, there are jokes based on policy disagreement (taxes, abortion, gun control) rather than jokes on personal issues (personality, image, or individual behaviour), or making baseless political opinions (unworthiness of politicians) (Niven, Lichter, and Amundson, 2003: 126). Late night talk shows perform a substantial role in buttressing news on politics and politicians (p. 128 -129). They hint at the fact that comedians have a blueprint of how they deride the weaknesses of politicians. Also, they did not discard the likelihood that late night humour enhances the thinking of the American people about politics and politicians (Niven, Lichter, and Amundson, 2003: 127). They noted that late night shows directed jokes toward the shortcomings of politicians rather than hitting on social issues (Niven, Lichter, and Amundson, 2003: 130). Baum and Jamison (2006:947) emphasize Patterson’s (2002) notion that ‘hard’ news covers issues about leaders, and major events that characterize society’s everyday occurrences, while ‘soft’ news covers sensational and dramatic presentation of human interest themes. Those programmes classified as soft news include talk shows and ‘infotainment’ which report issues around celebrities, lifestyles, scandals of politicians and Hollywood stars (Prior, 2003: 115).

Wells and Bull (2007) focus on identifying the important similarities and differences between the manner in which audiences connect to political speakers and stand-up comedians to determine whether comedians invite the same proportion of affiliative responses like politicians do. For Wells and Bull, ‘delivery’ refers to how a speaker verbally presents a material to an audience. This includes the vocal features of intonation, pitch and prosodic cues, and the non-vocal features of stance, gaze and gesture (Wells and Bull, 2002). They explore four British stand-up comedians televised on *The Stand-up Show*, on BBC, 2001 – 2002 series. They discover that materials from stand-up comedy make it difficult to tell whether the comedian is inviting audience response or not (Wells and Bull, 2002: 330). The analysis showed that affiliative audience responses during stand-up comedy are as synchronous or asynchronous as applause during political speeches (Wells and Bull, 2002: 333). It also shows that proportions of affiliative audience mismatches in stand-up comedy are quite different from those in political speeches (Wells and Bull, 2002: 334). Based on the sample of the four stand-up comedians, their results suggest that there may be similarities between stand-up comedy performances and political speeches with regard to the broad categories of invitationality and synchrony, and differences between the two genres on rhetoricality and mismatch types.

Politicians may not make their applause invitation ambiguous, but ambiguous delivery is an advantage to comedians. However, comedians are more subtle in their style of delivery than politicians. The rhetorical devices are a subset of the verbal techniques they use to invite laughter from their audiences. Wells and Bull further note the individual differences between performers as marked by interruptive audiences’ responses in the following ways: Perhaps isolated audience responses are a natural feature of stand-up comedy in a way that does not appear to be the case in political speeches; stand-up comedy is a much “faster-paced” genre than the political speech making atmosphere where delay is common. Delays are rare in stand-up comedy as comedians swiftly identify any possible delay and “talk into the silence” before delay becomes noticeable. Stand-up performance is less formal than political speeches, and interruptive responses are generally considered to be acceptable in such an environment. Such higher interruptive responses may indicate the popularity of the comedian (Wells and Bull, 2007: 339).

A well-known comedy programme in the United States is John Stewart's *The Daily Show*. The contributions of comedy shows to the enlightenment of our society about socio-political situations has encouraged scholars to explore how politicians and voters are turning to late-night comedy shows (Arpan *et al.*, 2011) and, in turn, how the show influences people's attitudes towards politics. By exploring data from the Pew Research Center Study (2004) to determine how young Americans are turning to late-night entertainment for political information (Young, 2004; Parkin, 2010; Baum, 2002; Baum and Jamison, 2006; Young and Tisinger, 2006, Feldman, 2007), it is becoming obvious that young people are less keen about sourcing political information from traditional news than their preceding generations. In Feldman's (2007) view, young Americans take *The Daily Show* and other comedy programmes as serious avenues for information about elections, probably due to the light mood in which the comedians package the news, although these young people already have knowledge of the political scenario that was re-enacted in the performance (Young and Tisinger, 2006). John Stewart creates humour by employing irony, parody, satire, and lampoon to ridicule typical news programmes, interviews, field correspondents and the norms governing them.

Through this flexible way in which late-night shows package news, young people who are avid watchers of late-night comedy receive much more information by watching the programme when compared to watching the traditional news. However, "not only does mere exposure to late-night programming positively correlate with exposure to traditional news, but even *perceived learning* from late-night and news are positively correlated". Young people are driven by familiarity with the circumstances that give birth to jokes and they relish watching late-night shows with saturated consumption. However, people interested in watching late-night comedy are not watching less of the mainstream traditional news (Young and Tisinger, 2006:123); yet "learning from shows like Leno and Letterman and from comedy shows like *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* is more common among young people who are also reporting learning from other news sources" (Young and Tisinger, 2006:126). Contrary to a growing perception, young people are not watching late-night comedy as their exclusive source of news instead of traditional news. Rather, they are watching both and are still *more* likely than non-viewers of late-night comedy shows to consume other forms of traditional news (Young and Tisinger, 2006:128).

Soft news also contains important content relating to international crises, though most foreign policies are typically ignored by soft news media. As Baum (2002) demonstrates, soft news media *do* convey substantive information concerning a select few high-profile political issues, prominently among them, foreign policy crises. In Baum's findings, soft news covers foreign crises, though not in the same manner like traditional news. He argues that "for many individuals who are not interested in politics or foreign policy, soft news increasingly serves as an alternative to the traditional news media as a source of information about a select few political issues, including foreign policy crises" (Baum, 2002: 91). People are likely to be ignorant of their own government's foreign policies generally, but by the way soft news package human dramas as entertainment issues, foreign crises are also put together for drama. In this sense, Baum asserts that "soft news media have increased the exposure of many politically inattentive individuals to select high-profile political issues, primarily those involving scandal, violence, heroism, or other forms of human drama; even individuals who are not interested in politics may be willing to pay attention to such information" (Baum, 2002: 92); and the information obtained in this manner is what Baum called 'incidental by-product' of entertainment, i.e. information obtained free of charge from soft news besides being entertained. Yet, Baum believes that people who follow foreign crises closely from other media sources also learn from soft news. Thus, he suggests that getting information about foreign crises as added to the entertainment motif could have an effect on American politics, and even the rise of the soft news media "allow leaders to communicate with segments of the population that have traditionally tuned out politics and foreign affairs entirely" (Baum, 2002:105–106).

Interestingly, politicians are even turning entertainment programmes into campaign venues. Parkin (2010) contends that politicians appear on late-night programmes to reach out to voters. He examines how viewers of late-night shows assess politicians and party policies in order to determine the influence of entertainment news on politics. In this way, late-night has attained some social respectability by the use of visuals, entertainment contexts, interviews, content to capture viewers' attention, and persuade their opinions about politicians. Parkin argues that "the visual imagery found on late-night television ought to stimulate psychological involvement so that viewers become more receptive to the dialogue taking place" (Parkin, 2010: 5). Thus, the intriguing package of music, laughter and other modes of

communication in late-night shows help politicians to warm themselves into the hearts of voters. Indeed, the light-heartedness of late-night interviews is more beneficial to fans of late-night shows than the formality of mainstream traditional news, because the comedy atmosphere may be funny and full of personal anecdotes that generate laughter, while it also contains issues that are pertinent to life including politics (Baum, 2002; Young, 2004; Arpan *et al.*, 2011; Parkin, 2010: 5). Of course, such shows will be attracting the interest of those who are unconcerned about politics because serious political issues are expressed with light-heartedness. Efficiency of late night comedy cannot be bowled over as the jocular mood can also excite people to serious political thinking and decisions. Thus, late night appearances might serve as a gateway for viewers who become engaged and thus better equipped to process political information from a wider array of sources (Parkin, 2010: 13).

Political contents in late night shows are also beneficial to politicians as well. For instance, Arpan *et al.* (2011) examine ‘political contents’ in news which partisan politicians may consider biased against their party but in favour of another party. Arpan *et al.* called such political contents ‘Hostile Media Effect’ (HME). By examining if political content in comedy is more biased than political content in mainstream news, they argue that comedians take advantage of HME for their performance. They discovered a higher bias to political content in late-night shows, perhaps because people discountenance the veracity of late-night programmes as credible news outfits. Young people watching late-night shows take political contents from the show as play and not as credible political contents from traditional news (Arpan *et al.*, 2011). This finding could vitiate Baum’s (2002) notion of ‘incidental byproduct’ (learning political issues from late-night comedy) because late night could be seen as being exasperating rather than being informative. Nevertheless, late-night does not substitute for mainstream news, rather, it complements it (Arpan *et al.*, 2011).

Feldman (2007) examines how *The Daily Show* is contributing to evolving journalism and journalistic practice. He looked at the discourse about *The Daily Show* between January 1999 and March 2004 to determine how journalists responded to comedy programmes as a news source. The increasing popularity of *The Daily Show* raises the challenge of granting legitimacy to comedy as a news source and the show has won prestigious awards (Feldman, 2007: 410). Also taking the Pew Research Center Study, Feldman indicates that journalists

are concerned that people are taking *The Daily Show* as news source and are also cognizant that the historical distinction between news and entertainment is becoming fuzzy (Feldman, 2007: 412). He mentions that Stewart and *The Daily Show* know how to stimulate the youth's interest in news unlike the conventional news media. As such, comedy, which is supposed to be humorous, is also informative, insightful and educative. In traditional news media, journalists operate within the conventions of their practice, but *The Daily Show* circumvents the traditional conventions through the use of comedic techniques of parody and satire (Feldman, 2007: 413). These techniques are used to mock mainstream news and thereby provide people with more information about politics and the world than many news media do (Feldman, 2007, emphasizing Rosenthal, 2003a: 39). Indeed, the show is doing more than other soft news entertainment to the extent that it is puzzling to classify it as either an information or entertainment programme. Even "journalists are recognizing that comedy and entertainment need not be incompatible with substantive journalism" (Feldman, 2007: 419). In conventional journalism, objectivity is the watchword, because news stories must be factual and a trustworthy account of events. Conversely, Feldman (2007) notes Stewart's suggestion that comedy is not tied to the journalistic convention of objectivism. Rather, *The Daily Show* is not under pressure of meeting deadlines or worrying about libel suits being filed against it. As such, *The Daily Show* blatantly ridicules the mainstream media, and "in our contemporary media world, the trade of comedians resist any claim to accountability when reporting news" (Feldman, 2007: 421). Looking at the interesting ways that *The Daily Show* engenders knowledgeable clues about politics, this present study focuses on how comedians 'remediate' everyday issues of life for entertainment and information purposes.

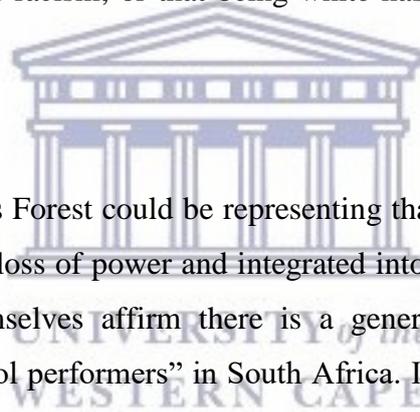
Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre (2010) also focused on the influence of late-night TV on political discussions in which they handled four assumptions in their study. The first was that pre-debates about late-night comedy viewing positively predicts comedy viewing. They discovered that the predictive power of late-night comedy viewing is more profound for subsequent debate viewing by respondents who are younger, because they were more likely to treat these late-night shows as sources of political information. On the other hand, the predictive power of late-night comedy shows is less profound with respondents who are older (Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre, 2010: 490). The second assumption confirms that viewing of political debates on late-night shows is significant for post-debate discussions on politics, notwithstanding people's political orientations or political media consumptions. The

third prediction confirmed both the first and second predictions in that late-night exposure is a significant predictor of political debate viewing and that debate viewing is a positive predictor of post-debate discourse. The viewing of late-night entertainment shows has no effect on subsequent political talk, but it has a positive indirect effect on discussions about politics through increased debate viewing. The fourth hypothesis revealed that age plays an important role in late-night comedy viewing, as the younger generation is more connected to political talk on late-night viewing. In essence, the scholars note that people view political talk after exposure to late-night TV comedy and this grounds the relationship between late-night TV comedy and political debate viewing on such shows, but the debate viewing is encouraged more from viewing late-night shows and the encouragement is stronger for the younger generation (Landreville, Holbert and LaMarre 2010: 491–493).

Baek and Wojcieszak (2009) considered the potential of late-night comedy to bridge the divide between entertainment and politics. They are not seeking to disprove whether viewers of late-night comedy is a junk food for the unenlightened mind or if it is a source of political news for those who patronise it. What they focus on is how measuring political knowledge contributes to the research on media effects in society. They believe that the inconsistencies in the understanding of whether people benefit from the mainstream media or the late-night shows could be due to the inadequate differentiation between their audiences and the type of political knowledge gained from them. Therefore, they proposed a model for measuring political knowledge that accounts for item difficulty, response option format, knowledge domain, as well as for other pertinent factors. They demonstrated that late-night comedy increases knowledge, but this contribution is primarily confined to easy political items and politically inattentive citizens (Baek and Wojcieszak, 2009: 784). Thus far, this discussion suggests that the effects that late-night comedy has on knowledge depend not only on item difficulty, but also on individual characteristics. It follows that summing multiple political knowledge items in order to create a monolithic scale might not capture these effects. As any study, ours has several limitations, the scholar assume that all late-night comedy programmes are similar in content and presentation style (Baek and Wojcieszak, 2009: 798).

2.12 Styles of stand-up performances in South Africa and Nigeria

Though stand-up comedy is booming in Africa, there is little study on the performances of stand-up comedians in Africa. However, I shall make a brief review of scholars' exposition on stand-up comedy in South Africa and West Africa. In South Africa, though comedy stories are meant to achieve hilarious results, Seirlis (2011) reveals in her study that stand-up comedy works as a cultural indicator, a marker of boundaries, and a particular kind of licensed relationship. Seirlis examines the comedy of Joe Parker concerning the place called "Brakpan" (a suburb east of Johannesburg for lower income Afrikaners), and finds that Joe Parker is in way talking about the low status of Afrikaners in the "new" South Africa and the connections that people have with social equality (Seirilis, 2011: 516). Also, Seirilis explores the performance of Chris Forrest (a young white comedian) who, through his stage persona of a straight-faced inept person, speaks without intonation or expressiveness. She believes that the character of Chris Forrest could be seen as one representing a risky or disturbing defeat of the rigid apartheid regime and racism; or that being white has been and will always remain harmless.



In addition to the above, Chris Forest could be representing that being white is boring which creates a way to adjust to the loss of power and integrated into the new South Africa. Seirlis stresses that comedians themselves affirm there is a generation gap between the older comedians and the "new school performers" in South Africa. Interestingly, the themes in the performances of young comedians are moving away from a highly politicized past into more experimental and different realms, such as new forms of popular music in South Africa (Seirlis, 2011 518). One of the 'new school' performers that Seirlis mention is Robert Fridjohn whose performances she describes as "abstract", "silly", and "off-the-wall" because Fridjohn sees the "world from an odd angle, such as playing with genre and register, making porn soundtracks for middle class consumer advice programs" (Seirlis, 2011: 519). In the 'new school', comedy is a political and subversive promise of fun, laughter and enjoyment, it marks the boundary between the old puritanical apartheid regime and the present democracy. While the new comedy delights in making the audience laugh, it also continues to criticize the government and to make social commentary (Seirlis, 2011: 521). Seirlis further explains South African comedians mark out the limits of what the ANC government has managed to achieve in the new democracy, point to the very gap between rich and poor, expose the huge differences in access to social amenities and infrastructure, show the unacceptable levels of

violence, and intimate on the government's failures to tackle crime. Since there is no barrier to freedom of speech, stand-up comedy assumes the form of what Seirlis (2011: 526) regarded as "permitted disrespect", even though no comedian has been arrested, censored, or banned for saying uncouth things about people and government, unlike the experiences during the apartheid era in South Africa.

Stand-up comedy is not just a mere form of entertainment, it serves as social commentary operating within the context of society. Parker (2002) considers humour and comedy as potentially powerful tools that women could employ in order to subvert images and attitudes of male dominance over the discourse produced by comedy in South Africa. He discovered that stand-up directly and powerfully confronts political correctness and the prejudices inherited from the past. In this sense, stand-up may legitimately be characterised as the protest theatre insofar as the individual performer is able to employ it as a vehicle for protest and social change (Parker, 2002: 11). With this in mind, Parker wants women in South Africa to re-negotiate their relationship to comedy to make their voices heard. He reports that unless alternative and resistant discourses are produced, certain perceptions and ideological frameworks about women will remain intact and unchallenged. This is because South African women are still portrayed in stereotypical ways by certain male stand-up comedians and the representations are often closely associated with sexuality. Parker suggests that the female comedian voices must be heard and they must reflect the diversity of South Africa in order to have more arenas for freedom of comedic expression, in which laughter can resonate (Parker, 2002: 26).

In West Africa, Donkor explores the performance of a popular Ghanaian comedian called Bishop Bob Okala who was used by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party to restore Rawlings's image and credibility as he prepared for the 1996 Ghanaian presidential elections. Donkor discovered that the comedian provokes laughter with mishmash attire, melancholic solemnity, makeup, and an unsmiling face, among others, to seem funnier and reach comedic heights. This in turn generates huge laughter from his audience before he even says a word. In his performances, he discreetly frolics with uncertainty as he astutely navigates the realms of social, religious, artistic, political, and economic issues in a way that both promotes and sabotages certain points of view. As such, Donkor argues that "the skilful use of ambivalence, beyond being an essential character of performance, can also be a

measure of the artistic efficacy and socio-political relevance of an artist” (Donkor, 2013: 266).

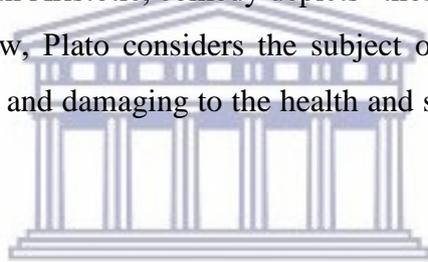
Donkor finds that Okala uses clumsy costume, dead-pan to provoke laughter as he juxtaposes the usual with the exaggerated. In this way, his ensemble of assorted apparels and trappings and the hilariously grotesque figure (a deadpan face made funnier by makeup) allows him to reach comedic heights. His performance spurs multiple meanings evident in his joke routines and he intersperses his routines with comic song parodies with which to arouse his audience. Donkor claims that Okala emerges as a trickster whose political trickery allows him to circumvent the obstacles of social expectations and unpredictable interpretations. Okala challenges established boundaries such as the “boundaries between sacred worship and the comic delight of parody, between liberal democratic ideals and popular cultural values, between political legitimacy and political illegitimacy, and between the politics of theatre and the theatre of politics” (Donkor, 2013: 276).

Afolayan (1999) critically analysed the role of laughter, or the hilarious, in the understanding of the postcolonial condition of Post-Colonial Nigeria. He explored the comedy of a Nigerian stand-up comedian, Basket Mouth, who makes jokes about serious Nigerian situations. Afolayan posits that the typical Nigerian comedy or comedy show is usually a combination of noticeable entertainment and indecorousness meant to teach moral lessons. He finds that the most popular feature in Nigerian comedy is the political content, but Nigerian comedians also use their common experience of poverty in their stand-up performances. Afolayan calls these species of comedy and comic forms, *the humour of the irresponsibles* (Afolayan, 1999: 163). It simply means the jokes that speak to the irresponsible political shiftlessness of the Nigerian leadership and political elites as well as the stagnancy of the Nigerian state. Comedians in Nigeria acquire their materials from real-life situations such as religion, corruption, and poverty (Afolayan, 1999: 165), among other things.

2.13 Criticisms of comedy

There have been criticisms of comedy and its performance. Wood (1988) wrote that Aristotle was the first to depreciate comedy; and in Aristotle’s contention, “comedy imitates not those

who are truly malignant in their moral character, but those who are ludicrous in their physical ugliness and spiritual eccentricity” (Wood, 1998: 27). This confirms that comedians mock the oddities and inconsistencies of life (Sturges, 2010). Also, stressing Aristotle’s view, comedy lacks the moral dignity of tragedy because it tends to decrease humanity to animal need. In this sense, rather than elevating human characters beyond the mundane through ennobling pain and pain, comedy immerses them in a foolish cocoon as mere mortals (Wood, 1988: 27). Similarly, the classical and neoclassical criticism of comedy, a tradition which began with Plato and Aristotle and extends beyond the renaissance, has examined comedies of some dramatists with meticulousness. In Aristotle’s argument, comedy at the beginning of the critical tradition, “aims at representing men as worse ... than in actual life”, and is “an imitation of characters of a lower type” (Poetics 2.4; 5.1). Here, Aristotle seems to give the impression that the typical moral of comic characters is lesser than that we may likely meet in real life. For Plato, comedy results in a deep-thought snubbing of deliberate imitation of the real world; but by agreeing with Aristotle, comedy depicts “those actions that are “unworthy” of a free citizen”. In this view, Plato considers the subject of comedy and its practice as morally repulsive, humiliating and damaging to the health and soul of the society (Shershow, 1986, 5–7).

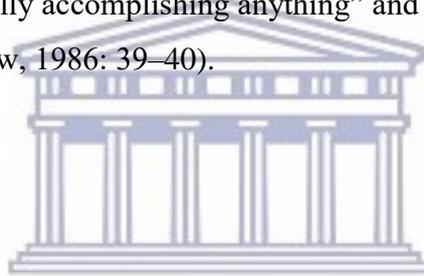


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As Westwood notes, Sigmund Freud considered humour as a rebellion in opposition to sense, which is childishness or silliness that takes us back to the imaginary, free-thinking, light-hearted state of childhood (Westwood, 2004). Also, joke is “a double-dealing rascal who serves two masters at once” (Shershow, 1986: 3). Shershow explicates Freud’s idea of conflict between enjoying and analysing a joke as the starting point for a theory of laughter. This idea involves looking at the performance of comedy as an unsuspecting approach to outwit our rational sense, because while watching a comedy performance, we eulogize and expose the limitations of our minds (Shershow, 1986: 4). Shershow highlights jokes that Freud calls “innocent,” because they spur surprises, incongruities, puns and wordplay. Such jokes persuade us to slight reason and encourage indulgence in nonsense, but which still delivers the joke.

Wood (1988) explored the linkage between comedy and the Christian faith. Wood showed that Christians mistrust comic vision perhaps from comedy’s root in ancient religious

ceremonies when the Greeks celebrated the death and resurrection of fertility gods such as Comus and Dionysus. Also, Wood noted that Christians worried about the viciousness and allurements of comedy, and not only their strict fundamental belief in the end of the world. The Christians also suspect comedy for its denial of life beyond the terrestrial and the morally subversive nature of comedy's intermittent performance and its major character (Wood, 1988: 24 – 26). However, it has been averred that “comic spirit lock us in unfamiliar cages” (Shershow, 1986: 27), yet comedy holds more than just adverse effects because it also applauds our wisdom to getting our missing balance (Wood, 1988). In addition, comedy is of a high economic importance, because people love comedy and pay to enjoy the pleasure that comedy offers. However, people have scorned comedy just as other practitioners of other pleasurable performances. For instance, the middle-class found comedy to be an unproductive discourteous endeavour. It is considered as an unserious form of entertainment which makes its audience pay just to be unproductive, but the performers “earn considerable amounts of money without really accomplishing anything” and also “seduce other people into wasteful enjoyment” (Shershow, 1986: 39–40).



2.14 Summary

In concluding this section, we have seen how comedians trivialise pertinent issues and also the criticisms that have trailed the striking rebuke they give to others in their performances. However, the literature has not addressed the trajectories of how comedians synchronize linguistic and non-linguistic modes to shape phenomena as they advance their audiences' world view and stimulate laughter. Indeed, language as the principal semiotic system of communication is not the only important mode by which comedians frame, express, and perform before the audience. Therefore, this present study is devoted to how the three theoretical frameworks of ‘multimodality’, ‘resemiotization’ and ‘semiotic remediation’ are embedded into comedians' performances as they humorously reconstruct language, gesture, dance, music, etc. to create communicative effects. Also, scholarly inquiry into African stand-up comedy has not received considerable academic attention; to this end, this research fills this gap. In the next chapter, I explain the theoretical frameworks that are used in this research.



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CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical framework

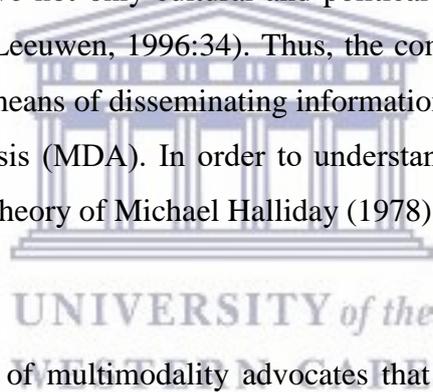
3.1 Introduction

In this section, I shall elucidate on the social semiotic theory of MULTIMODALITY (van Leeuwen, 2001), the concepts of SEMIOTIC REMEDIATION (Bolter and Gruins, 1996) and RESEMIOTIZATION (Iedema, 2003) that will complement each other for analysis of the data of this research. These analytical tools are applied in this thesis to understand the semiotic resources that stand-up comedians explore to elicit laughter and provoke critical thinking during performances. In order to draw attention to different semiotic modes (meaning-making resources) that allow stand-up comedians to manipulate their audience to laugh, I shall discuss first the theoretical framework of ‘Multimodality’ by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001).

3.2 Social semiotic theory of multimodality

Literally, as Nigay and Coutaz expound, multi means more than one and modal may contain the idea of modality and mode. Hence, modality is the means or channel we employ to disseminate or extract information and also the manner by which we understand or express an idea, or do a particular action. Mode refers to the manner in which we interpret information by using language or a thing to convey or make meaning. Thus, when communication occurs between humans or between a computer and user, modality and mode play an important part. While modality denotes the information being conveyed, mode contextualizes everything relating to interpreting the meaning embedded in the information (Nigay and Coutaz, 1993: 4 – 5). In this present study, rather than considering the multi-semiotic modes used by comedians as unconnected, I demonstrate that meanings emerge from the fusion of numerous semiotic resources they employ to communicate with their audiences. The idea is that stand-up comedy is a multi-semiotic practice in which meaning is produced by interrelationships between and among different linguistic and non-linguistic modes. In our world saturated by multimodal linguistic practices, stand-up comedians are increasingly utilising a range of communicative resources in their work including sounds, gesture, grimace, actions, bodies, talking and dancing, among others (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006).

Kress and van Leeuwen claim that the term ‘multimodality’ came into being for the purpose of knowing the value of semiotics such as image, music, gesture, and so on, other than language in use during communication. The “spreading ubiquity of sound, image, film, through TV, the computer and the internet is undoubtedly behind this new emphasis on and interest in the multi-semiotic complexity of the representations we produce and see around us” (Iedema, 2003: 33). In our contemporary world, our basic discourse practices are inundated with the use of “sound and image that are taking over tasks associated with the role of language since the invention of the printing press, and thus to some extent replacing language” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 37). Several social and cultural factors are responsible for this new development in the semiotic landscape of this modern-day world. One of them is the “intensification of linguistic and cultural diversity within the boundaries of nation-states; and by the weakening of these boundaries, due to multiculturalism, electronic media of communication, technologies of transport and global economic developments, global flows of capital dissolve not only cultural and political boundaries but also semiotic boundaries” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996:34). Thus, the combination of many modes for discourse has taken over our means of disseminating information and this is the emergence of ‘Multimodal’ discourse analysis (MDA). In order to understand multimodality, we need to tease out the social semiotics theory of Michael Halliday (1978).



The social semiotics concept of multimodality advocates that we explore all the available communicative modes at our disposal in any situation to construct the world in the utterances we make (Hodge and Kress, 1988). In other words, it concerns how we communicate and make meaning with a wide range of semiotic resources or modes (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005). In that sense, communication can be described as multimodal. Scholars argue that multimodality entails going beyond linguistics into social semiotics by considering the many modalities of communication as we can systematically describe (Martin and Rose, 2003: 255). In such a way, the concept of ‘multimodality’ moves beyond Halliday’s (1978) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) theory which assigns language alone as the resource to create meaning. Two linguists that are strongly inspired by the Paris school of semiotics are Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. Kress argues that the older sense of *grammar as a stable system of rules* cannot meet the semiotic demands of conditions now. In his book *Social Semiotic Theory of Multimodality*, Kress shifts from the term *grammar* to the use of the term *semiotic resources*. This is a shift from meanings traditionally attached to

‘grammar’ as a fixed and highly constrained regularity (Kress, 2010: 6). Van Leeuwen argues that social semiotics have moved beyond an exclusive interest in structure and system. As such, the focus changed from the ‘sentence’ to the ‘text’ and its ‘context’, and also from ‘grammar’ to ‘discourse’. Therefore, in social semiotics, the focus changed from signs to the way people use semiotic ‘resources’ both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them in the context of specific social situations and practices (van Leeuwen, 2005: ix). The term ‘semiotic resource’ originated in the work of Halliday who argued that “the grammar of a language is not a code, not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but a resource for making meanings” (1978: 192).

Rick Iedema (2003) states that ‘social semiotics’ works with yet another tool: the hypothesis that all meaning-making does three things simultaneously. Halliday refers to these three things as metafunctions; they are the experiential, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Halliday, 1973, 1978). The experiential metafunction means that language has a representational function in which we use language to encode our experience of the outer world; thus language conveys a picture of reality: things, events and circumstances. Additionally, the experiential metafunction concerns how language encodes meanings of human experience which is made known in the field of discourse (Butt *et al.*, 2000), or the “topic” of communication, that is, what a discourse is all “about” (Eggins, 2004). Halliday postulates that interpersonal meaning is realised through the tenor of discourse or text. It deals with the significant social relationships and nature of participants involved in discourse, their statuses and the roles in which they are involved in during communication (Halliday, 1985). Furthermore, the interpersonal meaning has to do with the ways we act upon one another through language; that is, giving and requesting information, getting people to do things, and offering to do things ourselves. It also involves the ways we express our judgments or point of views and our attitudes about things such as likelihood, necessity and desirability (Lock, 1996).

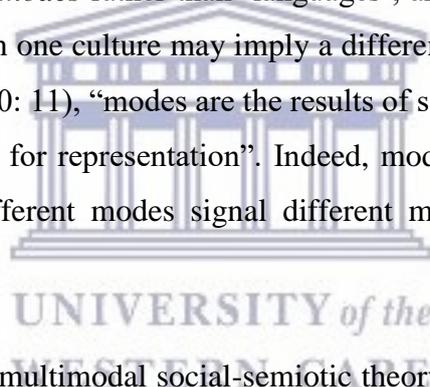
The textual meaning simply means the use of language to organise the experiential and interpersonal meanings into a message in ways that are appropriate to contexts (Halliday, 1978: 48). In other words, the textual meaning considers how we arrange a piece of writing or speech into a message (Eggins and Slade, 1997). Correspondingly, Iedema (2001, 2003) postulates the hypothesis that meaning making in images, fictional movies, actual talk, music

and other soundtracks are performing three overarching functions, or metafunctions. These three metafunctions are representation, 'orientation, and organization (similar to Halliday's experiential, interpersonal and textual metafunctions discussed earlier) (Iedema, 2001: 191). Next, I shall explain these three functions briefly.

First, representation lets us know about the world one way or another, and how we interpret a text is contingent upon context and who we are. In this way, representation lets us know "what meanings represent visually, verbally, musically or sound-wise" (Iedema, 2001: 191), and what anyone, people or things, is or are doing (Iedema, 2000b, 2001). Also, orientation has to do with how "meanings position characters and readers/viewers" (Iedema, 2001: 192). Indeed, the ways in which the participants in a discourse are positioned are very important because of the impression of identifying with participants. For example, participants in communication can be situated either as cold, calculating, social, concerned, caring, or in any other form. The third metafunction is organization which concerns the stringing and harmonization of meanings into effectual text (Iedema, 2001: 193). This patterning involves the orderly weaving of meanings and the symmetrical flow of the meanings, because how linguistics and extra linguistics forms and structures work together to create meaning is germane to the arrangements of texts. The organization of meanings will have an influence on the way a text will be read and comprehended (van Leeuwen 1991, 1996). What is significant about these metafunctions is that they enable us to know which pattern prevails in a text and they give us clues about how these patterns enhance and reinforce each other (Iedema, 2000b: 193). In this sense, language is a social resource with which we construe experience and act cognitively, because we can only know how language works if we consider the way we use it in particular cultural and situational contexts.

Semiotic resource therefore is "the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically with our vocal apparatus, with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc." (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). Van Leeuwen elaborates that semiotic resources are traditionally called 'signs', in which a frown, for instance, will be regarded as a sign of disapproval, the colour red will be a sign of danger, and the like. In contrast to traditional semiotics, social semiotic does not focus on 'signs' but on socially

meaningful and entire processes of ‘texts’ (Iedema, 2000b: 187). In van Leeuwen’s notion, the sign is the principal notion of semiotics. Van Leeuwen refers to Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1916, 1974) famous definition of semiotics: “A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable”. This Saussure calls semiology (from Greek *semeion*, “sign”). In social semiotics, the term ‘resource’ is preferred, because it turns away from the idea that a sign is ‘pre-given’, and not affected by its use; but signs cannot exist without tangible forms of social communication (Hodge and Kress, 1988: 18; in van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). Semiotic resources are not confined to verbal or written communication or pictures because even the different ways we do things articulate different social and cultural meanings. For example, van Leeuwen stresses that there may be different ways of walking: men may walk differently from women and people from different parts of the world, social institutions like the army, church, fashion industry, etc. have established their own ceremonial ways of walking (van Leeuwen, 2005: 4). Besides, Kress believes that a multimodal approach to investigating communication will compare *modes* rather than ‘languages’, and he wants us to believe that the mode of certain gestures in one culture may imply a different meaning in another culture. Thus, according to Kress (2010: 11), “modes are the results of social and historical shaping of materials chosen by a society for representation”. Indeed, modes cannot be presumed to be the same across cultures, different modes signal different meanings from one society to another.



As Kress further expounds, a multimodal social-semiotic theory shows the constraints of the use of language because “language is not a big enough receptacle for all the semiotic stuffs we feel sure we could pour into it” (Kress, 2010: 15). In essence, language alone is not the only vehicle we use to convey meaning; other non-linguistic communicative modes play important roles during communication. Kress prefers to use the term ‘resource’ for ‘representation’. In this regard, *resources* are always precisely reworked to one’s need at a particular point in time to satisfy an immediate demand “in conversation, in writing, in silent engagement with some framed aspect of the world, or in inner debate” (Kress, 2010: 8). Semiotic resources are communicatively shaped to convey understandable social demands, events and hence, a certain stability which is not rigidly fixed. Indeed, Kress believes that no amount of authority may be able to suppress the force of transformative social practice. The more cultural differences are recognizable, the more distinctions in the resources of representation and practices of their use will also be considerable. Thus, in hypothesizing and writing about communication, we can only talk about the cultures we are well acquainted

with, because when we have vague knowledge about a culture, we will talk about such a culture in an inexplicit and broad manner (Kress, 2010: 8).

In addition to the above, Kress considers the area of translation which, until recently, has focused on language alone. For instance, he looks at subtitling of films, taking into consideration the translation of a movement, an action, or a gesture that is entirely understood in one society and either entirely misunderstood or not understood in any way in another. Kress argues that “we simply can no longer assume that the reach of modes is the same across different societies and their cultures because modes occupy different ‘terrains’ from one society to another” (Kress, 2010: 11). Social semiotics is a practice as well; it is directed at examination and studying, to arouse all our senses for the elegance and intricacies of semiotic production and interpretation, and from social intervention to the discovery of new semiotic resources and new ways of using existing semiotic resources (van Leeuwen, 2005: xi). Therefore, the theoretical framework of multimodality is an essential tool to account for the co-articulation of the different semiotic systems used by stand-up comedians to communicate with their audiences. This is because our semiotic landscape is becoming more and more populated with social and cultural discourse practices and, according to scholars, “we are faced with sound and image taking over tasks associated with the role of language since the invention of the printing press, and thus to some extent displacing language” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 37). Hence, the framework of multimodality is significant in analysing data for this research which seeks to examine multimodal semiotic resources that stand-up comedians employ for communicative practices. As mentioned in the background, we shall see that comedians use more than a single mode of communication, because their performances involve using semiotic resources such as words, pauses, gestures, facial expressions, special costumes and props, grunts, snorts and howls, bodily movements, and facial gestures (Stebbins, 1999) during performance. Hence, the concept of multimodality gives insight into how stand-up comedians are interacting bodily with the audience. As a result, we see how stand-up comedians produce meaning socially through discourse, design and text. In the next section, I shall elucidate the notion of ‘resemiotization’.

3.3 The concept of resemiotization

Rick Iedema argues that the recognition of multimodal meaning making concentrates on two issues: (1) the displacing of language as the number one meaning making resource; and (2) the alteration and blurring of the traditional boundaries on the functions assigned to language, image, page layout, document design, and so on. He further clarifies that changes in our 'semiotic landscape' obscures the borders among the different semiotic aspects of representation. Also, the fact that we tend to make meaning by using more than one mode and our human development (ontogenesis) need more than one semiotic or just language making meaning (Iedema, 2003). Having seen that sound and image are competing with, and even in some instances, supplanting language, Iedema reinforces multimodality as recognizing that "language is not the centre of all communications because we also mobilize gestures, posture, facial expression, and other embodied resources such as physical distance, stance, movement" for communication (Iedema, 2003: 39). Therefore, while "Multimodality' is concerned with the multi-semiotic complexity of a construct or a practice, 'Resemiotization' is about how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next" (Iedema, 2003: 41). For instance, as texts move away from the original context where they were created to a different context entirely, the 'original statements' embedded in the texts become alienated from the social interaction that created them; and at each step, the developments modify the original condition of the texts (Iedema, 2003). Significantly, in this present study, I examine how stand-up comedians humorously re-enacted different scenarios from different contexts in front of their audiences for different communicative purposes.

Moreover, resemiotization concerns how forms of meaning making are generally accessible like talk, gesture and body posture while other forms like books, films, machines, scientific technologies, require huge investment of resources to access them (Iedema, 2003). Also, resemiotization takes into consideration how expressions represent social construction of meaning. As such, "resemiotization is crucially interested in how materiality (expression) serves to realize the social, cultural and historical structures, investments and circumstances of our time" (Iedema, 2003: 50). By studying a trajectory of how one particular scene evolves across time, issues of transformation and transduction are illuminated.

Furthermore, Iedema's concept of resemiotization puts emphasis on (re)materializations of talk, text, and drawing into a single historical trajectory (Iedema, 2003). This concept "is meant to provide the analytical means for tracing how semiotics are translated from one into the other as social processes unfold, and as well for asking why these semiotics (rather than others) are mobilized to do certain things at certain times" (Iedema, 2003: 29). Iedema presents the argument that multimodal analysis should be complemented with a dynamic view on semiosis. This perspective is about representing meaning in a historical context. As such, it asks how, why, and which meanings become placed in a different context (Bernstein, 1990: 60, 192 quoted in Iedema, 2003: 40) and a sense that the semiotics mobilized in social practice is manifesting a logical relationship to where a practice is up to (Iedema, 2003: 40).

Iedema expounds that the subject of resemiotization therefore looks at how 'materiality' (expression) functions to understand the social, cultural and historical structures, investments and circumstances of our time. As multimodality makes it clear that the nature of representation entails multi-semiotic resources, the concept of resemiotization seeks a dynamic way of presenting events and treat them as truthful and supported by facts from history. Thus, both multimodality and resemiotization are "a powerful toolkit for doing socially relevant, multi-semiotic discourse analysis" (Iedema, 2003: 50). In this present study, I use resemiotization to highlight how the stand-up comedians shift meanings from context to context, and change the original communication to comedic stunts (Iedema, 2003). I now turn to the explanation of the concept of 'Semiotic Remediation', as utilised for the analysis of the data for this study.

3.4 Semiotic remediation

Richard Grusin coined the term *remediation* (May 1996) as a way to complicate the notion of "repurposing". What the term *remediation* meant was not immediately clear until the double logic of "immediacy and hypermediacy" was worked out (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 18). Quoting Hegel, Bolter and Grusin (1996), "immediacy is, however, a one-sided determination; thought does not contain it alone, but also the determination to mediate itself with itself, and thereby the mediation being at the same time the abrogation of mediation – it is immediacy" (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 311). The logic of immediacy dictates that the

medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 5–6). Explaining immediacy, they use the term *Virtual reality* which, according to them, is immersive (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 315). Borrowing from the expression of computer scientists, “the goal of virtual reality is to foster in the viewer a sense of presence: the viewer should forget that he/she is in fact facing a computer interface and accept the graphic image that it offers as her own visual world” (Hodges *et al.*, 1994, cited in Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 22). In this way, viewers are intricately involved in the created world of the programme they are watching, thereby forgetting that they are watching via a television or computer screen. As such, the programmer/creator of an image is removed from the image while the viewer of the image erases all traces of mediation, but becomes more intimate with the image. Therefore, this present study looks at how comedians remediate other people’s language, music, gesture, body movement, voice, grimace and so on, as their own invention rather than materials from another source. In this sense, it shows how stand-up comedians create effects in their performances and the messages in such a way that their audience become part of their unfolding comic performance.

On the other hand, where the logic of immediacy suggests a unified visual space, hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, i.e. representation is conceived of hermetic overlapping modes for communicating messages. However, these seemingly contradictory logics are mutually dependent; immediacy depends upon hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 314). For instance, Bolter and Grusin explain that hypermedia CD-ROMs and windowed applications are fond of habitual replacement of one medium with another (Bolter and Grusin, 1996); and in doing so, they are performing what they characterize as acts of “remediation”. In this sense, “the content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 33). Bolter and Grusin stress further that our contemporary entertainment industry refers to such borrowing as ‘repurposing’ which simply means to take a ‘property’ from one medium and re-use it in another medium for a different purpose. Thus, the taking something from one medium and reusing it in another medium is called ‘*remediation*’ (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 339). In this research, I explore how comedians take semiotic materials from various sources and re-use them in stand-up comedy performance for different purposes.

The word ‘remediation’ derives from the Latin word *remederi* (meaning to heal, to restore to health), and Bolter and Grusin adopted the word to describe how “one medium is seen by one

culture as reforming or improving upon another” (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 350; 1999: 59). Based on this concept, as the new user remediates material from the practice of another practitioner, the social arrangement is also being remediated because the new user wants to claim the status of the practitioners of the earlier medium. Very significant is the fact that comedians are fond of impersonating characters of scenarios which they have witnessed in society in the areas of politics, education, religion, fashion, etc., and re-enact them before the audience. Because “the prefix “*re*” in ‘remediation’ implies that something important is taken to be the same, while situated in a different event of semiosis” (Irvine, 2010: 237), stand-up comedians do mimic and also conjure the voices, gestures, body movements, dressings, etc. of others to satirise societal shortcomings. The rhetoric of remediation favours immediacy, even though as the medium matures, it offers new opportunities for hypermediacy. Remediation can also imply reform in a social or political sense, and again this sense has emerged with particular clarity in the case of digital media (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 351; 1999: 60).

In an approach to narrative discourse as semiotic remediation practice, Hengst (2010) examines the ways narratives operate as communicative resources in the interactions of familiar communication partners, one of whom has a diagnosis of aphasia. Her analysis shows that semiotic remediation offers a way to understand how communicative competence can exceed linguistic competence in interactions of individuals with aphasia. She argues that the ability of an aphasic individual to successfully do frame-shifting and complex communication despite their linguistic challenge, lets us see beyond language but become aware of the contribution of other communicative resources as well. The “ability of individuals with aphasia to engage in complex, frame-shifting discourse practices so successfully and yet with sometimes quite limited linguistic signaling helps us to see beyond language, but also recognize how much communicative weight other semiotics can and routinely do bear” (Hengst, 2010: 110). By examining the verbal and non-verbal narrative elements distributed across participants and conversational activities, she discovered that speakers held their audiences’ attention by weaving together gestures, postures, facial expressions, actions, voices, and physical props as they describe, display, and interpret narrative (Hengst, 2010: 112).

Hengst alludes to Bakhtin's (1981) conceptualization of chronotopes (the connection of the temporal and spatial), indicating that chronotopes provide a very useful means for tracing how social and historical paths flow through narrative discourse (Hengst, 2010: 117) and shows that the use of non-linguistic resources such as gestures, postures, voicings, intonations, voice quality, prosody, facial expressions and accents form communicative effects. The participants in her study easily mesh together different communicative resources to effectively structure their narratives with numerous underpinnings and reference to a specific time and place (Hengst, 2010: 129). Likewise, Hengst stresses that handling narrative as semiotic draws attention to how narratives are linguistically presented and materially performed in concrete and physical space. Also, recognizing narrative as *re*-mediation points out how persons and events, experiences and imaginings, are conversationally re-presented in a new narrative (Hengst, 2010: 135).

In Bolter and Grusin opinion, the new user who is remaking what is already available must locate its commercial area by either replacing or adding to what already exists, because the new users will measure their economic success by the new usage. For web designers, for instance, "the economic aspect of remediation is tied up with its social and material aspects" (Bolter and Grusin 1996: 357). Consequently, the entertainment industry's understanding of remediation as repurposing reveals the inseparability of the economic from the social and material (Bolter and Grusin 1996: 358). In the same vein, I analysed how stand-up comedians wrest other people's languages, actions and demeanours because they are motivated by dreams, stardom and monetary reward as they perform such materials for commercial entertainment.

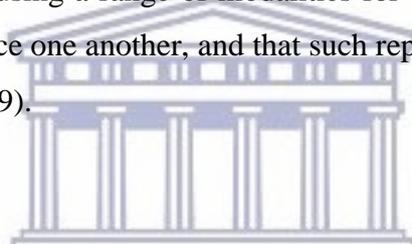
Also, according to Prior and Hengst, taking up semiotic remediation as practice draws attention to "the diverse ways that humans' and nonhumans' semiotic performances are re-represented and reused across modes, media, and chains of activity" (citing Prior, Hengst, Roozen, and Shipka, 2006, p. 734). Prior and Hengst prefer the term *semiotic* rather than *multimodal* because semiotic signals extensive interest in signs across modes, media, channels, and so on. On the other hand, Prior and Hengst believe that multimodal is contingent on a yet to be clarified delineation of mode, and this seems to suggest exclusions. They further assert that "*remediation* points to ways that activity is (re)mediated – not

mediated anew in each act – through taking up the materials at hand, putting them to present use, and thereby producing altered conditions for future action” (Prior and Hengst, 2010: 1). In addition, an attention to discourse *practice* is necessary because semiotic remediation is at the heart of *sociogenesis* (the people, artefact, and society – making dimensions of all activity) as well as of *situated discourse* (that is, discourse situated both *in* concrete, historical acts and *across* extended trajectories) (Prior and Hengst, 2010). As such, the framework of semiotic remediation is appropriate to the aim of this present study, because I examine the ways by which stand-up comedians reuse others’ scenarios to make people laugh.

Prior and Hengst emphasize that semiotic remediation as practice is fundamental to understanding the work of culture as well as communication. In this perspective, we are to consider the different ways that semiotic resources are reused across modes, media, and chains of activity. According to Prior and Hengst (2010: 2), “language and signs need to be understood as concrete, historical, situated, and social phenomena rather than as abstract, depersonalized, and unsituated systems. Also, knowing semiotic perspective will direct our attention from shadow conversations to, in effect, *shadow acts*, in which talk is only one aspect. As such, Prior and Hengst consider how reported speech embedded the use of paralinguistic, gesture, dress, and interactional formats, and also how people dialogically copy material features of texts/objects from others when they produce represented speech, thinking, and writing (Prior and Hengst, 2010). Furthermore, semiotic remediation represents a communicative practice that interdiscursively clusters modes, media, genres, and events together and operates as a basis for an orderly sequential arrangement and the intrinsic connection of temporal and spatial relationships (Prior and Hengst, 2010: 6). The exploration of trajectories of semiotic resources brought into play in stand-up performances distinguishes this research from the single-mode analysis that is presumably characteristic of much of the work on stand-up comedy.

In addition, Irvine (2010) pursues a theory of signs and sign-functions that will bring social and material contexts into how signs liaise between the world and our understanding of the world. Irvine corroborates Prior and Hengst’s (2010) opinion that “scholars who have written on semiotic remediation have focused on multimodality and transfers among media” (Irvine, 2010: 236). Irvine also believes that in order to better understand ‘remediation’ – as

necessarily involving different semiotic modalities – it would require a better-defined conception of ‘modality’ than what is generally found in the literature. Otherwise, modality would be too easily conflated with a simple technological sense of media, and many interesting topics would be overlooked. Hence, Prior and Hengst (2010) offer the concept of ‘remediation’ that centres more on ‘repurposing’. Remediation, in this sense, implies reusing what exists already for a new purpose (Irvine, 2010: 236). Interestingly, Irvine further claims that the concepts of semiotic remediation, multimodality, and repurposing overlap. Thus, remediation refers to a broader set of communicative processes in which all kinds of signs are taken into consideration and not only linguistic text alone. Indeed, the interconnection among numerous communicative modes that are occurring together is exactly what enables us to recognize the contribution of any one of them (Irvine, 2010: 236). The prefix *re-* in ‘remediation’ implies that something important is taken to be the same, while presented in a different activity that involves signs and the production of meaning (Irvine, 2010: 237). Irvine effectively reveals that using a range of modalities for communication can show how semiotics transform and enhance one another, and that such repurposing can serve to further a social project (Irvine, 2010: 239).



Grabill and Blythe (2010) describe an inventive work of an environmental organization in Habor community in which the organization attempted to influence public discourse concerning an environmental problem in the community. Borrowing the term *semiotic remediation practices* (from Prior, Hengst, Roozen and Shipka, 2006), Grabill and Blythe aim to avoid downplaying the concept of modes but rather they took interest in signs across modes, media, channels, among others. Thus, they chose *remediation* to investigate the ways that what has been communicated in one context is reused in new a circumstance. Also, following Prior *et al.* (2006), Grabill and Blythe (2010) use the word ‘practice’ to emphasize that semiotic remediations are discourse events that draw on cultural resources while simultaneously creating culture, a process which Prior *et al.* (2006) called ‘sociogenesis’ (i.e. people and society are making dimensions of activity). By adopting these terminologies, Grabill and Blythe discover that in the norm and distribution practices of the organization, there is remediation of text, visual images, maps, numbers, multimedia objects, embodied performances and other modes to debate the shape, future, and well-being of their community. The remediation happens across modes, i.e. from talk to text and back-and-forth to talk and then back to text. For example, meeting becomes moment and place for chains of

semiotic remediation practices because the distribution of flier becomes opportunity to talk with others and this practice is common in the community at large. Thus, the people used different semiotic resources to comprehend an environmental problem and propose a response, and in that way making a concrete plan for tackling the problem. As such, the study shows a better understanding of the ways that semiotic practices were remediated from situation to situation (Grabill and Blythe, 2010). Therefore, in this present study, I use semiotic remediation to account for how stand-up comedy can be seen as semiotic performance in which the comedians re-use other people's words, frequently re-perform others' gestures and actions, repurpose objects, re-present ideas in diverse media and thus restructure the 'other', their environments and themselves (Prior and Hengst 2010; Banda and Kunkeyani, 2015). Interestingly, this study shows how stand-up comedians deliver messages and also create effects in their performances in such a way that the audience is part of the unfolding comic performance.

3.5 Summary

To conclude this section, the applications of these theories elucidate the diverse modalities applied to deliver punchlines by the comedians. In the light of these arguments, the potency of a remediation approach to understanding a phenomenon has motivated me to adopt a descriptive and interpretive-based angle to the study of stand-up comedy. The concept of multimodality shows that comedians use more than a single mode of communication, because their performances involve using semiotic resources such as words, pauses, gestures, facial expressions, special costumes and props, grunts, snorts and howls, bodily movements, and facial gestures. The notion of resemiotization highlighted how comedians make meaning by shifting meaning from one context to another context, from one mode of communication to another, and from practice to practice. The framework of semiotic remediation examines how stand-up comedians take other people's actions or words, re-enact them, and make people laugh while at the same time communicating with the audience. Thus, it is evident that the theoretical frameworks of multimodality, resemiotization, and semiotic remediation are essential tools used by stand-up comedians for weaving together different semiotic resources to create communicative effects. I shall discuss the method of gathering and analysing the data of this study in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the methodological approach explored for close analysis of stand-up comedy performance. The approaches I have discussed in the theoretical framework will be situated within the paradigm of qualitative research. Thus, I discuss the overview of research methodology, the explanation of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of doing research, and the justification for the qualitative approach for this study.

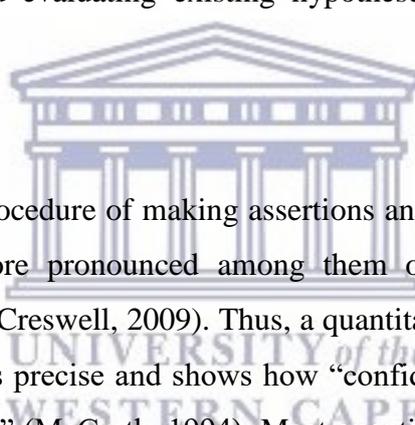
4.2 Research design and methodology

In research, “some theoretical and empirical tools are systematically used to try to increase the understanding of certain phenomenon” (McGrath, 1994: 152). The tools are necessary to successfully gather and analyse the data for the research without which the aim of the research will not be carried out. Indeed, the specific methods employed to collect and analyse data determine the outlook of that research (Creswell, 2003). Certainly, a researcher needs to collect data by using particular instrument(s) or examining the features of specific targets. In this way, the procedure of obtaining the information may require going to the location of the research and studying how some individuals behave or by asking people to talk about a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). Thus, research methodology basically means the “process, instruments, techniques, rules and procedures employed to collect and analyse a research data” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 261; McGrath, 1994).

There are different methods which can be used for the collection and analysis of a research data. The two well-known methods are the quantitative and qualitative methods. However, the two methods can be combined to become what Creswell calls the ‘mixed’ method (Creswell, 2003). I shall henceforth delineate these research approaches respectively.

4.2.1 The quantitative method

The quantitative research method is an approach in which the researcher uses irrefutable assertion to build on knowledge (“exploring cause and effect, reduction to particular variables and assumption and questions, the use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories”) performing experiments and surveys, and using instruments to collect data/information that produce statistical data (Creswell, 2007: 22). The focus of a quantitative method is to look at the relationship between two or more variables with the aim to construct accurate, reliable, consistent and non-arbitrary representations of the world. In this situation, the researcher experiments with a theory by identifying a limited hypothesis and gathering data to validate or negate the hypothesis. In fact, researchers use instruments to collect data and set up experiments to assess the attitudes of variables before and after the experiment, and then analyse the information obtained from the experiment by statistical methods, as well as testing the hypothesis and evaluating existing hypotheses (Averbach and Silverstein, 2003).



Quantitative research is the procedure of making assertions and distilling or discarding some of the assertions for the more pronounced among them on measures finalised by the observation of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Thus, a quantitative research method does not operate by chance; rather, it is precise and shows how “confident we can be that something other than chance was at work” (McGrath, 1994). Most quantitative research usually follows the rule of empirical, testable and demonstrable protocol by which the researcher tends toward being objective in the enquiry to ensure validity, reliability and also avoid bias (Creswell, 2009: 8). Therefore, the experiments in quantitative research “are true experiments, with the unsystematic subsection of substances to usage conditions, as well as partial-experiments that use nonrandomized designs” (Keppel, 1991); and “surveys that involves cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews to collect data, with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population” (Babbie, 1990, in Creswell, 2009: 15).

A quantitative approach also involves carrying out observations and descriptions of a phenomenon or group of phenomena by formulating hypotheses to explain the phenomena,

such as the use of a hypothesis to predict the existence of other phenomena, or to predict quantitatively the results of new observations (Barrow, 1991). The performance of experimental tests for the predictions of results from several independent experiments is usually properly performed. If the experiments bear out the hypothesis, it may come to be regarded as a theory or law of nature, but if otherwise, it must be rejected or modified; thus, the potency of a quantitative method concerns its predictive power (Barrow, 1991).

4.2.2 The qualitative research method

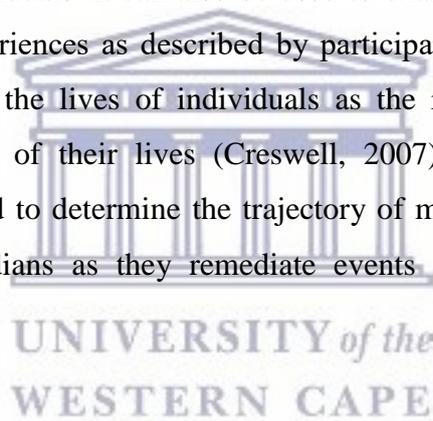
The qualitative method is an approach in which the researcher usually makes knowledge claims based on abstract expression of point of view. A qualitative research approach uses various socially and historically constructed meanings of individual experiences, with the intent of developing a theory, pattern or participatory perspectives, taking into consideration the political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change-oriented concerns. Also, this method uses strategies of inquiry such as “narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies” (Creswell, 2007: 22). As such, the qualitative approach looks at a process, issue, or phenomenon to be explored and does not involve the formulation of hypotheses (Devlin, 2006: 53).

Furthermore, the qualitative approach is investigative in nature and thus useful when a researcher does not know the important variable to investigate. Indeed, this approach is good for carrying out research on phenomenon that is new, or if the available theories do not apply to the phenomenon being scrutinized (Morse, 1991 in Creswell 2007: 23). Also, the qualitative method uses open-ended or semi-structured interviews for collecting data which are typically electronically recorded and transcribed. The structured interviews resemble verbal questionnaires in which the researcher usually asks an identical set of questions of all respondents. This allows the researcher to compare answers from different participants. On the other hand, the standardized or semi-structured interview is descriptive in form, an organized set of predetermined open-ended questions with other questions emerging from the dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 173).

The transcribed data of structured interviews “are then subjected to a series of analyses, beginning with the raw data and, step by step, moving to relevant text, repeating ideas

themes, theoretical construct, theoretical narratives, and research concerns” (Devlin, 2006, citing Averbach and Silverstein, 2003). Going by this argument, the analysis will enable the researcher to compare and contrast the facts obtained through the data collection in order to structure together the similarities of the facts collected and sieve the differences among them for clearer understanding (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 261).

It has been argued that qualitative research seeks out the ‘why’, not the ‘how’ of a topic through the analysis of unstructured information gained from things like interviews, transcripts, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos, and videos in order to understand the attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles of people (Devlin, 2006: 53). Thus, a qualitative approach is good for ethnographical studies of a particular cultural group, to handle in-depth case studies of a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. It can also be used to examine phenomenon or identify the “essence” of human experiences as described by participants in a study. The approach could also be used to study the lives of individuals as the researcher asks one or more individuals to tell narratives of their lives (Creswell, 2007). In this present study, the qualitative approach was used to determine the trajectory of multimodal semiotic resources explored by stand-up comedians as they remediate events in society for aesthetic and communicative purposes.



4.2.3 The mixed research method

The mixed method captures both the quantitative and qualitative approaches by gathering numeric data on instruments and also collecting text information in the form of interviews. The approach is one in which “the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds” by simultaneously or sequentially collecting data to best understand a research problem (Creswell, 2007: 21). Thus, this method mixes a survey to generalize results to a population and using open-ended questions to collect data to capture views from participants (Creswell, 2003: 22). Furthermore, this method helps the researcher to generalize results to a population, or test theories/concepts and follow it with a “detailed exploration with a few cases or individuals” and integrate the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2003: 18–19).

Since this present study is text based, I employed the qualitative approach for the collection and analysis of the research data. The basis for choosing the qualitative approach for this study is that out of a larger population of stand-up comedians in Africa, the cases of the comedians that are used in this study have a substantial effect on the credibility of the evidence resulting from the study (McGrath, 1994). Hence, the intricacies of the trajectories of semiotic resources embedded in comic performances to flexibly communicate information to the society are revealed. However, interviews were not necessary in this study, because video recordings were transcribed for the analysis of the stand-up performances of the two comedians used for this study. Having discussed the methods of doing research, I shall proceed to the techniques of data collection for this study.

4.4 Data collection

As I indicated in the background to this research, I chose two stand-up comedians from South Africa and Nigeria respectively. The stand-up comedians whose performances I investigated and analysed in this study are: Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola from South Africa; and Atunyota Akporobomeriere (Ali Baba) and Bright Okpocha (Basket Mouth) from Nigeria. Since case study is one of the unique techniques of qualitative analysis that is used to collect data directly from the source and based on explanations, stories, experiences and events (Yin, 2002), I chose these four comedians to represent the performances of African comedians. These comedians were chosen because they are the leading comedians in their respective countries and they have performed both locally and internationally. Their performances cover a broad range of issues across Africa and the world in general. Indeed, using a random procedure to sample from a population or to allocate cases gives the best chance that the resulting population will be representative, and that the resulting allocation of cases to conditions will be unbiased (McGrath, 1994:162).

Consequently, I have watched several videos of the above comedians, but I selected five videos of each comedian because of the feeling that they will capture issues from different perspectives. I bought some videos containing performances of the comedians but I discovered that their videos on YouTube are more appealing because they generated diverse comments on the issues they talked about. As such, I intended to download a total of 20 video performances of these four stand-up comedians (five each) for transcription and analysis.

However, Trevor Noah's videos are much longer than the other comedians; hence, I downloaded four of his videos. The transcriptions did not cover all the contents of the videos; rather the scenes that captured the objectives of this research were chosen for transcription. Thus, I transcribed the segments where the comedians talk about topical issues in society such as racism, stereotypes, politics, politicians, religion, lifestyles, cultural beliefs, education, sports, segregation, and other issues. The videos used for analysis are:

The videos of Trevor Noah downloaded are:

Trevor Noah Video 1: welcome to America

Trevor Noah Video 2: Stand Up Comedy 2015 – Best Comedian Ever

Trevor Noah Video 3: Trevor Noah - Live at the Apollo – London

Trevor Noah Video 4: Trevor Noah It's My Culture Service with a Smile

The videos of Loyiso Gola downloaded are:

Loyiso Gola Video 1: Loyiso Gola - Waptubes.Com

Loyiso Gola Video 2: Racism Bites, Loyiso Gola Bites Back - Waptubes.Com

Loyiso Gola Video 3a: Loyiso Gola_ Life & Times DVD - Waptubes.Com

Loyiso Gola Video 3b: Loyiso Gola - 11 Official Languages of South Africa _ AMW Live [STAND UP COMEDY]

Loyiso Gola Video 5: Loyiso Gola - Keeping Murder Classy _ AMW Live [STAND UP COMEDY]

Loyiso Gola Video 5: Loyiso Gola – Would You Elect a President with 783 Criminal Charges

The videos of Ali Baba downloaded are:

Ali Baba Video 1: ALIBABA–FREEZE COMEDY AT NIGHT WITH THE MASTERS

Ali Baba Video 2: NIGHT-ALIBABAS-WIFE-TOLD-HIM--UR-FADA [BollyCine.Net]

Ali Baba Video 3: Alibaba 2016 concert www.mobitechplaza.com

Ali Baba Video 4: [nigerian-comedian-wale-gates-ali-baba – codedwap.com](http://nigerian-comedian-wale-gates-ali-baba-codedwap.com)

Ali Baba Video 5: Alibaba 2012 Night of a Thousand Laughs

The videos of Basket Mouth downloaded are:

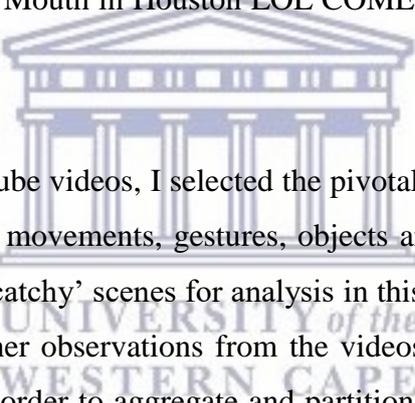
Basket mouth Video 1: Basket mouth Stand up part 1

Basket mouth Video 2: Basket mouth Stand up part 2

Basket Mouth Video 3: Basket mouth Stand up part 3

Basket Mouth Video 4: Basketmouth Thrills At The Lagos Leg Of GLO LAFFTA Fest

Basket Mouth Video 5: Basket Mouth in Houston LOL COMEDY SHOW (2011) by Golden Icons



From the above selected YouTube videos, I selected the pivotal scenes for transcription and I captured the pictures of comic movements, gestures, objects and demonstrations. Alongside the pictures, I transcribed the ‘catchy’ scenes for analysis in this study. For proper connection to the aim of this study, I gather observations from the videos in tandem with the research objectives (McGrath, 1994) in order to aggregate and partition the set of data and also to be able to make comparisons.

4.5 Transcription of data

I transcribed the segments where the comedians talk about topical issues in our societies and where they make comparisons about nations, cultures and practices because these are areas that connect to the objectives of this research. Also, I engage in multimodal transcriptions to capture the intricacies of non-linguistic texts embedded in their performances. Therefore, the following transcripts were done:

- a) Transcription of accent: Though graphical representation of accent is a challenge, I indicate the points at which the comedians parody accents of ‘others’ purposely to

hide behind different personas (Mesropova, 2003: 434). In doing this, I had to listen, re-listen and do phonetic transcriptions in some instances in order to analyse the purpose of the usage of accents in the comedians' performances.

- b) Transcription of body movements and physical demonstrations (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006): I snapped pictures to capture some moments in which the comedians create immediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) and embellishments through demonstrations to connect to the audiences.
- c) Transcription of gesture: Gesture typically accompanies language during communication (Iedema, 2003) but there are instances that the gestures of the comedians are calculated to convey specific messages.
- d) Transcription of dancing moves: It is not easy to represent dancing steps in words; however, I described some leg and hand movements that are part of their performances used for aesthetic and parodying purposes.
- e) Description of engaging the audience in the production and consumption of humour: There are instances that Ali Baba brings the audience to the stage, and I capture pictures of such moments for analysis in this research.
- f) Description of sounds: I transcribed some usage of sounds while in some others I only described or analogized with real sound production as the comedians explored sounds to drive home their points.

Thus, the transcription and interpretation of audiovisual stunts of stand-up performances was done in this study and this is because audiovisual recordings capture a greater amount of information than simply audio recordings (Reid, Stoughton and Smith, 2006; Podlasov and O'Halloran, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2001). I used signs to represent some communicative stunts in order to better understand how meanings are distributed in the videos of the comedians. Therefore, table one below contains the signs I adopted for the transcription.

Table 1:

The meanings of transcription symbols used in the data

Symbol	Meaning
...	Comedian or performer's trails' off

<i>words in italics</i>	Researcher's transcription of mannerisms, imitation of sounds, and non-verbal performances of the comedians
“ ”	Transcription of comedians acting the roles of two characters together
< >	Inaudible parts
//	Phonetic transcription

I employed these symbols to show how the performances create immediacy and hypermediacy as the comedians mock people, institutions and other aspects of society. At this point, I shall discuss how I analysed the data of this research.

4.6 Analysis of the data

Data analysis entails “working with a set data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what to tell others” (Bogdean and Biklen, 1982, as cited in Merriam, 1998). Also, data analysis is the “arrangement, ranking and ordering of data according to their categories and similarities for a common goal to be achieved” (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). In this present study, I compare and contrast the facts taken from the video performances and structure together the similarities of the facts while I sieve the differences among the facts for clearer understanding (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 261). The multimodal analysis done in this research covered audiovisual meanings by applying semiotic remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 1996), multimodality (van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010), and resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) in order to account for the different modes of communication employed by the comedians in their performances. To achieve this, I applied the following procedures:

- a) In line with objective one of how the comedians explore different semiotic material across modes, contexts and practices, I analysed sounds, gestures, facial expressions, physiological and psychological demonstrations, languages, dancing, and physical objects.

- b) To achieve objective two of how the comedians interpret and compare activities across modes, contexts and practices, I analysed the comparisons of mode of discipline, name bearing, manners of speaking, movie production, news reporting, crime, and others thing across different cultures.
- c) To achieve objective three of how the comedians' construction of verbal languages and other semiotic resources of gestures, actions, music, sound, and so on, for aesthetics and communicative effects, I analysed the communicative underpinnings in the use of these multimodal semiotic resources to impress the audience, while at the same time imparting cogent messages for social reflection into the minds of the audience.
- d) To achieve objective four of how the socio-cultural contexts of South Africa and Nigeria have differential effects on the choices of semiotic resources reconstructed for their performances to convey meaning, I compare and contrast the issues raised by the comedians from both societies to find commonalities and dissimilarities in their performances.
- e) To achieve objective five of how the comedians use cross-cultural taboos and boundaries with little or no social sanctions, I analysed the stunts they performed to abuse personalities, trivialize grave issues and to detoxify the toxin they use to attack the hub of the society.

Very importantly, since I intend to find the commonalities and dissimilarities in the modes that the comedians exploit to perform comedy, I reuse some of exerpts I analysed in chapter five for analysis in chapters six and seven respectively. The purpose is to determine how the social semiotic theory of multimodality, the notions of resemiotization and semiotic remediatinon are intertwined in stand-up comedy performance.

4.7 Generation of themes and categories

1. I explained and interpreted the actions and artefacts the comedians used to create laughter, as such actions are produced physiologically with vocal apparatus, with facial expressions and gestures, etc. (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). This helped to

understand *how* comedians engage in complex, frame-shifting discourse practices so successfully and yet with sometimes limited linguistic signalling to make people laugh (Hengst, 2010: 110).

2. I identified how semiotic resources are remade by stand-up comedians in line with what they need, in response to some demand, and some ‘prompts’ during performances (Kress, 2010: 8). In this sense, we understood how comedians repurpose or take a property from one medium and re-use it in their performances (Bolter and Grusin, 1996).
3. I did the interpretation of the diverse ways that semiotic performances are re-represented and reused by stand-up comedians. In this perspective, language and signs will be understood as concrete, historical, situated, and social phenomena rather than as abstract, depersonalized, and unsituated systems (Prior and Hengst, 2010: 2). All in all, we are able to gain a better understanding of the ways that semiotic practices were remediated from situation to situation (Grabill and Blythe, 2010: 189).

4.8 Summary

In this present research, the use of video, combined with more traditional methods of data collection, created a rich data resource that allowed close scrutiny of comedians’ multifunctional uses of different modalities in their constructions of the symbolic world. The analysis of comedians using different semiotic modes as intentional, socially organized activities in the construction of meaning, offers new potentials for understanding how stand-up comedians’ communicative practices blend with or become silenced by institutional practices.

4.9 Ethical issues

I understand that appropriate ethical issues must be taken into consideration because of the sensitivity of the issues involved in a social science or humanity’s research. However, since this study is text based, there is no need for ethical consent in the study. Therefore, information bordering on anonymity and protection of research participants does not feature in this present study.

Chapter Five

Analysis of Multimodality – emphasizing the multi-semiotic nature of representation in stand-up comedy performance

5.0 Introduction

Communication is now situated within a world saturated by multimodal linguistic practices and societies are increasingly reconstructing languages, images, gestures, actions, music, sounds, grimace, body postures and dancing (Hodge and Kress, 1988; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Iedema, 2003; van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2010) among others during communication. These are socially shaped semiotic resources or modes that societies bring to play for making meaning (Kress, 2010). In this chapter, I highlight how the comedians under study “communicate and make meaning with a wide range of semiotic resources or modes” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005) as they harmonise different modes to recreate real and imagined scenarios for communicative and aesthetic purposes. Thus, I analyse below the trajectories of the ‘repurposed’ semiotic materials that the comedians used across modes such as intonation, sound, dancing, bodily behaviour, gesture, among others across contexts and practices for socially meaningful communication.

5.1 Comedians mimicking accent of others

Though we cannot use alphabet to transcribe intonation/accents, the physical material of sound is part of communication (Kress, 2010); intonation/accents is one of the modes used in the performances of the comedians. By definition “accents are the mode of utterance peculiar to individual, locality, or nation” (Lippi-Green, 1997: 58); thus, the comedians in this study parodied the accents of ‘others’ to sound exactly as the real person(s) they are impersonating. First, I shall proceed with how Ali Baba draws a semiotic material from a wedding event by mimicking the accent of the Ibibio ethnic group in Nigeria as presented in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 1

Did you know that the people that went for 2Face’s wedding, there was a ‘Dog Show’ as part of the show. You know people went for Boat Ride, people went for the Safari desert, Safari, there was a Dog Show where those dogs would race (*he giggles*). Then they bounce three people (*still giggling*). They didn’t let them enter. I don’t know why: Kate Henshaw, Ini Edo and Florence Ita Giwa (*loud noise*)

from the audience). They said we come to watch... they say “What’s your names are? What part of Nigeria? They say South East. What part? What part? They say: Calabar. He said: *Yifin* coming here? (*laughter*). It’s a show, not an abattoir (*laughter*).

From the above excerpt, Ali Baba reconstructs an incident from the wedding of 2Face (a popular Nigerian hiphop musician). He organizes the joke through the affordances of giggling, dog race, mentioning names of celebrities and their birthplace directly, using sarcastic questions and the unintelligible word ‘yifin’ to recreate the incident at the wedding in his comedy show. These are the modes he exploits to make the audience laugh. He deliberately accentuates the utterance *yifin* as a mockery of the Ibibio ethnic group and to depict them as people with jumbled accent because they transfer their accent to their spoken English. Geographically, the town of Uyo is the capital of Akwa Ibom state in Nigeria, the home of Ibibio ethnic group where Ali Baba’s wife hails from. Here, Ali Baba teases Ibibio people by appealing to the common knowledge among Nigerians that Ibibio people love to eat dog meat (Of Stereotypes and Ignorance, 2016); therefore dogs run away from vehicles having their plate numbers in Lagos. Ordinarily, this phonetic interference is a common thing in non-English speakers but Ali Baba recontextualises the accent in his own way because Ibibio people do not speak such unintelligible word. Also, we see him remediating celebrities from this ethnic group by directly mentioning their names: Kate Henshaw and Ini Edo are prominent actresses in the Nigerian Nollywood movie industry, while Florence Ita Giwa was once a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Following the above, being sarcastic in this playful context of comedy performance is likely to be taken as friendly (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006); however, this performance correlates Santa-Ana (2009: 41) claim that Valentin in his comedy invokes the stereotype but did not disarm it. As Ali Baba light-heartedly teases the Ibibio people, he draws on the stereotypical depiction of the people as “dog meat eaters”. Interestingly, there is that ‘dialogicality’ between what is being said and what the listeners had already known (Banda and Adetomokun, 2015: 17). Ali Baba recreates the unique way Ibibio people can be identified by their accent and the audience is aware of the social identity which categorise people from that part of Nigeria as people who love eating dog meat. That is why he differentiates between a dog show and an abattoir; the audience connects his statements to context and it is the contextual knowledge which exhumes hysteria laughter.

In Trevor Noah's performance, he combines different modes to refashion his personal encounter with the American police in Los Angeles. In order to unearth the nucleus of his narrative for humour during his performance, he adjusts his voice to American accent for communicative effects (Hengst, 2010) to connect to the American audience. The following excerpt shows how the police officer tries to pull him over.

Excerpt 2

If you have to drive in Los Angeles,... So I have a little rented car. I'm driving on freeway and this police car pulls up behind me. He drives behind me for a little bit; then, he flashes his light (*hand overhead demonstration*). And I was like, oh he probably wants to go passed and so I moved over to the middle lane (*moving*) and then he came with me (*laughter*), and flashes his light again and I was like oh come on, come on (*gesture permission to overtake*) don't bump me men (*laughter*), and I moved back to the fast lane, and he came back with me with the flash. This time, is like whoo whoo (*holding microphone closer to mouth giving the sound of the police siren- laughter*), whooo. I can hear, go pass (*gesture permission to overtake*), go pass because I didn't think he was stopping me. I thought it was basically a vehicular equivalent of that moment on the sidewalk when you both turn on which way to go (*laughter*). I kind of doing that with my car... I, yoh yoh yoh ah yah ah hah... (*laughter*) I thought that was happening, I thought that was happening (*moving on the stage*). I thought that was happening. And clearly, he thought that I was evading him in the most polite manner ever. Because he gets irritated, he was like 'pull over sir' (*making loudspeaker sound*) whooo whoo whoo 'pull over sir' (*saying it with fast American accent*). I can't hear what the hell he was saying (*laughter*).

Trevor Noah is reconstructing the Los Angeles street experiences that black people with the police in the United States. He deploys different modes which are: mimicking the policeman's accent by saying 'pull vrsrr', howling, giving hand demonstration over his head, moving on stage, and using hand and facial gestures. Also, he gives the *yoh yoh; ah ah* utterances to create immediacy by redescribing the trajectories of his driving before the audience. Trevor Noah's imitation of the siren and the policeman's accent is a mechanical technique to demonstrate his comedic prowess and in this manner makes the policeman ludicrous which gives rise to laughter (Bergson, 1914). All these modes are meant to emphasize the reality of this incident and to create what Bolter and Grusin (2000) called 'immediacy' which is to put the audience directly as seeing the policeman at scene of the incident. Also, he uses the accent to endear himself to the American audience which could save them from the trouble of trying to understand what he is saying. In this sense, he saves his performance the risk of being bland to the American audience. By mimicking the American accent, Trevor Noah had the American audience energized and invested in his message as they laugh throughout this performance. However, the dexterous skill he uses still put the messages across to the audience that the white American police are unfriendly with the black people.

One importance of social approach to multimodality is that language alone does not encapsulate all meanings (Kress, 2010). On his part, Ali Baba Ali Baba uses the following comedians: Steve Onu (stage name: Yaw), Oni Lukuman Olanrewaju (stage name: Ambassador Wahala), and Lawrence Oluwaseyitan Aletile (stage name: Seyi Law) to impersonate the idiolect and demeanour of Mrs Patience Jonathan who is the wife of Goodluck Jonathan (former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). Yaw is interviewer and Ambassador Wahala who is deft at impersonating Mrs Patience Jonathan acts as Ali Baba. Part of the performance is presented in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3

Yaw: Would you take eh position as minister for women affairs?

Ali Baba: (*mimicking Patience Jonathan's idiolect*) Dem dey pay dem? (*laughter*) All of them wey be minister now, na voluntary work dem dey do (*applause and laughing*). Make una give me water drink. I'm thirsting. [English translation; Are they paying them? All of them that are ministers now, they are doing voluntary work. give me water to drink. I'm thirsting.]

Yaw: *Ah please water for her Excellency please, water (Seyi Law brings a sachet water and a cup, uses his teeth to cut the sachet open, the audience roar in laughter as he pours the water into the cup and gives it to Ali Baba who yells and complains).*

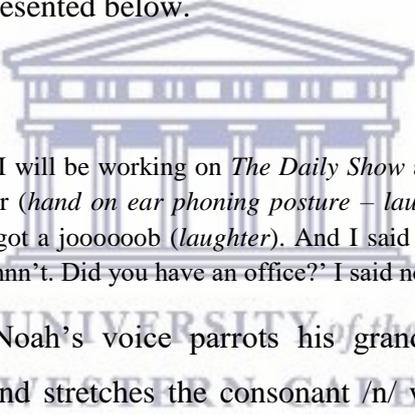
Ali Baba: Nigeria (*in a crying tone – audience respond with loud laughter*). We never reach one year (*laughter*), so no more bottled water, no glass cup. Na "Purewater" you carry come for me (*laughter*). (*takes the cup of water and pours the water on Seyi Law*) If na your mama, you fit bring am come. Come on, go here, you are stupid, idiot, stupid (*laughter*). Make una give me correct water, you carry purewater come (*laughter*). If na another business wey Ali Baba and the wife wan do, we dey watch them (*laughter*), useless idiot boy. Ali Baba is a criminal (*laughter*) and I'm telling General Muhammad Buhari, sorry President Muhammad Buhari you will probe Ali Baba and his wife (*laughter*). If they are not thief, how can you do a show you're selling table five five million? (*laughter*) If I hear here you buy a table for five million naira, your name will be out tomorrow (*laughter*). You will tell me where you get the money from (*laughter*).

Ali Baba remakes an interview scenarino where Mrs Jonathan was answering questions on issues of national concern, but he deos it for a different purpose. Therefore, he uses Ambassador Wahala, Seyi Law, the mode of parroting Mrs Patience Jonathan's accent and demeanour during the comedy-interview show. As comedians caricature 'others' for satire (Stebbins, 1990: 4), Ali Baba mixes Pidgin English with English language, also uses screaming and crying tone as modes to impersonate Mrs. Jonathan for ridicule. These modes create immediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000), and mimicking her accent is constant in the performance since the goal is to place Mrs. Jonathan before the audience. In fact, Ali Baba imitates the woman's accent because Nigerians are accustomed to ridiculing Mrs. Jonathan, especially her broken English. Thus, Ali Baba's parody of her voice is exactly, the

impersonation is excellent; it is typical of Mrs Jonathan's voice and body language. As Ali Baba brings different modes together to overlay the loaded meanings in the performance, the performance is an attempt to confirm the ubiquitous corruption in the Nigerian environment. To accomplish his objective, Ali Baba brings in "multiple semiosis in which modes and languages are as integrated whole or resources" (Antia, 2014: 581). That is why he mentions that Ali Baba will also be probed for charging too high for his comedy show.

Another deft move by Trevor Noah is that he recreates his conversation with his maternal grandmother as semiotic material to perform before American audience. He mimics his grandmother's accent in such a way that the audience could hear grandma rather than hearing Trevor Noah and this style helps him to sustain the comedy momentum and move it forward. He repurposes his maternal grandmother's reaction to his appointment to anchor John Stewart's *The Daily Show* as presented below.

Excerpt 4



My grandmother heard that I will be working on *The Daily Show* and she was really excited. She was like whooooooooo Trevorrrrrr (*hand on ear phoning posture – laughter*). I'm so happy for youuuuuuu (*laughter*). Well done, you got a joooooob (*laughter*). And I said no, no granny, I already had a job. She was like: 'no you didnnnn't. Did you have an office?' I said no ... 'It wasn't a jooooob' (*laughter*).

In the performance, Trevor Noah's voice parrots his grandmother's Xhosa accent. He lengthens the vowels /u, ɔ:/, and stretches the consonant /n/ which I have tried to literally transcribed as seen in the excerpt concerning his mimicking pattern of elongating consonants and vowels sounds during articulation. As scholars argue, "voices vary noticeably in tone and quality and give us immediate clues of the sex, age, social status, mood, and so forth; and also the intonation rhythm conveys important dimensions of meaning" (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006). Trevor tenders the texture of his voice to sound exactly like that of his old-age maternal grandmother to connect to the audience who laugh throughout. A study on contemporary female comedians in Russia reveals that the audience laughs at inappropriate or unexpected voice and the unexpected voice detaches comedians from their real identity while they feign a different 'persona' (Mesropova, 2003: 437). Similarly, Ali Baba and Trevor Noah exploit unexpected voice which is accent of other people to deliver jokes, and in this way they achieve Bolter and Grusin (2000) notion of 'immediacy' as they repurpose events to convey different messages through humorous performances. As part of negotiating multimodal semiotic tools (van Leeuwen, 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Gilje, 2010),

the comedians parodied accents in their stand-up performances. The adjusting of tones and pitches of utterances which “include mispronunciation of vowels or consonants, misplacing of stress and *misinflection* of sentences” (Lippi-Green, 1997) enable the comedians to connect to the audience. In the next section, I shall analyse how the comedians exploit the mode of bodily movements for communication.

5.2 Coordinated deployment of linguistics and bodily behaviour

Though the manner in which an action is performed, such action becomes a communication channel that is used to convey or acquire information (Nigay and Coutaz, 1993: 4); indeed “what counts as mode is a matter for a community and its social-representational needs” (Kress, 2010: 87). Thus in this present study, the comedians spice-up their creativities with different actions and demonstrations for communicative purposes. Starting from Ali Baba, one of his demonstrations is recreating the physiological activity of dogs for a different meaning. The excerpt and figure below show his performance before the audience.

Excerpt 5

Have you noticed it when you drive into some streets in Lagos, dogs run after you? They run after your car. You know those number plates reflect. So they come after the car *kitika kitika kitika* (making hopping movements) until you drive out of sight. But if they are running after your car *kiti kiti kiti* (hopping forward), they see Uyo: *whou whou whou whou* (barking and hoping backward in retreat - laughter).



Figure 1: Ali Baba hopping backward

From the above, Ali Baba mobilizes the modes of explanative gestures, hopping to the left hand side, walks back to the right hand side, hops to the left side again, and verbalizing the onomatopoeia of hoping saying *kitika kitika*, barking as he hops back to the rights hand side (Figure 1) as part of affordances for representation during the performance. In fact, the message comes from the blending of these modes as resources affording an impression of

both movement and engaged interaction (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006). However, the hopping movements present dual meanings: while the hopping forward is spontaneous solidarity of the dogs with the owner of the vehicle, the hopping backward shows that the dogs' withdrawal their solidarity and retreat for fear of being used as meat. As explained earlier, Uyo is the capital of Akwa Ibom state in Nigeria (home of Ibibio people). Here, Ali Baba personifies the dog as being able to distinguish number plates and avoid the ones from Uyo, leaving one to wonder if dogs can read and decode meanings from number plates. He appeals to the common knowledge among Nigerians that people from Uyo eat dog meat and the audience retrieve his intended meaning from context by the way Ali Baba knits language, the *kitika* and *kiti* sounds, walking and hopping demonstrations to reconstruct how dogs run away from the Uyo people in Lagos. Stereotypes are part of the currency of stand-up comedy (Gilbert, 1997: 323), and Ali Baba demonstrates it here; though the joke is potentially subversive of the people from Uyo, though the comedic context of the performance shields him from being taken serious.

Surprisingly, Trevor Noah uses the murder of Walter Scott in the United States as semiotic resource for communicative purpose. This is one of the real issues of global concern that he recreates and he exploit multiple modes to put his message across. Thus, through some speech embellishments and physical demonstrations, Trevor Noah remakes Walter Scott running away from the police before the audience. Consider the excerpt and figure bellow.

Excerpt 6

The policeman shoots the unarmed man who is running away and they have the nerve, they have the nerve to crazy enough to say: this is after he fear for his life. He was afraid. Afraid of what? The man is running away (*laughter*). There is nothing less frightening in somebody running away from you. That's the definition of fear. He's running away. The only thing he could have done is to couch like a chicken, kwa, kwa, kwa, (*making chicken sound couching running movement – laughter*), kwa, kwa, kwa. There is nothing less frightening than the man running away from you. What are you afraid of? You can't say he is running away, I was afraid. Afraid of what? He's running away from you. That makes it nonsense. You see him from behind. No one is threatened from behind. They are running away... there is no one who is fri ... maybe Kim Kardashian but nobody else (*laughter*).

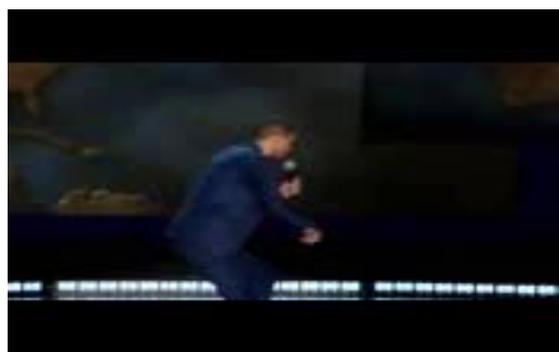


Figure 2: Trevor Noah is couching like a chicken

From the excerpt above, Trevor Noah is remaking his fear of the American police but he brings in the shooting of Walter Scott for the audience to understand that his fear is sensible. He exploits the modes of rhetoric questions, making chicken sound, demonstrating chicken running (Figure 2), and referring to Kim Kardashian backside. This storyline shows how Trevor Noah blends reality with entertainment by turning a melancholic incident to humour. However, he is able to achieve immedaicy through the coordination of gesture, voice, movements, actions and sounds (Iedema, 2000b; Iedema, 2003). Thus, Trevor's statements and questions relieve the audience of the pain of Scott's death but create a synergy of relaxation with the audience. Trevor does not play down the sadness of Walter Scott's death because he actually is lambasting the cop for shooting Scott by saying his statements. Here, Trevor shows that it is paradoxical that the policeman shoots a man that is running away from him and this is absurdity in the extreme. The blending of different modes brings out the stupidity and illogical aspect of the policeman's action that following Walter Scott behind cannot be interpreted a threat. Ingeniously, Trevor Noah weaves Kim Kardashian to the storyline implying that only the kind of her big buttocks could be threat from behind. Using Kim Kardashian bodily figure as mode in this manner offers Trevor the catalyst to mollify the tragic death of Walter Scott but rather jolt the audience to laugh. In this way, Trevor Noah's performance corroborate scholars' notion of the "logic of hypermediacy which helps him to exploit multiple symbols of mediation and in this way try to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience" (Bolter and Grusin, 199: 329). Indeed, the playfulness of his narrative and sense of the absurd (Double and Wilson, 2004) give the joke success.

By combining linguistic semiotic resources with visual composing resources (Ranker, 2012), Loyiso Gola draws semiotic material from the game of football for stand-up performance. Specifically, he reorganizes the action of Luis Suarez (a Uruguayan striker), who relishes biting opponents during football matches. Let us consider how Loyiso Gola uses some mannerisms, demonstrations, allusions, and jargons. Consider his performance in the following excerpt and figures.

Excerpt 7

I was there watching football and Suarez *yoo* (laughter), he bit someone playing soccer because they were not like Mike Tyson. No, Mike Tyson, no is not like *fucking* mike Tyson (laughter), because boxing is like a sport where you fucking each other up. So, biting is not too far from the thing (laughter). You know, I'm fucking you up (*demonstrating punching*), I'm fucking you up, you are fucking me up. I'm like fucking I'm going to use my teeth. That makes sense (laughter). Is not like a far-fetched fucking idea (laughter). We are playing football, the ball is there (*bending pointing to his toe – laughter*). You are biting up here (*touching his shoulder*) on the shoulder (laughter). I mean come on. That one is, you are fucking around, and Suarez is always in shape. Suarez is... remember he call Evra *nigga jo, nigga jo*. And I was no, no it's not right, is not right, is not cool, calling people nigga, racist, whatever (laughter).



Figure 3: Loyiso Gola touching his right leg



Figure 3: Loyiso Gola touching his shoulders

In the excerpt and as illustrated in the Figures 3 and 4 above, we see Loyiso Gola recreating football pitch and recreating Suarez. In the process, he becomes remediated himself as Tyson punching opponent to actualize the actions of Suarez on the field as absurd. In Figure 3, Loyiso Gola uses the mode of bending and pointing to his leg for illustration of the part of the body that is used to play football; while in Figure 4, he illustrates that the shoulder is not part of the body used to play football. However, boxers could hit each other's shoulder as Mike Tyson bit Evander Holyfield's ear during their boxing bout in 1997. He uses these modes for the audience to see Suarez as an oddity because the game of football is played with legs and not with the teeth. Moreover, he reiterates Suarez's using the extreme offensive name 'nigga' for Evra and this is a racist misnomer for a black person. This performance is a confirmation of using one medium after another as multiple representation (Bolter and Grusin, 1996: 337) as Loyiso Gola moves from Tyson to Suarez and then to Evra but the purpose is to show that Suarez's deviant action is unbecoming of a world-class footballer. We can see from his performance, Loyiso Gola exposes Suarez's action as uncalled for, irresponsible, uncultured and unbecoming of a distinguished footballer. Besides, in the track of his comedy performance, he reveals the harrowing issue of racism.

On stage, Ali Baba uses Ifedayo Olarinde (popularly known as Daddy Freeze) and also invites members of the audience to dance as part of the techniques utilised to create meaning. The performance is a long stretch of activities, but I shall present a fraction part of the dramatised comedy. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt 8

Freeze: (*he's bringing a lady and both were climbing onto the stage*) Watch ... now. One, two, three four....

Ali Baba: (*sees the lady*) Bless this food O Lord we are about to have in Jesus name (*helping the lady as she moves on the stage and surveying her bodily figure – applause and laughter continues*).

Freeze: This kind backside...

Ali Baba: Hey, (*facing the audience*) come, come. This is why I say road safety is not working (*laughter*). This kind of thing should come with a number plate (*audience noise and laughter*). PB Botswana (*the lady confirms she's from Botswana*). You're Botswana? Haaaaaaaaa (*making stamping movements*). That is how, I went to, South Africa. We were driving pass all the streets. My friend say: 'where are we going?' I say: 'ha haa, we can see direction; won ti n ya wa lori' [they are making us losing our heads] (*laughter – turning to look at the lady*) hey ...

Ali Baba: (*singing*) Omoge show me your back (*the lady starts swinging her waist and hips*)...

The audience: (*performing the backing vocalists*) Dig it right, dig it left.....

Freeze: (*holding the lady's hand and turning her back to the audience*) Like this, eh, ehn...

Ali Baba: Baby show me your back (*rushes to stand in between Freeze and the lady, turning to upbraid Freeze*) When you brought your own, did I interrupt? When you brought your own, did I interrupt?

Ali Baba: She and me Obama, case closed. How are you (*turning to the band*) oya, e bawa... (*noise everywhere*). Owoye, oya (*music starts and the lady starts to dance. He places hands on the lady's shoulders to turn her*) No, no, we don't want to see your face (*turning the lady around and she continues dancing – laughter galore*). (*Another lady has joined the dancing*) Can I have a Nigerian representation? Do I have a Nigerian representation here? Where is Toolz (*the lady swinging her hips to the excitation of the audience*). Where is Toolz? (*applause and laughter*). Where are all these?



Figure 4: Ali Baba turning the Botswana lady to dance



Figure 5: the Botswana lady continues to dance



Figure 6: the lady swinging her hips to the audience

From excerpt 8 above, Ali Baba is remaking the ‘skelewu’ dance for a different meaning. To communicate his message, he engages in a dialogue with Freeze who brings a chubby lady from the audience, Ali Baba makes an ‘exclamative’ utterance and offers prayer, helps the lady climb the stage and surveys her body figure. He turns to the audience and blames the Road Safety Corp for allowing such a heavy lady come into Nigeria without number plate. He talks with the lady, screams aloud when he knows the lady is from Botswana, stamps his feet, makes japing movements, and mentions his experience in South Africa. Furthermore, he makes his own song: di po po, reiterates a Nigerian musician’s song: “omoge show me your back; were, were, kia, kia; jowo show me your back” (babe show me your back; quick, quick, fast, fast; please show me your back) in order to carry the audience along. The Botswana lady starts dancing, swaying her hips (Figure 5), the audience members respond as backup singers; Ali Baba holds the lady and turns her for the audience to be watching her hips (Figures 6 and 7). Daddy Freeze comes to help the lady, Ali Baba rushes to stand in-between the lady and Daddy Freeze, complains about Daddy Freeze, and another lady comes from the audience to join in the dance. At this point Ali Baba asks for Nigerian representative because the ladies dancing on stage are from Botswana. Thus, we can see in the recontextualising of the skelewu dance, the audience become part of the performance as well. This is consistent with the idea that the audiences who have paid to be amused are also performers alongside the comedians (Brodie, 2008). All these are modes as material affordances (Iedema, 2003; Hull and Nelson, 2005; Van Leeuwen, 2005; Kress, 2010) that Ali Baba exploits to communicate for the purpose of comparing the new dance ‘skelewu’ to the olden days dancing (to be discussed more in this chapter). Ali Baba’s sarcastic shout and prayer refer to the lady’s voluptuous body as ‘food’; and in this context the lady slavishly follows Freeze and is not offended. Rather, she cooperates with Ali Baba who continues to use her as mode for communication.

Furthermore, these modes achieve immediacy because the audience can see interaction as the comedians invite girls from the audience to dance in a sense of playfulness. This lady freely takes up the role, accepts to be turned back and forth in cooperation with the comedians (Wilson, 2011: 278) for the purpose of performing humour. Indeed, the aura of the relaxed environment played down the insult to this lady whose body figure is metaphorically rebranded with the status of food and automobile that must have a number plate. In consonance with scholars conception, the physic of the Botswana lady in Figures 5, 6, and 7 helps Ali Baba to give her a “meaning not just in terms of her body figure, but because of a sense of internalized ‘language of textures’ that tells us that a certain kind of physical sensation is to be equated with a certain set of meanings” (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006). Otherwise, why would Ali Baba handle a lady like that all in the name of entertainment?

Just as (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) declare, Ali Baba likewise employs these techniques to achieve immediacy by which the comedians relocate to the background, leaving the audience in the presence of the girls as the harbinger of the comedic performance and the objects presented for ridicule to increase the entertaining impact. In addition, as Stebbins (1990:5) argues, “in prop comedy the performer brings one or more important accessories to the stage”; thus, Ali Baba and Freeze involve ladies from the audience as bodily materials for humour. This technique helps to interact with the audience, relax the atmosphere and make the audience feel less vulnerable (Mintz, 1985) and grasp the message being put across.

Another chunk of Trevor Noah’s encounter with the United States police concerns how the police pulls up behind him, flashes and orders him to pull over. Since “multimodal social-semiotic approach to representation puts the emphasis on the material, the physical, the sensory, the bodily, the stuffness of stuff, away from abstractions, towards the specific, the variable” (Kress 2010: 105), Trevor Noah melodramatises how he fear for his life as the policeman approaches him. The next excerpt and figure capture show how he performs the encounter before the audience.

Excerpt 9

My dad left when I was five. That's nonsense. So, I don't know how not to die. Here I am in my car on the side of the road riding in the streets of Los Angeles, and the whole time was like I don't want to die, I don't want to die. And the policeman gets out of his car and he starts walking towards me. And his hand is by his side and he's doing this (*shaking fingers by his right pocket side – laughter*); and now walks towards me (*laughter*). I know what this means (*right hand in the right pocket, thrusts out the pocket with the forefinger like preparing to shoot through the cloth – laughter*). This is never good (*laughter*). This (*hand by the pocket side*) never turns into friendship (*brings out his hand and stretched as if to have a handshake – long loud laughter*). So, I'm starting to stress I'm looking at him in the side mirror of my car and I'm panicking because ...objects in the mirror closing in they appear... (*laughter*). So, he's going to get there any moment. And I don't know why, I don't why I did this. Like I see this, I panic I completely panic. And I lock myself out of the window. I took my body and I threw it out of the window (*demonstrating bowing down – laughter*).

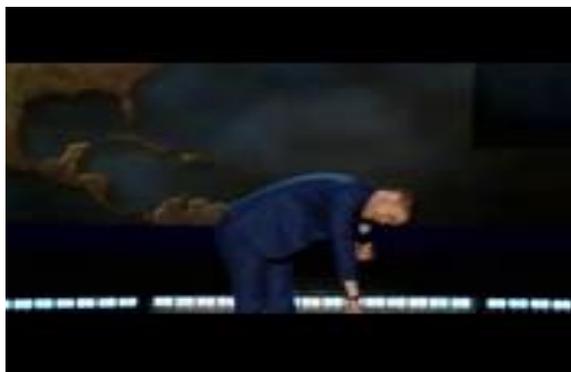


Figure 7: Trevor bends demonstrating throwing his body out of the car's window

Trevor Noah combines the modes of shaking fingers, puts right hand in the right pocket, thrusts out the pocket with the forefinger to the physicalize shooting of gun, puts hand by the pocket again, brings out his hand and stretches it forward. His explanation of how he starts to stress, looking at the side mirror and panic creates immediacy because it could appeal to the sense of the audience and cause them to visualise how he fears for his life before the whiter police in America. He bends his body downwards for the audience to physically see how he thrusts himself out of the car's window out of fear (Figure 8). Thus, Trevor Noah improvised to create Bolter and Grusin (1999) notion of immediacy to pass the new meaning. When scholars investigate whether the interactive style of comedy can be incorporated into higher education to provoke thinking among students, they discover that "the laughter is the result of a much more interactive process" (McCarron and Savin-Baden, 2008: 356). Also, Trevor Noah spurs the audience to decipher reality by putting hand in his pocket and saying "this (i.e. pointed gun) never turns into friendship". By hilariously narrating an experience that threw trembling through his spine, he behaves silly in front of the audience to exaggerate how

he fears for his life. However, his bending posture and childish tone suggest that safety of the blacks is not guaranteed as racism could prompt a white police officer to kill a black person.

For Basket Mouth, the defects in movies' acting are semiotic materials for communicating new meanings. As he establishes his comedic performance, the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) comes under fire though the "Nollywood is counted among the major business centres of film making in the world" (Ojukwu and Ezenandu, 2012: 22). He utilizes different modes to lampoon the Nigerian movie actors while filtering through the acting skills embedded in some of Nigerian films. In the excerpt and figure below, he mocks the poor quality of acting in by Nigerian movie actors:

Excerpt 10

And, if you watch Nigerian films and the American films, is different, even the Indian movies. American films, when it comes to the end part, you know, the way they want to fight, you will know. Like, no men...you can't fuck with me, I'm gonna pucker your ass, damn you, taa poom poom poom (*demonstrating shooting a gun*). They start shooting, you know. And their slow motions, they put slow motions where it's needed. You see the guy jumping out of the building in slow motions, poom, poom (*faint laughter*). Nigerian films, there's not part, nobody can jump from the building now. So, the only time they put slow motion is either when Ramsey Noah wants to slap Genevieve, you see. You, I'm going to slap you (*demonstration – laughter*). That's the only effect they can do (*demonstration and laughter continues*).



Figure 8: Basket Mouth demonstrating slow motion

Basket Mouth uses demonstration of shooting gun, mimicking gun sounds, American English, demonstration of slow motion effect (Figure 9), mentioning Ramsey Noah and Genevieve (prominent actor and actress) in Nigeria as modes to communicate his message to the audience. These semiotic resources enable him to compare between American films and Nigerians films. For instance, looking at the movement of his right hand, he mockingly demonstrates the slow motion implying that the Nigerian actors are mediocre compared to their American counterparts in film production. Notwithstanding his mockery, this joke could

be a wakeup call to the Nigerian movie producers to improve the quality of acting in their movies. In fact, Basket Mouth is provoking the Nigerian movie producers to step up to international standards in the production of movies.

Moreover, Basket Mouth remakes some Nigerian movie actors by acting dual role simultaneously when demonstrating the simplicity of typical things he observed when watching Nigeria movie. However, he embellishes the demonstrations contrary to expectation from acted script that actors could have performed. During the performance, he blends language, sound and demonstrative actions as presented in the excerpt and figures below.

Excerpt 11

Nigerian films most times some of their movies are good. Some of them, they are not too good. I watch one the other day. There was the..., the words..., they were talking slowly because they wanted to kill time. Nothing dey to talk. Kanayo O Kanayo just came out (*demonstration gesture*). ‘You, I’m going to shoot you now and you will die’ (*he is acting the dual roles by moving to two opposite positions A and B – figures 10 and 11*). Saint Obi said: oh why do you want to shoot me, what did I do (*laughter*). (*Moves to position B*) ‘Shut up, shut up, now die’. The gun shots always sound like knockout pa, pa, pa; ‘aah, aah (*demonstrating holding his body and going down by the right hand side*) aah, you have shoot me; now, I will die’ (*applause laughter*). Thank you.



Figure 9: Basket Mouth demonstrates at position A



Figure 10: Basket Mouth demonstrates at shooting position B



Figure 11: Basket Mouth demonstrating saint obi holding his body and going down

In the above excerpt, by converging additional communicative modes of descriptive gesture, shooting gun, making knockout (fireworks) sounds, and saying expressions befitting an ignoramus movie actor, Basket Mouth indeed recontextualises another Nigerian movie scene for different meaning. Also, as the figures illustrate, Figure 10 shows Basket Mouth mimicking Saint Obi asking Kanayo question, Figure 11 shows imitation of Kanayo O Kanayo shooting Saint Obi while Figure 12 remedies Saint Obi holding his body while going down from the gunshot wound. These modes create the impression of giving members of the audience a direct access to the movie scenes as if they are watching the movie, rather than having a stand-up comedian in front of them. By dexterously reenacting and ‘repurposing’ the movie scene, he successfully sways the mood of the audience to continue laughing and applauding him. With this performance, he shows that the Nigerian film industry is fraught with substandard production compared to the American film industry. As in Bolter and Grusin (2000), Prior and Hengst (2010), and Banda and Jimaima (2015) views, Basket Mouth integrates these modes of action, gesture, sound, comical expressions and movement together to achieve the communicative effects and evaluation.

As comedy, makes japing mockery of the moral principles that preserve society against otherwise uncontrolled passions (Wood, 1988), Trevor re-enacts an attitude he observed from passengers when preparing to disembark an aeroplane. In his performance, he demonstrates how typically an impatient passenger sitting by the window on the plane will experience difficulty during getting off from the plane. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 12

Finally, everyone seated. They take off, the plane heads off to San Francisco. And that was by far the most tense flight, (*laughter*) I have ever been on. [...] We finally land at the airport, the plane was taxiing to the gate...everyone, everyone was waiting for that seat belt sign to go off. Everyone was tense like more than normal. Because already I never understand why people were in a hurry on the plane to get out of it ...like you can't go anywhere. For... everyone is seated likecome on, come on, come on, you can't go. You got to go there. That's where you ...you should go there. Come on, come on ...come on, *pooh khkyeee (laughter)*. I don't understand why people are in a hurry to... You know what's even worse, the people at the window. You have no right to be in a hurry. You see...come on, come on, come on, come on, *puu, yeeeeh (holding his right ankle and audience burst to laughter)*. Ah, ask me yeah. Alright, get me my luggage, pass me now, *yeeee (bending to his right side)*, ...two more minutes, this is uncomfortable (*laughter continues all through*). (*standing upright*) it's just scary... you should wait (*laughter*).



Figure 12: Trevor demonstrating the person standing by the window inside the airplane

As we consider the excerpt above, Trevor Noah mobilizes modes of sounds, bending posture, holding his right ankle to rest on his right hand (figure 13), and repeatedly using the slang “come on” to convey meaning through which he exposes the attitude of people when disembarking an airplane. Indeed, his creativity complements his narrative effectively and the audience was emotionally invested in his joke. As “selection of modes affects choice of discourse” (Kress, 2010: 121), and Trevor Noah uses this common attitude of flight passengers’ posture at the time of disembarking an airplane, as semiotic resource to provide a signifying meaning of absurdity. Ordinarily, this behaviour is set up to be a normal thing but Trevor berates it as a bad habit because it is unbecoming of decency expected inside the airplane. Thus, as argued in the literature, there is a moral dimension to the story (Afolayan, 1999) because Trevor educates his wide-awake audience on the virtue of ‘patience’.

Furthermore, by indulging in exaggeration of imitations (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013), Basket Mouth re-presents the preaching styles of pastors in Nigeria. Categorically, he

points out about the dressing of ladies and conduct of some pastors in church. He actually blends the narrative with drama before the audience in the following manner:

Excerpt 13

Seriously, and there is this thing that these women dey do nowadays that really trips me. They will come to church and they will sit in front and they confuse the pastors. Why? Because they wear short skirts. In Lagos, they do, you see fine girl, short skirt because they in front of pastor, confuse pastor (*laughter*). Lagos pastors, they try as much as possible not to look, not even get distracted [...] But in Warri, Warri pastors, they will look. But he has to look because you're on top and she's below. So, they will turn the preaching to something that will make them go down. You see the pastor preaching about repentance. My brothers and sisters, praise the Lord. You see, I want to tell you that you have to be born again to enter into the kingdom of, God (*elongate the vowel [ɔ]*). Glory be to God (*low voice – laughter*). Before I talk about repentance, I want to tell you that Abraham was a man that was assigned by God to look into the future. So, Abraham was directed by God to be moving majestically. Abraham was moving spiritually (*stamping his feet in marching fashion*). Abraham was moving steadily and God told Abraham to bend down and look into the future (*he bends – laughter applause*), o glory, glory, glory. Jesus is Lord (*laughter applause*). The future was not clear (*laughter*). The future was not clear but Abraham was a man that has hope and faith and wisdom. Abraham did not give up (*hysterical laughter*). He still moved and moved and bends down again (*he bends – laughter*). This time he look and the future was clear (*laughter*).



Figure 13: Basket Mouth bending down on the stage



Figure 14: the man standing to laugh in the audience

In the excerpt and figures above, Basket Mouth weaves the modes of vowel elongation, low voice, marching and stamping his feet like a soldier, repetition of word, and bending down on the stage to perform a joke around Warri pastors about how they stylishly bend down to look at ladies who dress in short skirts to their churches (Figure 14). He injects demonstration to the storyline to add electricity to his performance thereby amplifying the inner strand of hypocrisy of some pastors in Nigeria. Significantly, through these modes, he creates a subsume reality of the audience seeing the pastor before them. Basket Mouth had some members of the audience on their feet. We can see a man engrossed with laughter displaying a spasmodic whopping cough dance (Figure 15). This joke sells because Nigeria is ranked the most religious country in the world with 90 percent of the population believing in God

(Agbibo, 2013:19; Chilwa, 2012: 735). He is showing the Nigerian audience the extent of decay in the churches is desirable and the audience could start to have a rethink about their pastors henceforth. Therefore, the action of this comedian bending down to communicate to the audience buttresses the argument that multimodality infers that language is not at the centre of all communication (Iedema, 2003).

As Trevor Noah continues to remake his experiences in the United States, he adjusts his performance to make remediate one lady he claims he met somewhere in Lexington Kentucky. In the performance, he reenacts the grammar and catwalk of the lady. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt 14

It ...because I met a woman out there, gorgeous... I will never forget ... she walks into the lobby of the theatre where I was standing with two friends. And she was absolutely stunning, a classic southern belle. She had long big blonde hair, giant boobs (*thrusting chest forward with cuddling hands description – laughter*). She ...herself into the lobby, pushing people out of the way (*he demonstrates catwalking o – laughter*). She made her way straight for me, straight for me...me in the face. Excuse me buddy, excuse me, hi, may I touch you from ...please. That's a news report. Hi, hi, how are you. How are you ma'am? She said 'honey I just want to let you know you are about to ...for the funniest, and the handsomest nigger have ever seen (*loud laughter*). That's how I whoooooooooooooo (*loud laughter*). I was so shocked because it isn't most handsomest. The grammar is crazy men (*loud laughter*).

Trevor exploits the communicative modes of imitating the lady's voice, making catwalking steps, using grammatical error of the lady, and shouting in order to pass the new message across to the audience. He uses these modes to recreate a fact and he is impressing upon the audience that the lady's look and use of grammar belie her glamour. This performance symbolizes that what looks beautiful outside may lack expected substance on the inside when we consider how the grammar of the lady speaks low of her masquerade status of a 'classy' lady. Trevor Noah utilises interconnectedness of bodily description, mimicking catwalk, voice switch, wrong use of adjective 'handsomest' and sound as multimodal composing processes with linguistic resources (Ranker, 2012) to build meaning. Hence, he pokes at the lady's concealment of her dullness in the gorgeousness of her dressing and cat-walking.

As evident in this section, it could be argued that that the comedians in this study incorporate demonstrable actions into their performances in order to extraordinarily present the

unexpected while sensitizing the audience about improprieties in the society. As such, the society could become aware of these ills than when they do not attend stand-up comedy show. Therefore, the exemplum embedded in the jokes could be beneficial if they are imbibed in their full potentials. In their performance of actions, the comedians exploit demonstrable actions to taxi through the audience's psyche to create communicative effects. By setting controlled interchange of actions and languages in their performances, they ingeniously exhibit engaging personalities and achieve understanding and hilarity rather than resentment. Thus, the actions 'constitute particular kinds of interaction' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001: 22). These mediated body movements show comedians exploit the entire stage, create dynamic positions with their bodies, facial expressions, and some props in the conveyance of messages to their various audiences (Timler, 2012: 57). Though this section delves a little into gestural demonstrations, the next section shall be devoted to analysis of how the use of gestures features in their performances. The next section will be devoted to more re-enactments of 'others' actions and behaviours.

5.3 Creative portrayal of others' activity

Gesture is one of the multiple modalities within an interactive system that the comedians employ for communication (Nigay and Coutaz, 1993). The meaning conveyed in gesture is "at least partially *constituted* by that choice, for it belongs to a language of gestures in which we are all competent" (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006). Humour is considered as a kind of social gesture and during discourse, gesture struggles with speech in that it pursues the speaker's thought and trying similarly to act as interpreter (Bergson, 1914: 12). For instance, in Ali Baba's performance, his re-enactment of how dogs run away from vehicles with certain plate number generate instant reaction from his own wife because she is from the Ibibio ethnic group and she sits as part of the audience. Her mediated gestural response to the joke contributes to deciphering the meaning of the performance. The excerpt and figures below show the pointing of outward hands during the performance.

Excerpt 15

Have you notice it when you drive into some streets in Lagos, dogs run after you? They run after your car. You know those number plates reflect. So they come after the car *kitika kitika kitika (hopping forward)* until you drive out of sight. But if they are running after your car *kiti kiti kiti (hopping forward)*, they see Uyo: *hou hou hou hou (hopping backward in retreat and barking, his wife pointed outward hands to him from where she was sitting among the audience and he returns his own outward pointing hand to her and said): your father too (audience continue to laugh).*



Figure 156: Ali Baba's wife points outward hands to him



Figure 167: Ali Baba points outward hand to his wife

The excerpt with figures above is another layer of meaning embedded in Ali Baba's refashioning of dogs running away from some vehicles with certain plate number. In figure 16, Ali Baba's wife points outward hands to him as he finishes the dogs joke, while Figure 17 shows Ali Baba's response. This particular gesture by the wife is what would be described in Nigeria as conveying the meaning of a curse (I curse you). The pointing of the outward right hand means 'I curse your father' while pointing the left hand means 'I curse your mother'. She could not bear the identity of dog-eaters her husband is labelling her kinsmen. In the Nigerian socio-cultural context, pointing an outward hand to someone is an insult. Here, it can be argued that the genre of comedy relates to context (Mueree and Machado, 2009) because Ali Baba does not say the Ibibio people love dog meat but the contextual depiction of the people as such is embedded in his performance. However, in this performance, when Ali Baba's wife points both outward hands to him, it means she is also involved in the mediation of humour; but in the video, another member of the audience brings her hands down. We can see that Ali Baba knowingly teases his own wife's ethnic group in her presence and this style has been documented as "licensed abuse" that emanates from comedians' establishing a relationship with their audience in form of an unwritten social contract, and this makes the laughter elicited appear harmless (Parker, 2002: 11).

Furthermore, in an ordinary situation, the above gestures could provoke strife but in the comedy setting it only generates more laughter from the audience. When he notices his wife's outward hands to him, he replied her with pointing hand too and said: your father too. Since the semiotic resources that society use for meaning making are shaped by what counts in a society and the purpose it is used (Kress, 2010), in the Nigerian context, the outward pointing

hand is an insult to one's parents (right hand is used to curse the father, and the left hand for cursing the mother). The Nigerian audience understands the social message contained in these gestures and that is why the gestures make them laugh. Though this interaction include exchange of insult between the comedian and his wife (Mintz, 1985), the mode of gestures produces laughter being in this atmosphere of comedy unlike a real serious situation which could have made the reaction far from being hilarious.

In another ridicule and comparison of movies from different countries, Basket Mouth speaks about acting in Chinese films. During the performances, he exploits English, Pidgin and moving lips to stir his audience. Using materials from another division of the entertainment industry helps shines light upon the fact that comedy can enable us to learn certain “knowledges, perceptions and ways of seeing the world that impact directly on the audience” (Parker, 2002: 16). Basket Mouth performs the following before the audience:

Excerpt 16

Chinese films, those ones they move their lips like a hundred times and only two or three words would come out. You see, Ching Fu and Ching Ha. Last fight you see Ching Fu will just come out and, hun... you (*now only moving his lips – laughter*), your own don finish (*laughter applause*). Thank you.



Figure 18: Basket Mouth demonstrating lips movement

If true, the demonstration of the mode of ‘moving lips’ here may be part of the storyline in a Chinese movie but Basket Mouth is exploiting it in Nigeria for comedy. Basket Mouth embellishes the lips movement (Figure 18) purporting to mirror the Chinese actor. His intention is to make the audience see the flaws as he stretches his left hand, holds it in space that his jacket lifts and we can see that he did not tuck in his shirt; and this shows the energy he puts into the performance. Also, by speaking Pidgin English, “your own don finish” (it is over for you) he could sway the audience’s thoughts because Chinese actors do not speak Pidgin English in their movies. However, he derisively points out the defects in Chinese

movies that are laughable. He uses the movie acting skills as semiotic resource for joke while sensitizing the society to the areas that require improvement in the production of their movies.

Since comedians strive to accomplish direct connection with the audience through warmth, charisma and incorporating the unexpected into his performance (Double and Wilson, 2004: 280), Loyiso Gola takes a storyline from the murder case against Oscar Pistorius who allegedly shot his girlfriend dead on Valentine's Day in 2013. Apparently, the incident is not a joke; however, Loyiso Gola could turn the trial of Oscar for murder into a semiotic resource for humour. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt 17

So, where, where do I start? Oscar Pistorius! That guy is crazy, men. Oscar Pistorius is the maddest ever. Do you know why? He shot his girlfriend in the face on Valentine's Day. Guy, you don't understand? On Valentine's Day, he shot his girlfriend. Guys, just like shooting Santa Claus on Christmas (*laughter*). No respect! (*laughter*): I mean valentine is one day when we specifically ask you don't shoot (*right forefinger on face*) your girlfriend in the face (*laughter*). I remember one that particular valentine I forgot to give my girlfriend flower but she was so happy to be alive sham (*laughter*). Sham she forgot everything... hay uyandi thanda akanadibulalanga [he loves me so much he didn't kill me] (*laughter*), ha ha ha ha ha ha (*laughing himself*), he he he he he he (*laughter*). Crazy!

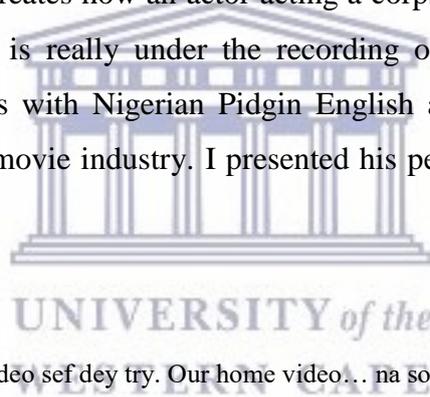


Figure 19: Loyiso Gola putting his right forefinger on his face

From the excerpt and Figure 19 above, Loyiso Gola exploits the modes of sarcastic questions, allusion to Santa Claus, putting his right forefinger on his face, mentioning his relationship with his girlfriend, codeswitching to Xhosa language, and using sarcastic giggling to pass his message across to the audience. In this context, these modes achieve 'hypermediacy' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) because Loyiso Gola overlays one point with another in the trajectory of this joke. Thus, he humorously recreates true incident but in his own way that plays down the goriness of the murder though implying that the shooting is ill-timed and the motive ill-

conceived. That is why comparing shooting ones girlfriend on valentine day to shooting Santa Claus on Christmas day invites the audience to judge and see the ridicule in Oscar's terrible action on valentine day. By putting his right forefinger in his face, he trivializes the terrible incident and the audience could see the folly of Oscar's misjudgement and void of reason by shooting his girlfriend in the face. Using this style, we acquire a sense that Loyiso Gola prevents the audience from taking the Oscar's predicament serious. He achieves humour as soon as the attention of the audience is fixed on the gesture which transports them into the realm of comedy (Bergson, 1914: 45). Also, the blending of Xhosa language into the performance alienates the audience and makes him to be secretive though some or all members of the American audience would not understand him.

Once again, Basket Mouth uses a burial scene in a movie he has watched as semiotic resource for different meaning. He recreates how an actor acting a corpse inside the coffin is dancing oblivious of the fact that he is really under the recording of a camera. Interestingly, he continues to flavour his jokes with Nigerian Pidgin English as he sarcastically points out another flaw in the Nigerian movie industry. I presented his performance in the excerpt and figures below.



Excerpt 18

Our Nigeria... our home video sef dey try. Our home video... na so I watch one home video, one burial scene. The person wey die for inside coffin. Dem dey bury am, he dey dance (*dancing movements, mouth-drumming – laughter*). He dey inside coffin dey sweat (loud laughter). As una know the name of the film I for tell una (laughter). E no know say camera dey on top am, he dey sweat. Na so im dey (*standing still to demonstrate a dead still body, puts hand in his pocket and brings out a white handkerchief and wipe his face with the handkerchief, puts it back and joins the audience to laugh*). O boy!



Figure 170: Basket Mouth demonstrates corpse in the coffin



Figure 181: demonstrates the wiping his face with handkerchief

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

Basket Mouth draws on his experience of watching Nollywood movies and culls this joke to subject the Nigerian movie industry to ridicule. He combines the modes of standing still (Figure 20) to act dead, dances, putting his hand in his pocket, taking out his handkerchief and wiping his face (Figure 21), and later puts the handkerchief back into his pocket to make his description vivid. As contained in the literature, this is one of the reasons why actions, at which we never dreamt of laughing, become laughable when imitated by another individual (Bergson, 1914: 12). Ordinarily, his demonstration is weird; however, he does it to gain a foothold on the audience continues to laugh. Considering that the said movie must have passed through editing stages and still came out with such a huge error shows that the Nigerian movie industry is yet to get it right. Basket Mouth is actually telling the audience that there is question of standard in the Nigerian movie industry. Here, the movie actor's "physical activity contributes a semiotic resource" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 4) which Basket Mouth re-presents for negative comment about the Nigerian movie industry.

Furthermore, Loyiso Gola uses court case as semiotic material as he comments about Oscar Pistorius trial in South Africa. In the Guardian Newspaper report (2013), Parker said: "Eighteen years after the end of apartheid, race still percolates almost every aspect of life, and comedy is a prime example. Race is an easy target" (Smith, D., 2013). Consider how humorously Loyiso Gola talks about racism in the excerpt and figure below.

Excerpt 19

But eh listen, I know we are supposed to be the rainbow nation of Nelson Mandela. But as black people we're so happy there were no black people involved in the whole Oscar Pistorius thing, *jo (laughter)*; till tomorrow black people are going to church to pray to Jesus and saying thank you for saving us on this particular one, thank you *(laughter)*. No black people involved, the only black person involved was the judge and she was judging fuck up *(laughter)*. You know she was looking at people, oh okay white person, you kill another white person. Oh okay, oh ... ha ha ha *(laughter)*. That was crazy. Even Oscar Pistorius' father, he would have tried before the trial started. He was hey, the ANC does not protect white people and the black people were like: where are we involved now? *(opening both hands – mild laughter)*. How are we involved? *(laughter)* ha ha ha ha, he he he he he. That's crazy.



Figure 22: Loyiso Gola demonstrating black people are not involved in Oscar's case

From the excerpt, Loyiso Gola shows how prejudice is still inundating racial divide of “us and them” in post-apartheid South Africa. By combining the modes of mannerism, uncivil words, giggling, opening hands (unconcerned gesture – Figure 22), he insinuates that black people were happy about Oscar Pistorius' predicament. He engages himself in intermittent laughter as he delivers the joke through different languages, demonstrable actions, gestures and body movements. He uses laughs to signal that what he wants to say should be taken as unserious but it is an indication that racism is still intense within South Africa. By saying that black people are so happy and going to church to thank Jesus for not being involved in Oscar Pistorius saga makes his style of exaggeration obnoxious. Also, by jokingly saying the black judge is was all right with a white person killing another white person, Loyiso's comic face ridiculously expressed a certain proud contempt for the white race because his performance style here characterizes a subtle snobbery of the white people. We can stress that “Loyiso Gola is “identifying and reinforcing the continued efficacy of race and the survival of a de facto racial segregation, of continued racial boundaries” (Seirlis, 2011: 524). However, the mixed race audience laughed while he went away with the raucous humour without reprimanding. In a nutshell, Loyiso Gola is neutralizing the whites while also revealing the extant division among the whites and the blacks despite the official pretext to conceal race segregation in South Africa.

5.4 Sound as a semiotic resource

Iedema (2003: 33) has argued that sound and image are contending with the role of language as meaning making resource that it appears they could displace language; thus, in the present research, Trevor Noah utilises sound more than the other comedians as he receives

electrifying applause from the audience. I will analyse his performances only in this section because he uses sounds specifically to make meanings. Consider how he generates heat from the audience through sounds in the extract below.

Excerpt 20

(Loud noise mixed with music as Trevor Noah comes to the stage, bows, and waves to the audience)
Thank you very much, thank you very much, thank you very much. Helloooo, yeees, helooo, thank you; thank you. Thank you very much, good to see you, thank you. Thank you very much; thank you, welcome, welcome. This is just Washington D Ceee (*loud noise continues throughout*), yeeeeeees. You guys feeling good? Yah. It's good, it's good to be here with you, with you here too. And that is love, guys.... and that is love... I love that. I love this house. You people make so much fun. Yeah. We just, ... we just thrown language out of the window. I like that (*laughter*) the fact that we are evolving as human beings now. That's the thing that separates us from the apes. Wasn't it?: the fact that we chose speech, yah. Monkeys used to run around scream *han han han*. We were like, no... (*laughter*), English (*laughter*). But now we start to go back to that to embrace our roots. It's really been exciting, I'm happy, you're happy, whoo whoo whoo whoooooooooooooooooo (*laughter*) whoo whooo, whoo whooooo, whoo whooooo, whoooooooooooooooooo (*laughter*) whoo whooo, whoo whooooo (*making waist twisting movements*) haau, haauuu (*laughter*). That's one of my favourite sounds. It sounds like someone having so much fun there. It sounds like didn't planned ahead of time: haaa, haa, haauuu (*bends and holds his left side with right palm*). Too much fun! It's such a weird sound. I love it. You know what's crazy, that we all know what that sound means. You know, we don't agree on anything in this world: race, religion, politics..., but that sound, that whooooo, whooooo has united us all (*laughter*). You can make that sound anywhere. We can accept it as long as there is alcohol present (*laughter*). You can make that sound: whooooo, whooooooooo (*body dancing gesture*). [...] You know, black people can't whoo whoo whoo. Black people often do whoo whoo (*laughter*). But it's not instinctively a black sound of happiness. And I think it's because black people are uncomfortable with the whoo whoo (*laughter*). Deep down inside, there is a certain moment in whoo whoo when every black person stops enjoying it. It's just ... it's just a moment. When... and maybe this is just my personal experience but I think it sounds really similar to a police siren in just a moment (*laughter*).

Kress (2010) opines that sound is a resource for meaning making which could fashion everyday social lives; thus, Trevor Noah uses sound as part of semiotic affordances for comedy. He clusters different sounds for different meanings. The *yeees* and *helooo*, repeated 'thank you' and elongating *D Ceee* sounds endear him to members of the audience who just welcome him to stage with a loud noise. It has been argued in the literature that stand-up comedy is a genre of intimacy (Brodie, 2008), the excerpt above reveals Trevor Noah's comedic acumen to spontaneously connect with the audience which gets the show off to a vivacious start. By parodying *han han han* (monkey screaming sound), he distinguishes between human preference for language and *whoo* (siren sound) sound. His reiteration of *whoo* sound for long puts audience in suspense as he makes waist twisting movements, bends and holds his left side with right hand, and makes dancing demonstration. All these are modes that Trevor Noah utilises in the build-up of his joke about the police in the United States. Though the police are not there, through onomatopoeic sound of the police siren, the

audience will later grasp the logic of using the sound before them. As seen from the performance, the sounds get the audience to be enthusiastically invested in the performance though at first they can hardly decode what messages the sounds are portraying. He generates audience's receptiveness and his creativity sustains the audience's suspense of what the sounds encode until he links it to the 'police siren' and the threat the sound portrays to black people.

Expectedly, making comedy out of serious issues characterizes Trevor Noah's performances. As such he utilizes more sounds as modes to perfect the entwining of a storyline around terrorism in such a way that thrilled the audience. He remakes an experience (real or imaginary) which could have involved the blowing up of an airplane. The performance is presented in the excerpt and figure below.

Excerpt 21

I was on a flight, my first Middle Eastern flight, finally Emirates plane. And this man emerged from the galley, a long beard, he was carrying a box. And he just went up and like ...Allahu la ...ilah la... I now, I say haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa (making modulated high to low pitch frightening sound and gesture). Chicken, please (long loud laughter). Chicken, sorry I heh heh (laughter continues), I get really excited for chicken (laughter continues). I'm sorry for that.

One Passenger: "Sorry! My friend, excited? You look petrified".

Trevor Noah: I said: 'I am, of the flavour' (laughter continues). 'Chikeeeeeeeeeeen, waoh, I love chicken, I love chicken so much'.

One Passenger: "Ohhhhh, is that eh... is that a black thing?" (laughter).

Trevor Noah: I said: 'that's racist' (laughter continues).



Figure 193: Trevor's demonstration of being petrified

From the excerpt above, Trevor exploits the modes of exhibiting fear, a quiver long sound of *haa* with modulation, makes frightening gesture (Figure 23), and asking for chicken to recreate how he was scared to death on sighting a potential suicide bomber chanting the Muslim Adhan prayer call. His unstinting courage to brazenly alter his face to satirize extremism is humorously outstanding though he is communicating a different message to the audience. The modes are tactics that Trevor Noah utilises to remediate islamophobia but wittingly changes the course by showing the audience his liberalism and anti-islamophobia. Potentially, he could offend the Muslims in a performance that is in the direction of tagging them as terrorists but he tempers such expectation by using solid actions and high energy to pass his message across instead of generating resentment. Thus, by mitigating the effect of norm-breaking routines (Mesropova, 2003: 436), Trevor Noah utilises the above-mentioned modes to subtly pass his messages across to the audience. Indeed, this style of performance reduces the potential of violating Muslims' sensibilities because he rather propels ample burst of excitement in the audience throughout. Also, the enactment of a purported dialogue between a passenger and himself is semiotic affordance meant to fight racism. In the next section, the issue of using the body and tangible objects will be analysed.

5.5 Exploiting body and tangible objects as modes

The weaving together of gestures, postures, facial expressions, actions, voices, and physical props (Hengst, 2010: 112) feature in Ali Baba's stage drama performance where he performs together with Freeze. Ali Baba utilises a lady and her pair of shoes as modes for communicative and aesthetic purposes. When explaining the context of marginal humour, Gilbert (1997) stresses that "to treat someone comically is to deny subjectivity"; and in order to make someone the "target" or "butt" of a joke, it is necessary to make that person a thing, an object" (p. 256). The conversation and Figure 25 below capture the segment of the performance when Ali Baba makes fun of the lady's shoes and dancing skill.

Excerpt 22

Freeze: Who can do 'skelewu' here?

Ali Baba: Which one is skelewu?

Freeze: Eh, Ali Baba say: which one is skelewu? Ali baba, you're officially sixty (*laughter*).

Ali Baba: What is Skelewu? Is it one kind of food?

Freeze: You, you know what! I will enter inside the crowd, person go explain quickly now.

Ali Baba: No, no, no, because I know, look ... This people have started. This Yoruba people dem different names for this ...food. Madam, give me two skelewu and (*laughter*) one...

Freeze: Who knows what skelewu is? Who can show Ali Baba skelewu? (*noise from the audience*). Anybody in the house? Who? Ha haa, people dey protest from that side (*going down to the audience*) ehn, who?

Ali Baba: Come, come, hey leave those girls (*noise and laughter*) leave those girls.

Freeze: For how much? (*moving to a lady in the audience and talking to her*) come, can we all put our hands together for ...

Ali Baba: Hey, no, no...Freeze, Freeze, don't bring her just take her ...go and put it on her DV

Freeze: No, let her put on her DV

Ali Baba: So go and put it on her DV.

Freeze: Ali Baba, bobo you too dey worry o (*holding a lady from the audience and bringing her to the stage*)

Ali Baba: No now, you say stage things. Oh boy, craze dey worry you o (*noise laughter*)

Freeze: E get one girl wey moto jam as... (*climbing the stage with the lady*)

Ali Baba: Wait, wait, wait, wait...is she... (*talking to the lady*) Do you like drinking champagne? Are you the brand ambassador for MOEP ...OIL? (*noise laughter*)

Freeze: (*ignoring Ali Baba and talking to the lady on the stage*) Come, come, come...

Ali Baba: Chineke! All these shoes dem go get visa for America (*loud laughter*). In Jesus' name they must give you the visa (*camera shows the lady's shoes*).



Figure 204: Camera showing Ugo's pair of shoes

Freeze: Amen. Don't worry, she will come to your church to give testimony. (*music starts*) Alright, Ali Baba na be old school. This my sweet sister here, ehn, na new... generation, Instagram, Facebook ...

Ali Baba: Wait, that girl na ... inside...?

[...]

Freeze: Alright, alright, alright, alright, for one minute she's going to demonstrate skelewu. For all the olden days people that are here, for all the daddy's and mummy's... (*putting microphone in the lady's mouth*): What's your name?

Lady: Ugo

Freeze: Ugo? Ha haa! You're Ibo? (*Ugo nods in agreement*)

Here, Ali Baba and Freeze blend the mode of questions, reference to Yoruba people, Freeze going to the audience, bringing a lady to the stage and having dialogue with the lady. Also, Ali Baba interviews the lady, goes spiritual by praying for the lady's shoes to qualify her for American visa (Figure 24). We can see the dialogicality in the use of questions and statements corroborating Banda and Peck (2014) idea that there is flexibility of space and semiotic resources. Hence, we can see the using of a live band on stage, going into the audience, bringing someone to the stage, talking about shoes, involving in exchanges on the stage nodding as co-contributors to the performance. However, the purpose of the comedy performance which is to compare the old generation dancing to a new generation dancing called skelewu as Freeze hints. Also, the blending of English and Pidgin English effectively and using Igbo language exclamation 'Chineke' (God) enhance meaning in the performance. All these are modes as material affordances (Iedema, 2003) that the comedians exploit to enable the audience understand that modern music and dancing are recycled from the old music and dancing in Nigeria. When we consider the drama performance so far, the comedians corroborate Brodie's (2008) position in the sense that the audience takes part in the performance of stand-up comedy and also show reaction, it also validates Brodie (2008) belief that when the stand-up performer is using microphone, members of audience become part of the mediation of humour.

In another scene of the performance where Ali Baba impersonates Mrs Patience Jonathan, he makes use of water to convey a message to the audience. The performance is presented below:

Excerpt 23

Yaw: Would you take eh position as minister for women affairs?

Ali Baba: (*mimicking Patience Jonathan's idiolect*) Dem dey pay dem? (*laughter*) All of them wey be minister now, na voluntary work dem dey do (*applause and laughing*). Make una give me water drink. I'm thirsting.

Yaw: *Ah please water for her Excellency please, water (Seyi Law brings a sachet water and a cup, uses his teeth to cut the sachet open, the audience roar in laughter as he pours the water into the cup and gives it to Ali Baba who yells and complains).*

Ali Baba: Nigeria *(in a crying tone – audience respond with loud laughter)*. We never reach one year *(laughter)*, so no more bottled water, no glass cup. Na “Purewater” you carry come for me *(laughter)*. *(takes the cup of water and pours the water on the man who gives it to him)* If na your mama, you fit bring am come. Come on, go here, you are stupid, idiot, stupid *(laughter)*. Make una give me correct water, you carry *purewater* come *(laughter)*. If na another business wey Ali Baba and the wife wan do, we dey watch them *(laughter)*, useless idiot boy. Ali Baba is a criminal *(laughter)* and I’m telling General Muhammad Buhari, sorry President Muhammad Buhari you will probe Ali Baba and his wife *(laughter)*. If they are not thief, how can you do a show you’re selling table five five million? *(laughter)* If I hear here you buy a table for five million naira, your name will be out tomorrow *(laughter)*. You will tell me where you get the money from *(laughter)*.



Figure 215: Seyi Law tearing open purewater with his teeth



Figure 226: Ali Baba pouring water on Seyi Law

The above text and figures represent the use of water as semiotic resource to make meaning. Nigerians call the sachet water ‘pure water’ which is a packaged drinkable water of low quality (Figure 25) and it attests to the fact that Nigerians are not enjoying the best from their government. Thus, the modes of using crying tone, pouring the water on Seyi Law (Figure 26), and using uncivil expressions to accuse Ali Baba are all meant to create the impression that the Nigerian economic situation is worrisome because the standard of living of is deteriorating instead of improving. Furthermore, this performance is directed at exposing politicians and corrupt government in Nigeria. Contrary to Sturges’ (2010) observation of the absence of “commentary on parties, government and policy, and that cynically politics is beyond a joke” Ali Baba employs different modes to attack politicians. By putting Ali Baba up for probe in this performance, it also shows the effort that President Buhari is fighting corruption. Interestingly it could be argued that the comedians as political commentators use stand-up comedy as a strategy to fulminate against extant dysfunctional leadership in Nigeria.

Loyiso Gola utilises a drink (perhaps beer) and a cup on the stage as semiotic resources to make a different meaning. He lifts the cup to his mouth and drinks as if he is specifically imitating someone's drinking practice in particular. Loyiso Gola's characterization of someone else is presented in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 24

Cheers to those who drink stuff (*audience noise – he lifts a glass cup to his mouth*). Yeah, otherwise we all drinking would have messed up (*drinking amidst laughter*). Errrrrr, everyone is got that uncle. Where is that guy? He could be drinking Fanta (*grimace and drinking – laughter*) haa. Wooh wooh, what do you worry about? No, actually, actually ha ha ha ha ha ha (*laughing*). This, this is good shit, men (*dropping the cup*).



Figure 237: Loyiso Gola drinking (beer) from the cup

In excerpt 24 above, Loyiso Gola exploits the modes of lifting a glass cup to his mouth, drinking the content, making sound and facial expressions of satisfaction (Figure 27), grimacing, laughing, asking questions and responding, and dropping the cup for the purpose of connecting to the audience. At this point, with no clear narrative in force, his statements and questions are directed to no one in particular because it is just at the beginning of a performance. Hence, he needs to endear himself with the audience from the start by utilising these modes in the performance; however, he could be exposing a drinking habit common among people in general.

The last comedy content to be analysed in this chapter focuses on I have analysed above how Ali Baba and Freeze perform together to compare the old generation dancing to a new generation dancing called skelewu and the use of 'Ugo' in the dramatic performance. The excerpt below is a long excerpt to capture the modes involved in the discourse during the performance.

Excerpt 25

Ali Baba: By the way, all of you who are old school, you know that is all the dancings we did they're repeating abi?

Freeze: Nooo. Skelewu no be (*dancing demonstration*) ... now.

Ali Baba: Oh, you've not, you've not seen this one (*hard dancing moves*), you've not seen this one?

Freeze: Ali baba, you've not seen this one? (*demonstration*)

Ali Baba: Which one? That one na aerobic. Get out (*laughter*)

Freeze: Common ladies and gentlemen, the band, can I have silence for one minute...

Ali Baba: That....

Freeze: one ...minute

Ali Baba: Eh, they can dance with ...

Ugo: (*smiling and bending*)

Freeze: SkelewuAli baba, you wicked sha.

Ali Baba: She can't dance anything. This one dance 'Torito' (*loud laughter*)

Ugo: (*covering her face with hand and smiling – applause laughter continues*)

Freeze: Alright, alright...

Ali Baba: That's why ... call any of this ... Oya, Limpopo (*dancing*) ..rito, Limpopo, oya, oya. (*hand on ear as if phoning*) hello (*dancing*), ehn....

[...]

Freeze: Okay, sorry, yes, alright... (*turning to Ugo who had been standing and laughing all through*) show us skelewu.

Ugo: (*gesticulating as if confused and lost*)

Ali Baba: Oya, po po popo di popo; po po popo di popo (*acapella singing*)

Freeze: Hold on, hold on, hold on. ...BBM from this side of the crowd (*moving back into the crowd*).

Ali Baba: What? This one is skelewu.

Freeze: DJ, (*talking to the DJ*) una no open eyes? Una see DJ for there? DJ, DJ, DJ, save your job right now eh. If you no get skelewu, na me and you this night o. This place be like boxing ring.

[...]

Ali Baba: This one goes. Abi this one is gone (*laughter*). Goes na present continuous. This one dey making ah... This one is not in the market again. (*turning to the lady*) Are you available? (*laughter - Ugo was staring at him, but he turns away from her*) Oloju come and do (means someone with attractive look). Mo ni 'are you available?' (I asked are you available?) she say (*making approval nods - laughter*).

Ugo: (*Skelewu music starts and Ugo starts to dance*).

Ali Baba: Oya, oya (*Ugo continues to dance*)

Freeze: Ali, sorry sorry, I don't spot some contenders inside crowd (*Ugo continues to dance and the guitar band behind her*). Ladies and gentlemen....

Ali Baba: (*holds Ugo hands*) come, come, come (*taking her away from the stage*)

Freeze: Hey, Ali Baba,

Ali Baba: Em (*holding Ugo's hand and helps her climb down the stage steps; now talking to Freeze*) come, come, you're, you're, you're a liar. You say you are going to bring somebody to come and dance skelewu, this one is skinnywu (*laughter*). Le...



Figure 248: Ugo dancing and the band behind her

I present this long excerpt to show the modes that Ali Baba incorporates for the purpose of knowing the distinctiveness of the skelewu dance and recognise it. Both comedians engage Ugo in dialogue and she smiles, bends her head and covers her face with hand. Ali Baba sings, puts hand on his ear as if making phone call and dancing are meant to sustain the attention of the audience. Interestingly, the altercation between Freeze and Ali Baba continues, while Freeze turns to Ugo who has been standing and laughing at the comedians. We can see how semiotic modes interact in the performance as the performance continues to unfold. Also, the modes include Ugo's gesticulation of being confused and lost at what is going on between the comedians, Ali Baba's acapella singing, Freeze talking to the DJ while he moves back into the audience. With reference, to Iedema (2003), by reusing skelewu dance moves in a comedy show (Figure 29), the dance develops into a humour and at each step, the developments modify the original condition of the dance. Though Ali Baba feigns ignorance of the skelewu dance, Freeze demonstrates the dance but Ali Baba calls Freeze's dance aerobics and counters it with hard dancing moves. In this way, Ali Baba insinuates that the new dancing is a recycling of the old dancing and this is a process of what (Bolter and Grusin, 1996) calls taking a semiotic material and reusing it for a different purpose.

Furthermore, Ali Baba turns to Ugo and asks her question if she is available (perhaps for dating) but Ugo stares at him. At this point, Ali Baba turns away from her and addresses the audience mixing Yoruba and English languages to tease Ugo by calling her “Oloju come and do” (the one with attractive face) and nods to amplify that Ugo gives him her consent. The band starts Skelewu music and Ugo starts to dance and the band stare at her (Figure 29). Ali Baba is unsatisfied with Ugo’s dancing, he holds her hand and helps her climb down the stage. Here, these comedians utilize “immediate materials” of linguistics, material affordances (Iedema, 2003) of body and physical spaces to communicate while at the same time connect to the audience. I would argue therefore that the comedians use themselves, the ‘skelewu’ dance and ‘Ugo’ for the purpose of showing the generation gap in music and dancing in an atmosphere of humour. This representation of one medium in another is *remediation* – a defining characteristic of the new digital media (Bolter and Grusin 1996: 339) as Ali Baba and freeze demonstrate in this performance which rouses the audience to laugh.



5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed different range of multimodal semiotic resources by which language, gestures, body movements, sounds, etc. work together in concert for comedic importance. The semiotic resources are exploited by the stand-up comedians as a chain which is sequentially processed, and both meaning and humour culminate progressively as the performances unfold. The analysis shows different modes of communication as affordances, needs and interests that stand-up comedians use to communicate in different comedic contexts. The analysis of various modes in combination afforded me the opportunity to gain insight into how these comedians are interacting bodily with the impression of both movement and engaged interaction (Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey, 2006). In talk, we mobilize language as sounded speech, and we further ‘mean’ through gestures, posture, facial expression, and other embodied resources such as physical distance, stance, movement or stasis.

By netting in all these aspects of meaning making, the term multimodality aims to offer a way of talking about, for example, how gesture and talk co-occur (Iedema, 2003: 39). The

comedians negotiate with languages, sounds, objects, body movements, gestures, and many more when they decide to make people laugh and also keep them informed (Gilje, 2010). It is evident from a multimodal analysis perspective that in the performance of stand-up comedy “language is not big enough receptacle for all the semiotic stuffs we feel sure we could pour into it” (Kress, 2010: 15). Hence, this study corroborates that multimodality entails “going beyond linguistics into social semiotics and taking into account as many modalities of communication as we can systematically describe” (Martin and Rose, 2003: 255). In the next chapter, I shall analyse how the comedians change meanings from context to context.



CHAPTER SIX

Analysis of resemiotization: how the comedians shift meanings from context to context and from practice to practice

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to determine how comedians re-contextualize original materials they reuse to create humour by placing them into a comedic context in order to achieve communicative and aesthetic effects. Following Iedema's (2003) argument that a multimodal analysis should be complemented by a dynamic view on semiosis in time and space, I consider how the theory of resemiotization functions to underscore the material and historicized dimensions of representation; that is, how the comedians under study present events and treat them as truthful and supported by facts from history. In correlation with Iedema's (2003) argument, the comedians under study detached original statements, actions, gestures, and other semiotic resources from the social interaction that created them and reconfigured them for different meanings. The shift in meanings occurs due to the "distance gap between the original materials and the comic re-contextualization which adds more weight to the reality of the materials" (Iedema, 2003: 41). Thus, I analyse the data for how the comedians shift the meanings embedded in issues from serious contexts to communicate in a relaxed context for the purpose of keeping the audience informed through humour.

6.2 Comparing life happenings across cultures

In this section, we will look at how the comedians take life happenings from their original contexts and turn it into humour by placing it in a different time and spatial context, and how these comedians weave together multi-semiotic resources to achieve communicative and comedic effects. Comedians have almost never-ending sources of scorn for society's enigmas, because they either consciously or unconsciously demonstrate the ways in which semiotic choices interact in multimodal discourses (O'Halloran, 2008) to fulfil particular objectives – to entertain and inform. Interestingly, Gordon (2009) argues that we use humour as a way to relax and also communicate ideas because the humorous communication of an idea makes a lasting impression on the people than when articulated in the standard or normal

way. The first example I will be taking is the performance of Basket Mouth while performing in Houston in the United States. During the performance, he appeals to his background to compare how black parents discipline their children to that of white parents correcting their children. He narrates how as a child his father usually punished him whenever he was out of line. Basket Mouth says the following:

Excerpt 1

Basket Mouth Video 4 – (04:02)

The white people are so sadly they are not here. But I will just... they, they ... Do you know they don't beat their kids? They don't beat their kids. They negotiate with them. There is something they call 'Naughty Corner'. Alright, you mess up. Then go to the naughty corner and stand and think about what you did. And that is supposed to make the kid know what life ... what life is all about. No punishment, nothing. Mark, stop doing that Mark. Shut up dad, I hate you dad. Me dad, me, oh my God you know what you're talking ... you broke my heart (*joins the audience to laugh*). Ooh men! In my house in those days when we were younger, I think I was about ten years old. My dad will wake up in the morning 7am, dressed up for work and call all of us. Bright, Onjekwere, that's my name (*laughter*), my Ibo name. Onjekwere, Onyekachi, Emeka, Chioma, everybody come here, lie, stand here, stand straight. He will now go to his room, bring cane come outside, for no reason, early morning (*laughter*), carry cane (*flogging gesture*) *fwiii fwiii*, twelve, twelve strokes each (*laughter*). You say *ha ha* daddy what did you do? He will say shut up. You've not done anything but I know if I go out you will do something (*laughter*). So, this is a deposit (*laughter*). He dey invest cane for our lives (*laughter*). Like there was a time we're misbehaving, our neighbours was like... your daddy will beat you. No, he don beat us already (*laughter*).

In the above example, Basket Mouth draws his material from the context of moral of appropriate discipline. Basket Mouth stands on the stage, putting on a white hat and holding a cup of coffee in his left hand, and narrates about black and white parents' styles of correcting their children. After regretting that white people were not in the audience, he went ahead to describe the type of conversation that may transpire between a typical white parent and their children. It is expected that the audience would understand this joke because they possess what is referred to as "humour-specific knowledge" (Kuipers, 2009) without which the audience lacks the ability to decipher the joke (Friedman and Kuipers, 2013: 6). Basket Mouth convulses his body, adjusts his hat, looks down, and giggles while demonstrating how the white child protests to the father but he does these for a different expectation of laughter in the current mediated manner. Basket Mouth exaggerates through demonstration of lifting his hand up, bringing it down, giving the sound of flogging, and demonstrating the outrageous number of strokes his father usually gave him. By saying that white parents only advise their children to go to a 'naughty corner' and black parents will rather beat such a

child, he presents the white people's culture as liberal, explanative, understanding and enlightening, but pictures the black culture as patriarchal, overbearing and pre-emptive.

Basket Mouth is able to deliver his message by picturing an original context in which parents are trying to discipline their children for the purpose of preventing children from doing silly things. However, in the comedic context, the intended motive of standing in the naughty corner and how his father summoned him and his siblings to be beaten at no provocation have been altered. Though Basket Mouth presents this account as factual, because one would be tempted to believe he is telling the truth, the re-contextualization of parents' actions in both contexts are meant to hit the punchlines. The view that comedians create distortion achieved through exaggeration and stylization (Mintz, 1985: 79) applies to Trevor Noah's style of narrative here as well. As such, we see that the gestures, giggling, and demonstrations that accompany the performance are functioning to enable him to tilt the parents' and children's actions towards humour. Otherwise, neither the parents nor children would find such a situation funny in the real context. Though Basket Mouth conjures this narrative, there are elements of truth in it and the audience was not confused or disappointed because the joke delivers the laughter. Should we investigate his message empirically, it is possible to find that things are contrary to what he has fed his audience. Also, the space has changed because his father performed the action in Nigeria and he is narrating it in Houston before the audience. Hence, in consonance with Iedema's (2003) view, Basket Mouth has shifted the meaning from the correction of children to enlightening the audience about different cultural practices in society.

Trevor Noah expresses his strong rejection of class disparity and racism in both South Africa and in the United States by weaving humour around peculiar unfair incidents in both spaces. It is a fact that African Americans face racism, in its various manifestations and guises (Carpio, 2008: 4), and Trevor Noah highlights them in his performance. By the resemiotization of class and race issues, Trevor puts up fun, engaging points that are significant and he has the audience fully behind him as his performance creates great energy in the venue. While entertaining the audience in a performance in the United States, he says:

Excerpt 2

Trevor Noah Video 1 – (45:41)

And today in Gauteng, a man was shot in what was suspected to be gang-related violence. It's always gang-related violence. They never say anything else, maybe it just two guys, gang-related ... probably gang-related. Why do you say that? Why? Because you know in the area there is (*neck twisting movement*) hip hop (*laughter*). Well is gang-related because it doesn't matter who it is. It could be two kids, someone got shot. A three-year-old was shot today by a four-year-old in what is suspected to be gang-related violence. But they were kids here. Yeah, they were still very young (*laughter*). Wasn't it a mistake? No it's not a mistake. It's never a mistake. But if it's in a rich neighbourhood, the story changes because you will never hear them reporting the same thing about the Hamptons. And today in the Hamptons, a man was shot in what is suspected to be gang-related violence. The probable gang have been known to operate around this part (*laughter*). And this is... we never see this... In fact ...the more like you see the police commissioner going with ah, a lot of ...ah, ah... just we commence our investigation ...and we em...find out that em a firearm was discharged earlier today; and em ... the boy collect... em the weapon (*silence*) penetrating a victim and em preliminary investigation whether em whether it was misfire and em... I'm sorry to say ... Did someone shoot the gun? We, we're not, we're not ruling anything out right now; but em, what we are checking to see if there was a mechanism failure and em... What about the person? We, we don't think that this was intentional. We don't. So we're living in the world where you investigate the gun before you investigate a rich white man? Is that what you're saying? (*laughter*) No, no, no, that's not what we're saying. But I mean you must remember that the gun is black (*laughter*). But that's not the point (*loud long laugh*), the point is ah... (*he moves silently not talking – laughter continues*).

The excerpt above shows Trevor Noah frowning on the discriminate manner that crime reporting is being done in rich and poor neighbourhoods. In the original context it is reporting, but in the comedy context it is resemiotized for criticism and the expression of dissatisfaction. He weaves neck twisting, morose movement, and startling questions together with language to project “new realities” of class disparity and racism in a comedic context (Iedema, 2003). As Trevor Noah is telling the story, he shrugs his shoulders mildly, gesticulates and shakes his head mildly when saying ‘never a mistake’, and gestures to indicate a shift to rich neighbourhood/never say it in rich neighbourhood. Also, he talks softly with cautious ease to imitate the police commissioner’s response, pausing expressions with ‘em’, stands without moving, moves head in an inquisitive gesture (I’m sorry, someone shot the gun), gestures to indicate confusion (we are not...), another inquisitive gesture (what about the person), moves gently (not ruling out if it’s intentional), uses rhetorical questions and moves back on stage with no utterance. He embodies and re-enacts this saga utilising the blending of these semiotics together, to “enhance and enrich each other” (Iedema, 2000b: 193) as he discursively reproduces the encounter before the audience.

In addition, Trevor Noah addresses this significant issue by playing one-man acting before the audience and designs the narrative with paradoxical expressions and questions. Thus, he implies that a white policeman will stress that because there is hip hop in a poor area, violence will be assumed to be gang-related. Also, a white policeman will say a firearm was discharged penetrating a victim and they are checking to see if there was a mechanism failure because they do not think that it was intentional for someone in a rich neighbourhood to shoot another person in the same neighbourhood. Trevor is critiquing ideological issues in our contemporary society though he achieves humour by weaving together movements, gestures, mannerisms, demonstrations, and voice modulation to arouse the audience.

Furthermore, Trevor Noah uses the question: “Are you going to investigate the gun before you investigate a rich white man?” and the possible reply of the policeman: “You must remember that the gun is black” to augment other semiotic resources employed and establish that there is prejudice against black people in our contemporary society. This is a real issue in the world and Trevor presented the facts in this performance. Such realities include how violence in poor communities is stereotyped ‘gang-related’ irrespective of those involved, but murder incidents in a rich neighbourhood will be labelled an ‘isolated incident’. However, humour comes by using some anecdotes, movement and questions (Stebbins, 1990)) as Trevor Noah alters the meaning of the original situation of tension to a humorous performance. The original incident concerns the probable genuine manner in which police officers respond to violence in two different environments, but Trevor Noah reconstructs such reports ludicrously to sensitise his audience in an atmosphere of laughter. Interestingly, “the subject which the shifts portray or does” (Iedema, 2000b: 191) is showing the folly of white people for being mean to black people.

Basket Mouth compares the British Broadcasting Corporation’s live reporting of news and the Nigerian National Television Authority (NTA). He keeps diving at the audience, demonstrating and grimacing as he puts the two contexts side by side in the joke. Consider how he teases the NTA mode of reporting events in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3

Newscaster Christiane Amanpour, I don't know if you guys no am. Yeah, she, she, she covers the war. She covers every war. She's like a veteran, a war veteran without shooting any gun (*laughter*). She's a war veteran. She goes to the war front and she reports from there. Oh my, we're here and in back, oh my God. You can't believe what's happening right now. They're soldiers, they're doing this and that, *eh...puum*. Bomb dey blow *puum*. She still dey there. CNN they cover..., BBC they cover anything. NTA (Nigerian Television Authority)... (*laughter*). Have you ever seen any reporter for NTA covering even riot? (*laughter*). Never! (*laughter*) The best they can do..., maybe they are fighting one small riot around *eh...VI* (Victoria Island). Let's start... let's say VI. You see the reporter. Em, alright, the guy no go dey... maybe they are fighting around Ozumba Mbadiwe. The guy go dey at Ahmadu Bello near bar beach (*laughter continues*). Alright, my name is Usman *eh* Mohammed, and *eh, em...* I'm reporting live for NTA (*laughter continues*). If you walk straight down this road (*laughter continues*), and turn right, that is where they are fighting the riot (*laughter*). So please don't pass that road (*laughter*). Let's just wait here, a witness will pass eventually. You see somebody just running (*running demonstration*). They say come, come, come, what's happening over there? People are dying. As you can hear, people are dying (*laughter*). He no send now.

The above storyline is another smart comparison explored by Basket Mouth and here in his performance, he shifts the purpose of news reporting, which is to inform, to entertainment and ridicule. In fact, one needs to be watching both BBC and NTA to ascertain the veracity of this narrative considering the manner he satirises the media practice of the NTA through sarcasm in this performance. Still with his cup of coffee on his left hand, he makes a '*poom*' sound to imitate a bomb blast, he runs on the stage, and extending the left hand gesturally for vivid descriptions of how the CNN and NTA reporters operate. These modes enable him to alter the intended meaning of live reporting of war or crises and shift the focus from news to subjective evaluation of the reporters before his audience.

Furthermore, in the resemiotization process, he utilises body movements, demonstrates running and gesturing in different directions while eulogizing the CNN and mocking the NTA. By using these semiosis to narrate how Christiane Amanpour (of CNN) differs from Usman Mohammed (of NTA), Basket Mouth achieves licence of comedic effect which can be clarified using scholars' notion that all these "form part of a repertoire of mediation that involves strong elements of ridicule" (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 33). In essence, the point in this joke is that the BBC or CNN have skilled reporters whose reports are authentic and reliable. On the other hand, by impishly putting down the NTA as unskilled, lily-livered, and ancillary news reporting, Basket Mouth had the crowd energized and engaged in laughter. Criticising a joke is unrealistic, as Freud considers jokes "as escape from criticism to a prior happiness" (Limon, 2000: 12); Basket Mouth's narrative here is a fluke,

however, unless we keep watching the BBC and NTA and notice these trends from the two media outfits, we cannot rely on his narrative as a proper representation of both media. Hence, in the process of resemiotization, the joke repositions the BBC reporter as brave, while the NTA reporters as a coward. Basket Mouth utilises different semiotic choices to reconstruct the original mode of journalistic practices to create new realities of positive and negative evaluations of news reporters. These new meanings validate the argument that the shift in meaning happens because of the detachment of the original material from the actual condition that created it; other things have been joined to the original material in a new reconstruction context to make it more appealing and suitable to the present use (Iedema, 2003).

6.3 Reconstructing issues of global concern

Our contemporary global village is bedevilled by myriads of uncertainties including insecurity, terrorism, poverty, disease, wars, natural disasters, and the like (Afolayan, 2013; Lowe, 2007) and these are among the issues that provide materials for stand-up comedians to acquaint their audiences with global challenges. In this regard, Trevor Noah tells a make-believe joke about terrorism by presenting a scary flight experience in which a suicide bomber was trying to bring down an airplane. He puts the story in the following manner:

Excerpt 4

Just... just a little thing that makes me think there is a chance someone understands the language. They may be able to talk the guy down. There could be ...there could be a terrorist on the plane, the guy with a suicide vest, flying 40,000 feet in the sky, the man jumps up losing his head, and is Allah al chukalwachulkau ...allahu akbaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrr. And just maybe, maybe some guys would be opposite him like: 'hey, what are you doing?' (*laughter*) I am going to blow up this plane to show everybody that Allah is graaaaaaaaaaaeeeet. Yes, but eh, we know this (*laughter*). Everybody here knows this. So, what are you doing? I wanted to show all of you the power of... what are you showing us that we don't know ah (*laughter continues*). What are you showing us? Are you saying look, look we are not good Muslims? Is that what you are saying ah? Are you showing us we don't know the power of Allah? Is that what you are saying? You are saying we are bad Muslims. What are you saying? No my friend, please I was not trying to offend you. I was just trying to kill you (*laughter continues*). Listen to what I want to...I wanted to show you. What are you showing me, ah? Are you saying I didn't pray, is that what you're saying? You're better Muslim than me? You think I'm not good Muslim just because I'm watching (*laughter continues*), is that what you think? (*laughter*) what are you saying? I'm not saying, I wanted to ...What are you showing us? You show nothing, you are making us looking bad. Why don't you preach? Why don't you talk to people, *eh?* This is not Islam. What are you doing with your stupid vest? Ba, ba, ba, (*laughter*). You make us all look bad (*laughter*). No, no, I was not trying to.... No, no, you will not try nothing (*laughter*). Put your vest back, because you don't even know what you're doing here (*laughter*). So, this is my first time, I never

done this before. Yeah, yeah, story, story, sit down; shut up; eat something. I don't know if I can eat...yah, you can eat it. Don't worry you can eat it, all of that, yeah, yala, yala, yala, yala, yala, stupid (*laughter continues*).

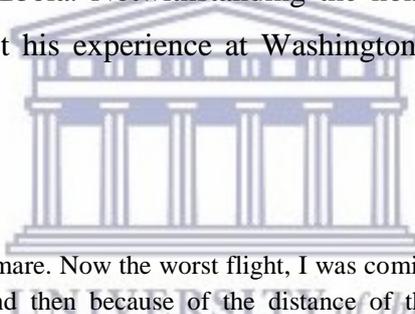
Trevor is handling a delicate issue here and he directs the audience's attention to avoid violating the sensibilities of Muslims by delivering the joke in an incongruous comic dramatic style. By playing two characters, he dramatises how someone can potentially persuade a suicide bomber from blowing up a plane. During his performance, resemiotization happens through the use of– gestures, closing his eyes while shouting *Allahu akbar*, looking up and moving on stage to positions A and B, and asking and answering questions by himself. Also, he moves to position A after lifting one hand over his head while saying 'hey', then moves to position B when saying "I'm going to blow....", and returns to position A. Furthermore, he gazes for some seconds, turns his head left and right, makes an allusion to watching a cartoon, moves to position B, looks up again, closes his eyes, and returns to position A. He places his hand on his waist indicating where the suicide belt is fastened, closes his eyes, says *yala, yala*, and scratches his head while saying stupid things.

All the above multimodal resources enable Trevor Noah to talk about this sensitive issue in a comic way and should not be taken serious. This style "puts the audience at ease and makes his dialogic performance event feel like colloquial, quotidian talk" (Seizer, 2011: 230). Indeed, Trevor astutely presents this joke with good cause away from Islamophobia. He professionally tilts what could have been a religious inciting story towards the humorous and said the things he could not have said otherwise. He builds this story portraying the moderate rational Muslim taking on the extremist irrational, one who is purporting to bring down an airplane. Ordinarily, this incident cannot be humorous, but Trevor achieves humour by interspersing the narrative with silly sounds, questions that defuse the extremist's belligerence, and absurd instructions given to the extremist. Thus, Trevor mitigates the effect of religious backlash through this employment of multimodal resources to align his statements with Islam and using colloquial words (Mesropova, 2003: 436; Greenbaum, 1999). The truth in this joke is that the world grapples with the menace of Islamic extremism, and Trevor conciliates this Islamic joke by projecting opposing attitudes of two potential Muslim characters. Extremism is a known global problem and the picture of hijacked airplanes being flown into the World Trade Centre of the 9/11 terrorist attack in America

cannot be erased from the memories of people. However, in Trevor's performance, he makes the point that a terrorist could be pacified, disoriented or prevented from carrying out a suicide mission. Thus, the shift in context and other communicative modes involved in telling the narrative (Iedema, 2003) lend humour to the narrative; otherwise, the act of terrorism is not funny.

Moreover, Trevor takes a jab at the United States for the unkind treatment they gave to Africans at their airports during the Ebola crisis. Ebola is a terminal disease that took thousands of lives within a few days in some parts of West Africa in 2014 (Mack, Snair and Mundaca-Shah, 2016). Even in the present time, the fear of Ebola is still in existence and each country is fighting hard to curb the outbreak and spread of the disease. As such, there are measures in place at airports all over the world to detect if any passenger entering a country shows symptoms of Ebola. Notwithstanding the non-comical side of this disease, Trevor Noah could joke about his experience at Washington Airport in the United States. Consider the excerpt below:

Excerpt 5



Ebola makes flying a nightmare. Now the worst flight, I was coming from Johannesburg, South Africa to San Francisco, flew; and then because of the distance of the flight you have to stop over in Washington and they change your flight, and another flight takes you San Francisco. And when we were changing planes, we were switching over. The air hostess in the second plane tells the passengers that Africans were coming on board (*audience make – ooh sound*). And so because of this, they are going to be spraying the cabin with a light pesticide. I don't understand that when people are afraid they do stupid things. I get it (*laughter*). But what I didn't understand was why she told them this as we were boarding the plane (*laughter*). Have the decency to speak behind our backs! (*laughter*) because we're walking unto the aircraft, and she takes a little microphone, she just: "Ladies and gentlemen, please we have some passengers joining us in South African flight. They are coming from Africa. Everybody please stay in your seat as these passengers find a place. We are going to be spraying the plane with a light pesticide due to the Ebola crisis. And eh feel free to cover your nose, eyes, ears and mouth. The pesticide shouldn't be harmful but maybe. So, everybody should just cover up and we will be coming down shortly as everybody takes their place. Thank you very much" (*with female sonorous voice*). She says this as we board the plane. This is how...should: Ebola crisis, hello, hello, (*laughter*), hello, hello, hello, hello, etc (*laughter continues*). Do you know how hard it is to find a seat in the plane when people are thinking you're bringing them death? (*laughter*).

Trevor Noah imitates a sonorous female voice, keeps repeating *hello* perhaps expressing disappointment, gestures for description, demonstrates by putting his hand to his ear like a phone, holding mic with both hands, making salute sign in a silly way, and using candid rhetorical questions. The issue Trevor mentions above could in no way be a joke because

Ebola shook the whole world when it was killing people in Africa, especially in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The contagiousness of the disease causes fear whenever it is mentioned and people have been advised not to get close to anyone having the symptoms of the disease. It was so serious that casual body contact was discouraged, whether it was handshakes or hugging.

For Trevor to construct this joke based on Ebola lends credence to whatever authenticity he injected into the joke, though it was meant for laughter purposes. This storyline exposes the treatment meted out to Africans. Only African passengers were mentioned as the reason for spraying light pesticide inside the plane. Already, the purpose is biased against the African people and Trevor touches this issue with seriousness because we can feel Trevor's tone of disappointment in the narrative. In fact, he berates the female air hostess by mimicking her voice and also expressing how disheartening it is to be such a passenger who is targeted. I would argue that Trevor Noah points out the politics that the world played on Africans during the outbreak of Ebola and how the disease has "casually perpetuate[d] stereotypes, and cunningly evoke[d] deep-seated prejudices" (Santa Ana, 2009).

From the timbre of Trevor Noah's voice, he achieves this humorous effect by parroting the female air hostess's voice but the message in the voice depicts a stereotype of Africans as conveyors of the Ebola disease, but the audience laughed as he mimicked the unexpected voice. The use of a different voice from the comedian's voice as Mesropova (2003: 437) points out "emphatically dissociates comedians from their character, and helps them to hide behind the mask of a different persona". Thus, following the idea of Iedema (2003), Trevor Noah utilises different semiotic resources to communicate his message to the audience and the semiotic resources help him to shift the meaning from an airport routine situation to humour.

Unfortunately, our contemporary global village is enmeshed with incorrigible and audacious criminals. Crime is abhorred in any society, but the comedians in this study tackle crime in their performances (South Africa's new comedians find a nation eager for laughs, 2013). The frightening crime rate in the world cannot be material for humour, but Loyiso Gola uses

murder as the butt of one of the jokes he performed before a white audience. In his performance, he presents murder as something to be accepted in the society and the audience continue to laugh with him. Consider how he comically meanders through the gravity of the crime of murder in his joke below.

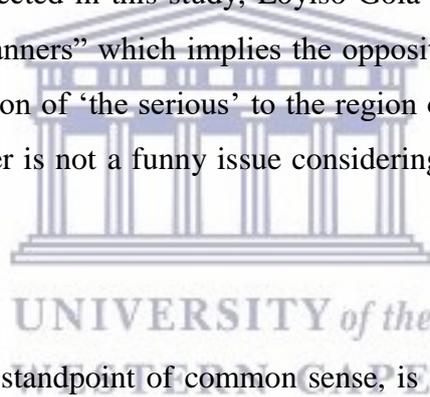
Excerpt 6

But the one thing that scares me about America is that you guys like to shoot each other; like in cafeterias, high schools, all that shit. That shit is scary for me; like you do. And then I did a research, and it's mostly these white people who shoot people. Not to say that black people don't shoot people. They don't shoot everybody (*demonstration, audience laughter*). Black people will come in here with the most of 'sorry guys, I can see there is comedy here ..., I just want to shoot Hardy. He owes me money (*laughter*), he shot my grand (*laughter*). He walks very polite, sorry guys I'm not trying to fuck with my gun I mean here and he will shoot Hardy *puu puu*. Sorry men, I mean no blood and stuff like that. You understand what I'm saying, and then he will just casually leave. White people will come in and shoot everyone. What a fuck. I'm not... listen, I'm not against murder per se, I'm just saying please shoot the person you came for (*laughter*) you know. I mean white people just observe that decorum please (*laughter*). Like even George Bush when he was looking for Osama Bin Laden, he blew up the whole Afghanistan, went to Pakistan blew that shit up again. Then came the black president Barak Obama. Barak Obama knew Osama Bin Laden was in that house. Did he blew up the whole house? No (*laughter*). He went inside, where is the monster call... sorry. Guys excuse me, is Osama here? Yes (*laughter*). Shoot Osama in the face and then left (*laughter*). Don't shoot everyone. We are, black people have manners, we don't fucking shoot the whole place (*laughter applause*). I'm not saying don't murder people. I'm just saying observe the protocol (*laughter*).

From the above, Loyiso Gola depicts murder as an inconsequential thing to be used as a material for humour. To achieve this, he puts both hands on his waist, gestures for illustrations, holds the microphone with both hands, shapes two fingers to indicate the shooting gun, makes *poom poom* sound to imitate gunshots, gestures to indicate Pakistan is a far distance, places his hand vertically on his face and bringing it down when saying 'Obama went down', uses the colloquial exclamation 'yoh', bends and places his hand on his chest when saying 'is Osama here?', then brings both hands together to indicate 'protocol'. By placing murder in the context of a joke, Loyiso Gola infuses the words 'fuck', 'fucking', 'shit', to enwrap the audience and keep them inside the humour. He is not expressing annoyance, disgust, contempt or impatience associated with the words; rather, as Seizer (2010) argues, the words are "non-denotational swear words helps create a mutually

enjoyable, intimate experience for audiences”. Furthermore, the informal comedy setting helps Loyiso Gola to use the words ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ being registers that the audience are familiar with considering the “venues of the comedy performance where looser-than-usual social behaviour, linguistic expressivity are permissible for such marked language and behaviour” (Seizer, 2010: 211).

In the light of Iedema’s (2003) argument, Loyiso Gola detached murder from the real situation that created it, and involved all the semiotic resources above in his performance before the audience. Also, he exaggerates by saying that ‘Americans like to shoot each other’, ‘George Bush blew up the whole of Afghanistan and Pakistan’, and Barak Obama ‘shot Osama in the face and then left’. However, in consonance with Iedema’s (2003) exposition of resemiotization, Loyiso Gola presents these issues as historical truth in the context of his comedy performance. As expected in this study, Loyiso Gola insults the white audience by saying “black people have manners” which implies the opposite for the white people. Thus, he takes murder from the region of ‘the serious’ to the region of ‘the ridiculous’ to generate the humour; otherwise, murder is not a funny issue considering the elated way the audience responded with laughter.



The sport of rugby, from the standpoint of common sense, is a rugged sport. One can only wonder how someone will allow himself to be kicked, smacked, punched, tackled, bleated, and beaten and still enjoy every bit of it. The Springboks is the South African national rugby team and Trevor Noah takes a jab at the sport. He embellishes the reaction of angry Springbok fans and also ridicules rugby players in the following manner:

Excerpt 7

Anyway people come out of sports ah let’s just hope that your team has won, just too much pressure on you, you know. Last week, the Springboks lost. People came to the show, they were grumpy just like a rural Afrikaans guy. The whole time they were just looking like at me like ... (*grimacing and the audience erupt into laughter*) just like I was the ref (*grimace and laughter continue*). They were sitting there in the Springboks court, all of them. I mean it could have been the team, I don’t know really know (*laughter*). I don’t know exactly what they look like. I mean like you guys, it could have been them, super angry, Afrikaans people angry with the Springboks groups hey...like it is. They’ve robbed us, stupid ref it is (*laughter*) then the guy is giving us yellow card like Christmas ... men (*laughter*). Who gets yellow card for Christmas? That’s not the point. Shut up, you know what I mean (*laughter*). What a horrible Christmas that will be. Merry Christmas, yellow card, ten minutes going, going

(*laughter*). I'm not surprised when, when the guys get angry, you know especially Afrikaans get angry, because rugby itself is a very angry sport just like you know. I, I always get ...tackle each other ...busy punching, punching and fighting, you know. It's weird for me when the referee stops the fight. That's the weirdest thing. They just stop: hey guys, common, we don't need that ... in the sport, common. Then start again *pupupupu* (*blowing air into the microphone as he demonstrates struggling on the stage – laughter*). That's better (*laughter*). People watch...what a feeling bruised...one guy came back on with a bandage. Why would you come back? You're bleeding, just sit, just sit ple... Like blood is ...your body is telling you stop. That is your body saying and you come back. What do you doing? What ...just sit down (*laughter*), and relax (*laughter*). No I want to play rugby. You're not playing rugby, you're suffering rugby (*laughter*). That's what they should say. I suffered rugby yesterday (*laughter*). Such a rough sport! And then you the ministers that are like, we demand a quota system (*laughter*). We want more black players in the national rugby team. And black people are like, maybe you baba (*laughter*).

In the performance, Trevor Noah parodies committed and very angry rugby fans in the original context. He presents the fans as being so angry that when they were greeted 'Merry Christmas', they responded by saying, "yellow card, one, two, three, going, going". Trevor resemiotized the effect of the referee's action on the Christmas celebration of the disappointed fans and thereby tilts what is hurting them to a laughing matter in the real sense of it. As Trevor resemiotized the event in strands, the audience enjoyed every bit of the material used for laughter. On the rugby joke, every rugby player must have gone through rigorous practice to keep him in shape and fit for every encounter. In contrast, Trevor considers this game as a weird and an angry sport. He lampoons rugby players as rough and could not see reason for the agitation of black people for more representation in such a sport that only makes the players suffer. All these elements of reprimanding angry football fans and rugged rugby players are the matter for laughter in the performance. As Trevor reconstructs these scenarios, the angry fans and rugby players become objects of laughter for a vivaciously excited audience. In the process of resemiotization, perhaps what Trevor mentions here could be real, but the meanings have shifted in the context in which he is presenting them before the audience (Iedema, 2003).

6.4 Reconstructions of personalities' deeds

In a society that honours celebrity, those individuals who live life on the public stage are also fair game for comedians' derision. In Santa Ana's (2009) view, laughing at powerful or celebrated individuals diminishes them and makes the average viewer feel better about himself or herself. As such, Loyiso Gola adds his voice to comments made about the incident

of Oscar Pistorius who shot his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, dead on Valentine's Day in 2013. This unfortunate incident made headline news all over the world as Oscar was subsequently charged with murder. In performing before an American audience, Loyiso Gola says the following:

Excerpt 8

So, where, where do I start? Oscar Pistorius! That guy is crazy, men. Oscar Pistorius is the maddest ever. Do you know why? He shot his girlfriend in the face on Valentine's Day. Guy, you don't understand. On Valentine's Day, he shot his girlfriend. Guys, just like shooting Santa Claus on Christmas (*laughter*). No respect! (*laughter*): I mean valentine is one day when we specifically ask you don't shoot (*right forefinger on face*) your girlfriend in the face (*laughter*). I remember one that particular valentine I forgot to give my girlfriend flower but she was so happy to be alive shame (*laughter*). Sham she forgot everything... hay uyandi thanda akanadibulalanga [he loves me so much he didn't kill me] (*laughter*), ha ha ha ha ha ha (*laughing himself*), he he he he he he (*laughing*). Crazy! But eh listen, I know we are supposed to be the rainbow nation of Nelson Mandela. But as black people we're so happy there were no black people involved in the whole Oscar Pistorius thing, jo (*laughter*); till tomorrow black people are going to church to pray to Jesus and saying thank you for saving us on this particular one, thank you (*laughter*). No black people involved, the only black person involved was the judge and she was judging fuck up (*laughter*). You know she was looking at people, oh okay white person, you kill another white person. Oh okay, oh ... ha ha ha (*laughter*). That was crazy. Even Oscar Pistorius' father, he would have tried before the trial started. He was hey, the ANC does not protect white people and the black people were like: where are we involved now? (*opening both hands, mild laughter*). How are we involved? (*laughter*) ha ha ha ha, he he he he he. That's crazy.

Three issues are resemiotized in the above excerpt. The first one is the statement "*I mean valentine is one day when we specifically ask you don't shoot your girlfriend in the face*". As he says this, he places his right forefinger in his face, uses Nguni phonetic by pronouncing face /feis/ as / /feɪ:si/, he makes sarcastic giggles, moves right and left as he makes allusion to Santa Claus and switches to speaking Xhosa language. This style helps him to detach the mournful condition associated with murder and turns murder into humour before the audience. However, in a true sense, we are bound to wonder who makes the warning, whether it is universal, and whether it is binding on all men not to shoot their girlfriends on Valentine's Day. After applauding Nelson Mandela's idea of a 'rainbow nation, another issue that Loyiso Gola raised concerns his statement that *black people are so happy they are no*

involved in the Oscar Pistorius thing. And that till tomorrow black people are going to church to thank Jesus about that. In reality, Loyiso Gola's statement here needs to be verified to ascertain if the black people in South Africa truly reacted in the manner he enunciated in his performance. Thus, as Santa Ana (2009:27) described about the comedian 'Leno', Loyiso Gola "deliberately lies, but his audience does not consider him a liar".

The third issue Loyiso Gola attacks concerns the black judge in charge of Oscar Pistorius' case. He says that the only black person involved is the judge in hearing the case; however, he implies that the black judge is in agreement with a white person killing another white person. A court proceeding involving a case of murder is serious, disheartening and far from hilarious. It is the shift from the context of court proceedings to using gestures, Nguni phonetic, sarcastic giggles, movement on stage, weaving like Santa Claus, and Nelson Mandela, switching to Xhosa language, and giving a ridiculous salute to achieve resemiotization that earn the reaction of laughter during the performance. Otherwise, as Loyiso Gola presents Oscar Pistorius as a fool and the judge as an unprofessional and unpatriotic public official, he is reinforcing racism in his joke. In fact, he embellishes his performance with exaggeration, giggles, mannerisms, rhetorical questions which he answers himself, but presents the black people as racists. Thus, the deployment of these modes to shift the meaning of the original incident (Iedema, 2003) helped him to achieve humour which the performance was meant for; otherwise, murder is not funny.

With the spate of demonstrations against fatal police shooting of black people in different parts of the United States, Trevor Noah uses the comedy platform to present his encounter with the police in Los Angeles. He tells how black people who drive expensive cars may be harassed. His narrative reveals the existence of race and a divided nation, as presented below:

Excerpt 9

White people have a very different relationship with the police. I was trying to explain this to my friend, Dave. You know, when we were hanging out. It's like dude, what is it with black people please? I was like no, it's not that black people don't like the police or hate the police; it's just that, it's just that we have too much history with the police. One day we were driving, we were driving on the highway and the police car pulled up behind us. And I got tense, because I got really tense. He is like dude what's going on? I said they're ... police, police are behind us. He was like *ah, ehn*, did you do

anything wrong? I said, that's not the point (*laughter*), because it really isn't. For white people, that is the point. The police will send you to jail if you do something wrong. As a black person, you have a different relationship. The police may send you to jail just because... I know this because I was driving... I was pulled over by the police for the first time in my life in America. [...] And this guy he approaches slowly, he approaches slowly. He finally gets to me ...my arm and just get back in the car, get back in the car. He stashed me back by window (*demonstration*). Get back. No, no, no please sir, please I don't want to die (*mimicking a moronic voice*). He was like sir, sir come down, come down. Okay (*mimicking sobbing*) is eh, sorry sir, sorry. Sir, have you been drinking? I said no sir. I haven't been drinking. He said okay come down. Do you know why I pulled you over sir? I said, because I'm black? (*laughter*) Now I wasn't given an ass. No one was joking. I've just been informed that as a black person in America if you drive a nice car, there is a good chance you are going to be pulled over by the police, yah. So, in my world he was doing his job as I've been told (*laughter*). Yeah, I wasn't judging him. In fact I was a little flattered. He was more freaked up because I ... him. I said is because I'm black.

From the above, Trevor Noah tells of the different relationships the police have with the white people and the black people in the United States. Trevor Noah addresses a pertinent issue in this joke based on the knowledge he has of how the police handle black people driving expensive cars in the United States. As he recounts the experience of how the police pulled him over, gestures accompany his talk: he turns his head here and there, moves as he describes the event, demonstrates how he was stashed back into the car, makes a moronic voice, and sobs. These semiotic resources serve as “mitigating tactics of exaggeration, fantasy, and the placement of risky humour in longer bouts of a humorous key” (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006: 69), which Trevor explores to express his opinion about the unfriendliness of the police to black people in general. This joke has the potential to view the police as hostile to black people and motivate any black person to interact with the American police with that conception. Here, Trevor Noah performs before an African American audience and this joke could corroborate the view that “African American humour, like other humour that arises from oppression, has provided a balm, a release of anger and aggression, a way of coping with the painful consequences of racism” (Carpio, 2008: 5). Since we do not know how this encounter transpired, Trevor presents this as a real event, but the manner in which he narrates the story here, with embellishments and a childish accent, ornaments the real event and changes the meaning of the encounter. The encounter with the police is basically to stop him for interrogation, but he reworks the whole scenario into something laughable before the audience. Trevor Noah's stellar performance here could be viewed, in view of

Carpico's (2008) comment, that this joke could strengthen black people to affirm their humanity in the face of its violent denial.

Comedians' proclivity to distort the "truths" of everyday life before the audience for humour is a rare gift (Garner 2004). In view of this, Loyiso Gola builds up a story around people performing entertainment in the public for voluntary donations, but expertly adjusts the narrative to taunt the president of South Africa as being incompetent for the office of the president. From his creative standpoint, Loyiso's productive non-linear storylines enable him to blend fragments of stories to catapult his punchline forward and remain factual. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 10

(Smiles) You know, I was, I was in the UK and then the crazy thing like, like in the UK you know the people who busk in the tube? Who's ever been in the tube here, in the underground? That thing is like ten stories underground, ten stories! And then under there, there're buskers like a station, is the whole underworld underneath. But underneath there, people will busk they busk ...pa pa pa pa playing trumpet or whatever. Then I found out this people have to audition to be street performers (*laughter*), audition *jo* you have tough ...every man can audition amongst like a thousand people and then the best, when you see that guy, he went through some shit to be there *jo* (*laughter*). He's the best, he's the best at that level (*laughter*), no really don't. You guys laugh because we in South Africa don't even audition the president *jo* (*laughter*). Like what are you doing for the next four years? Yah, swagger (*giving dismissive gesture*) (*laughter*). Imagine auditioning Jacob Zuma. Okay, first thing first: matriik (*long pronunciation, standing still with open teeth – laughter – he giggles and moves his eyes with an attitude and then follows it with an 'I have no idea' gesture*). Okay, okay, okay let's be lenient. We are being lenient. Let's keep matric. Can you read a speech without giggling (*laughter*)? Already failing, failing, hi hi hi hi ha (*laughing himself*). Okay, okay, okay, okay you don't have to read speeches (*laughter*). Have you ever faced any criminal charges? Heeee (*shouting*) seven hundred and eighty three [783] (*laughter*) crime, 783 is heavy charges. You know you have to break the law e everyday for a ... for two years (*laughter*). Just waling around the street just smacking people paa (*demonstration- laughter*). Hardy boy, bendifuna assault, assault yashota lana, kwi wrap sheet yam iyashota, ayikho. [Translation: *Hardy boy, I wanted assault, assault is not enough here, in my wrap sheet it is not enough, it's not there*]. So I just wanted to add assault he hehehehehe (*laughter*). haa, the president heeee, because I don't think Jacob Zuma knows that he is the president. He thinks he's the president of something but not...(laughter). I don't think he's sure guti know this is the real...is a country (*laughter*). He thinks maybe it's something, njanyana [puppy] (*laughter*) ha hahahahaha (*laughter*).

In the excerpt above, Loyiso Gola starts with a smile, makes a trumpet sound, demonstrates beating a drum, gestures for description as he adds comedic depth into the performance. Apparently, his description of people busking by playing a trumpet or whatever and the idea that people have to audition to qualify as buskers are true. However, he uses these semiotic resources in a way that scholars refer to as anecdotes to initiate the flow of humour as he ridicules the South African president (Parkin, 2010; Reid, Stoughton and Smith, 2006; Stebbins, 1990). Moreover, he chortles, engages his mannerisms, raises his head, stretches his right hand to one side, grimaces, and gestures as he dresses down President Jacob Zuma, describing him as unqualified to be president, incapable of giving a speech without giggling, and someone facing 783 criminal charges. He uses facial expressions to show annoying disappointment, switches his language to Xhosa and uses Bantu phonology to pronounce the English words ‘matric’ as [metrɪkɪ], and ‘assault’ as [ə'sɔ:ltɪ], sarcastically giggles to say ‘already failing’, and demonstrates punching to enliven his performance. Placing this joke in the light of scholars’ contributions to the essence of stand-up comedy that comedians treat people with disrespect to the audience laugh and enjoy themselves (Mintz, 1985: 79), Loyiso Gola directs this political joke toward President Jacob Zuma in what scholars believe is the personal foible of the political leader (Niven, Lichter and Amundson, 2003: 130). Through the use of sheepish giggles, dismissive gestures, ridiculing facial expressions, unnecessary shouting, switching to Xhosa and using his home accent to create immediacy as “available communicative resources at his disposal” (Hodge and Kress, 1988), he changes a possible political interview into sarcasm of the president. These comedic stunts defused the toxicity of his statements which could otherwise earn him censure.

Trevor Noah is the only comedian who uses segregation in his performance. Unlike the new comedy of Menander which created a make-believe world of stereotyped characters (Gordon, 2009), Trevor Noah remediates his experience at San Francisco airport where an announcement portrays discrimination against African passengers because of Ebola. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 11

Ebola made flying a nightmare. Now the worst flight, I was coming from Johannesburg, South Africa going San Francisco, flew; and then because of the distance of the flight you have to stop over in Washington and they change over your flight, and you go into another plane and that plane takes you to SAN Francisco. And when we were changing planes, we were switching over. The air hostess in the second plane tells the passengers that Africans were coming on board (*audience make – ooh sound*). And so because of this, they are going to be spraying the cabin with a light pesticide. No I don't understand like when people are afraid they do stupid things. I get it (*laughter*). But what I didn't understand was why she told them this as we were boarding the plane (*laughter*). Have the decency to speak behind our backs! (*laughter*) because we're walking unto the aircraft, and she takes a little microphone, she just:

“Ladies and gentlemen, please note we have some passengers joining us in the South African flight. They are coming from Africa. Everybody could please stay in your seat as these passengers find their place. We are going to be spraying the cabin with a light pesticide due to the Ebola crisis. And *eh* feel free to cover your nose, eyes, ears and mouth. The pesticide shouldn't be harmful but it may be. So, everybody would just cover up and we will be coming down shortly as everybody takes their place. Thank you very much” (*saying this part with sonorous female voice*).

She says this as we board the plane. This is how introduction... Ebola crisis, and we are doing like hello, hello, (*laughter*), hello, hello, hello, hello, etc (*laughter continues*). Do you know how hard it is to find a seat in the plane when people are thinking you're bringing them death (*laughter*). Do you know how hard... like you're sitting there, everyone will go ... They move far from that seat like forest dump. Like as I'm walking out of the plane, she was like: *hunhun-un* (*shaking hand – laughter*). You can't sit here. No space. You just walk down trying to find your genie (*laughing himself*). Finally, everyone seated. They take off, the plane heads off to San Francisco. And that was by far the most tense flight, (*laughter*) I have ever been on. I coughed once (*laughter*). The plane shook (*laughter*). It wasn't even a bad cough, it was like a little tickle... I just like *ku-huh, ku-huh* (*imitating coughing and covering his mouth with hand*). The guy opposite me was like...Ebolaaaaaaa, Ebolaaaaaaa (*laughter*). I said, hey dude, calm down, men, calm down (*laughter*). It's just... hey you're safe buddy (*laughter*), come down (*applause laughter*). It's okay (*laughter*). That's why I'm so stressed.

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The Ebola disease, according to WHO report, killed 4,033 people out of 8,399 cases over seven months in seven countries (Ebola death toll rises to 4,033: World Health Organization, 2014). The apprehension that African migrants might spread the disease prompted Ebola screenings for arrivals from Africa to the United States, especially where Trevor had the experience he reconstructed for humour. He utilises the modes of mimicking a sonorous female voice, walking on the stage, gestures, using an American accent, giggling and wriggling his neck to call the idea behind the humiliating announcement of African passengers boarding the plane stupid as he remediates the air hostess' announcement. He uses the sonorous female voice over the microphone to achieve immediacy while his repetition of 'hello' which highlights the negative effects of the announcement on Africans. Trevor conveys that treating Africans in this manner makes them edgy because they may be unnecessarily isolated while sitting on the plane and make it more difficult for them to find a seat on the plane. Thus, Trevor Noah's performance concurs with Timler's recognition that

comedians are “cultural critics who take dynamic cultural elements and represent them within a theatre of fluid and uninhibited interaction...”, as such, comedians become conveyors of cultural consciousness (Timler, 2012: 59). Furthermore, Trevor exaggerates by saying the plane shook when he coughed and demonstrates how a passenger opposite him yelled Ebola in a silly loud sound. Though the topic for his comedic exposition is not funny, he achieves humour by accompanying language with exaggeration, demonstration, sound and laughing. Validating Iedema’s (2003) notion of resemiotization, Trevor Noah takes the hostess’s announcement and presents it in a comedy show by involving different modes to alter the message to convey another message of segregation against Africans. Thus, Trevor lifts the lid on the surreptitious humiliation Africans are being subjected to outside their continent because of the Ebola epidemic.

Basket Mouth humorously re-enacts a cuss fight he witnessed in a banking hall in front of his audience for aesthetic and communicative purposes. By iterating the original statements of the altercation, he explores mannerism and speech skills to describe the scene in the bank to the delight of his audience. The excerpt below shows the trajectory of the performance.

Excerpt 12

This is just a joke actually, but it happened real life. I was there. I went to a banking hall in Lagos. I was seated in the banking hall and because of this twenty-five billion naira thing in Nigeria, because every bank is now looking for twenty-five billion naira to be able to stand strong for central bank. So now, all the bankers are extremely nice, looking for money to put in the bank. One man from America just came in. You will know the way he was dressed, the way he was talking. He walked to the cashier and said:

Client: Hello madam, can I see your fucking manager please.

Cashier: Sir, please we don’t use such word here please. This is a banking hall.

Client: What a fuck are you telling me? I want to see your fucking manager. You’re telling me not... what a.....Are you fucking crazy?

Cashier: Sir, please you can’t use such word here please. This is a banking hall.

Client: Fuck you men, I want to see your fucking manager, you’re telling me the fucking banking hall. What a fuck are you talking about?

Cashier: Please sir, I’m afraid I have to ask you to leave

Client: Abi you wanna....fuck you.

The manager came down, ‘sir what seems to be the problem?’

Client: Are you the fucking manager? Look my fucking face, men.

Manager: Sir please we don't use such word. This is a banking hall.

Client: Fuck you all men, fuck all you niggers men, fuck; because I wanted to open an account with two million dollars in this fucking bank. Fuck all ya niggers.

The manager say: Sir, come (*laughter*). What did you say?

Client: I would have opened a fucking account with two million dollars. You guys are telling me fucking rubbish.

Manager: Two million dollars! What was this fucking girl telling you? (*laughter*) My name is Tony. I'm the fucking manager (*laughter*). Let's go to my fucking office (*laughter*).

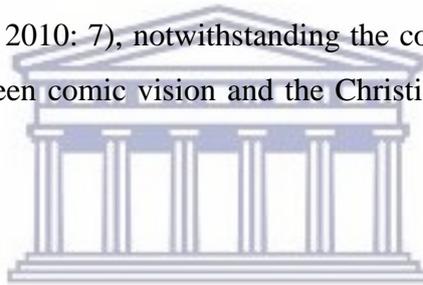
In the above excerpt, Basket Mouth reiterates the language use by a prospective client which caused a squabble between the client and the banking staff. When he tells the joke, he places his left hand on the waist, demonstrates the angry client gestures, flicks fingers to articulate the manager's passion, and demonstrates the manager's pointing to the cashier. Basket Mouth re-contextualizes this original statements made in a formal bank setting and reused them in an informal, loose, comedic environment that made the audience laugh. This joke anchors on the problematic use of the slang word *fucking* but which later becomes the solution. However, as context plays a major role in the efficacy of jokes (Sturges, 2010), Basket Mouth explores the comedic context to change an altercation in a bank to humour before the audience. The Nigerian society regards the slang term 'fuck(ing)' as unpleasant but this Americanized Nigerian has it on the tip of his tongue. The audience was attentive as Basket Mouth related how the client repeatedly used the word 'fucking', as the storyline was built up. Interestingly, when he related how the Nigerian bank manager changed his attitude from rejecting the word to started using the same word for reconciliation and politeness to the potential client, the audience exploded into laughter.

Indeed, this joke shows a clash of cultures where what is acceptable in America is unacceptable in Nigeria. This is a situation of globalizing diction invading the Nigerian semiotic space, but the impact is misperceived by the bank worker. Of course, this performance shows that what one culture considers unacceptable becomes acceptable owing to certain situations. If this narrative is true, as Basket Mouth has said, his body language and manner of saying the word 'fucking' delivered the punchline. As scholars believe, if

comedians make use of swear words, sexist or racist expressions before a receptive audience or interactional context, such jokes can overcome the risk of unacceptability and be received with affirmative responses (Scarpetta and Spagnolli, 2009: 228). Hence, in the light of Iedema's (2003) argument, Basket Mouth divorces a scenario of serious business communication in a bank by dramatising it anew, and changed it to a hilarious spoof in order to communicate didactic meaning of the virtue of patience to the audience.

6.5 Reconstruction of religious event

Nigeria is a very religious country and this offers Basket Mouth material for recontextualization before the audience. He touches on the issue of how ladies dress to churches and how pastors fall into temptation. Here, Basket Mouth recognises the idea that religion is not a force for good, and that religious leaders, practices and beliefs ought to be subjected to ridicule (Sturges, 2010: 7), notwithstanding the contention of Wood (1988) that there is no easy linkage between comic vision and the Christian faith. Consider the excerpt below:



Excerpt 13

Seriously, and there is this thing that these women dey do nowadays that really trips me. They will come to church and they will sit in front and they confuse the pastors. Why? Because they wear short skirts. In Lagos, they do, you see fine girl, short skirt because they in front of pastor, confuse pastor (*laughter*). Lagos pastors, they try as much as possible not to look, not even get distracted. Like a Lagos pastor might be preaching: my brothers and my sisters....aah, glory, glory, glory, glory. You see, I want to tell you that you have to be born again....glory, glory, glory, glory (*laughter – he is now dramatising a preacher turning from distraction – the audience laughs more*), Jesus, Jesus. So, what they do is that they try not to go to that part because they don't want to be tempted. But in Warri, Warri pastors, they will look. But he has to look because you're on top and she's below. So, they will turn the preaching to something that will make them go down. You see the pastor preaching about repentance. My brothers and sisters, praise the Lord. You see, I want to tell you that you have to be born again to enter into the kingdom of ...God (*elongate the vowel [o]*). Glory be to God (*low voice*) (*laughter*). Before I talk about repentance, I want to tell you that Abraham was a man that was assigned by God to look into the future. So, Abraham was directed by God to be moving majestically (*moving and demonstrating marching by stamping his feet*). Abraham was moving spiritually. Abraham was moving steadily and God told Abraham to bend down and look into the future (*bends – laughter and applause*), o glory, glory, glory. Jesus is Lord (*laughter and applause*). The future was not clear (*laughter*). The future was not clear but Abraham was a man that has hope and faith and wisdom. Abraham did not give up (*hysterical laughter*). He still moved and moved and bend down again (*bends again – laughter*). This time he look and the future was clear (*laughter*).

Basket Mouth presents this narrative to ridicule the way some people dress for church and the indecorum of some pastors. Some factors are important to confirm the exactness of this narrative. First, one must regularly attend churches in both Lagos and Warri. Also, to observe this from the front vantage position, one must be a worker who is actively involved in activities at the front of the church during services to witness what is happening there. Thirdly, it is also necessary to differentiate the churches where such behaviours are prevalent, because different churches have different dress codes and sitting arrangements. However, Basket Mouth ingeniously employs a “dramatic vehicle” (Mintz, 1985: 71) to hold the audience’s attention as he weaves together gestures, postures, facial expressions, actions and voices, what scholars called “multi-semiotic complexity of representations” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 37). In this sense, for Basket Mouth to change a typical church scenario in order to expose the aberration of the Christian religion in this joke, he mimics a preacher’s turning from distraction, lowers his voice at some points, elongates vowel sounds exactly like some pastors practise, stamps his feet as he marches on the stage, and bends, resting his body on both knees and the left palm. These different semiotic dimensions of representation corroborates the “realization that human predisposition towards multimodal meaning making, and our own multi-semiotic development or ontogenesis, requires attention to more than one semiotic than just language-in-use” (Iedema, 2003: 39). Thus, following Iedema’s (2003) assertion, the semiotic choices which Basket Mouth involves in the reconstruction of a church scenario changes the moral lessons embedded in preaching to describing pastors and ladies as models of immorality, because the context has shifted from a place of worship to a place of entertainment before the audience. In the next section, I will discuss how the comedians typecast ‘others’ in their performances.

6.6 Assigning identities to particular group

Comedians have a great appetite for stereotyping. For instance, just as a “play on stereotypes equates Irishness with lack of intelligence” (Reid, 2015: 5), Ali Baba’s joke equates the Yoruba people with a lack of bravery and as people fond of giving misleading hope. He draws from his personal experience by narrating how he was seeking direction from a Yoruba man but who let him down. In order to make the incident seem true, he fixes the story into a Yoruba context. The deliberate contextualisation of the dramatic narrative is presented below.

Excerpt 14

Now, *em* one thing wey dey don talk and na true. Yoruba people dey fear, true. In Warri, we like jaguda, we like fight. You don see when Warri boy just waka join dey fight people, e go dey fight. Warri boy don waka join people, two people dey fight, two people join, e come turn four people. At Warri, com say they... we just begin fight. After you go ask am say why? I no know o, one of them fit relate with me after I reach home. I just dey join now; make all of us just fight am (*laughter*). But Yoruba, haaa, dey no like fight and dem dey fear. [...] And the other day (*giving a mild laughter*), somebody talk the other time say e dey look for address. You come ask Yoruba person. I don ask one Yoruba man for address before, the man take my eye see pepper (*laughter*). As I say: *ah baba e ma binu, forty-four Adegbite street ni mo nwa*. “Forty-four Adegbite street, ni suuru. Taju, wa, s’omo forty-four Adegbite?” Esay: no. E say: haa, won o moo, awon boy yi, won o knowledgeable. So I enter moto. As I drive dey go, the man say: ‘haa, boda, boda, wa, shhhh. E ba mi pe boda yen, boda, boda’. Na im I reverse come back, reach there. I say: baba thank God I no lost again. E say: ‘ha, as you enter the car, you wanted to drive, eehn, Kunle my smallest son, he too just come out and I ask him, he sef he no know’ (*laughter and applause*).

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

From the excerpt above, Ali Baba compares the Yoruba people’s cowardice to the Warri people’s bravery, mixing both Pidgin English and Yoruba languages. He presents Warri and Yoruba people as people with striking opposite attributes, because the word *jaguda* literally means *pickpocket* or *robbery* which he attributes to the Warri people. Likewise, as Ali Baba divorces his personal experience from the original location where it happened and performs it in a comedic space, he demonstrates the Yoruba bow of respect, imitates how the man turns to look back when calling Taju, makes invitation gestures, turns and shakes his head and gestures when saying ‘I don’t know’. Also, he illustrates how he was driving off, gestures pointing to draw someone’s attention, and moves backward indicating reverse. These semiotics, according to Iedema (2003: 41), are the “re-contextualization that adds to the ‘weight’, the institutional importance, the authority, in short, the ‘facticity’, of what is said”. I would argue therefore that Ali Baba appeals to contexts to cast Yoruba people into certain ‘identity’ moulds, having identified a certain trait in some members of the Yoruba ethnic group. However, this joke could push the audience to think of the Yoruba ethnic group in a certain way. Here, Ali Baba uses his performance as a conduit to utter and construct a stereotype of the Yoruba ethnic community in Nigeria and this joke is grounded in other divisions and banal prejudices. Interestingly, the members of the audience are familiar with this social construction of the Yoruba, just as a study in Scotland revealed that “comedy reproduces certain ideologies and stereotypes that are familiar currency in mainstream

discourses about one particular ethnic, national and religious community” (Reid, 2015: 15-16).

Furthermore, as another indication of the constant shifting and renegotiating of practices (Iedema and Scheeres, 2007) for new meaning in a new way, Basket Mouth touches on the sensational issue of crime by making a comparison of the uncivil attitudes of some people in Lagos and Warri. He weaves the narrative around how passengers using commercial motorcycles treat the riders in two different contexts. He performs the drama as presented in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 15

And you know, the Warri people...you people, you don't have bike. Do you do bikes here? You don't? In naija we do bikes a lot *you know*, because we try to beat traffic and everything *you know*. And most times, people in Lagos and other places of Nigeria, you have your money before you stop the bike *you know*. 'Bike'; the bike just stop. 'Where'? Bode Thomas. 'Okay two hundred naira'. 'No problem', you enter you pay. In Warri, they have a technique. They don't have money normally. They don't have any naira in their pocket but they would stop the bike but they have a trick. They just stop the...bike. The bike go stop.

Rider: 'Where'?

Passenger(s): 'Enekeh junction',

Rider: 'Two hundred naira'.

They might be like two guys you know.

Rider: 'Two hundred naira for una two'.

Passenger(s): 'No problem, we go pay'.

They enter the bike (*demonstrating mounting a motor cycle*). They will not say anything. When they are close to Enekeh junction, the guy at the back behind the bike man would ask his friend:

First passenger: Foge, Foge, that gun wey I give you eh (*laughter*); how many bullets dey remain inside? (*laughter*)

Foge will make matters worse.

Foge: Bros, bros, na six bullets dey remain o.

The bike man go say 'O boy, I don die today. Which kind wahalabe dis?

First passenger: Six bullets! No be eight dey inside before?

He (i.e. *Foge*) will say: Bros, you don forget say that bike man wey carry us, we shoot am with two bullets (*laughter*).

When they get to Enekeh junction, they will come down say: 'bros, how much be your money? Bike man will say: 'Bros, don't worry' (*demonstration*), eh...na free, na free (*laughter*).

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

In Nigeria, motorcycles are used for transport to beat traffic jams, but usually the passenger will pay for the service of the rider for the distance travelled. In this joke, Basket Mouth presents that such passengers in Warri resort to subtle techniques to avoid paying for the services rendered by the commercial motorcyclists. He resemiotizes the passengers' trick by using the Pidgin English and demonstrations to impress the meanings embedded in the narrative on the audience. For instance, the statements: *Foge, Foge, that gun wey I give you eh; how many bullets dey remain inside?* (Foge, Foge, how many bullets are remaining inside the gun that I gave to you?); and *The bike man go say 'O boy, I don die today. Which kind wahala be dis?* (The motorbike rider will say 'Alas, I'm dead today. What type of problem is this?) It is common knowledge in Nigeria that the Warri people are adept users of Pidgin English which is regarded "as a kind of lingua franca across Nigeria" (Abdullahi-Idiagbon, 2010: 52); Basket Mouth uses it to flavour his performance.

In the original scene, the incident is dialogic between three people, but in the resemiotized version it is monologic, performed by the comedian alone. Thus, he gestures, touches the right side trouser pocket, demonstrates mounting a motorcycle, keeps mute for a short time, gives the WWE superstar John Cena's 'you can't see me' taunt, illustrates pointing closeness to somewhere, turns his head backward and uses low tones to show how the first passenger, called Foge, bends forward, thereby showing how the bike rider was afraid. All these are semiotic resources that Basket Mouth weaves into the fibre of the scenario to modify the incident before the audience. Iedema believes the semiotics assembled in social practice has a logical relationship to where a practice is up to (Iedema, 2003: 40), hence, the storyline portrays the Warri people as more devious than people from Lagos. Interestingly, the semiotic resources diminish the prestige of the Warri people and the drama plot generates laughter all through. Also, Basket Mouth performs this joke in Kenya outside the Nigerian context, and as Westwood (2004: 778) posits, context plays a significant role in the reception of joke.

Once again, Ali Baba plays with stereotypes in a way that electrifies the audience as he takes on another observed mannerism to disparage the Yoruba people (Sturges, 2010). He weaves a storyline around the inkling that Yoruba people of Nigeria love their vehicles too much. It takes someone who understands Pidgin English and Yoruba language to grab the contents of

the joke because Ali Baba conveniently mixes the languages with English as the audience jerks with laughter. Consider his performance below:

Excerpt 16

One, have you notice when a Yoruba man buys a car, he and the car become one. That's why if Yoruba man car lost, all the cars wey dey park for the place, he dey check under (*laughter*). Yoruba man fit look under this thing (*pointing at an object on the stage*) for his 504(*laughter*). You know why? Because he and the car don become one. That is why when Yoruba man get flat tyre, he no go talk say my car get flat tyre. He... say: moni flat tyre ni (*laughter*). Yoruba man go tell you say: battery mi ti run down, mo fe lo charge re [my battery has run down. I want to go and charge it]. And if you hit Yoruba man car, he will not say they hit my car. He will say: Ogba mi lateyin ni (*laughter*) [He hit me from the back]. Na you dem gba, abi na the moto? [Are you the one hit or your car?] Which is why if Yoruba man dey drive and dey run enter bad pothole, *gbaga*; and the wife dey the car; the wife go say: e pele baba Taju (*laughter*). Because na him, na im dey feel am (*laughter*) [That is why if Yoruba man is driving and the car runs into bad pothole, the wife inside the car will say 'sorry baba Taju' because he is the one that suffers the impact].

In the performance, Ali Baba represents the Yorubas as people who are fond of attributing self to their vehicles. He points to the ground to show the Yoruba people's attitude of undue acquaintance to their cars as he says that they will search under any tiny thing if their car gets lost. Also, he pronounces 'charge' /tʃa:dʒ/ as sarge /sa:dʒ/ to ridicule an aspect of the Yoruba accent and asserts that the way a Yoruba man talks about charging the car's battery would imply the battery is fixed inside his body. Also, he demonstrates bumping into potholes and implies that it is the body of the Yoruba man that accidentally banged into the pothole. Ali Baba gesticulates throughout the performance as he describes the phenomenon to the audience. This re-contextualization of a typical Yoruba man ultimately guides the audience to make the decision to ridicule this type attitude with laughter. However, from a common-sense point of view, this joke could be manifesting a logical relationship (Iedema, 2003) to this attitude in Yoruba people which Ali Baba is reconstructing before the audience for communicative and humour purposes.

6.7 Expressing self-opinion

As cited by Timler (2012: 59), comedians "use verbal timing and the multiple levels of context available in orality to create spaces of self-reflexivity" (Hall 1990:2-20). In essence, comedians utilise their spoken skills and numerous circumstances existing in the tendency to

communicate orally to construct a scope that allows their reactions to influence their performances. This argued notion is true with Trevor Noah as he uses a little of his own biography as historical fact with the intention to expose the evil of apartheid in South Africa. He narrates how under the apartheid law, he was a child born in crime because of his mixed parentage (a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa woman). His narrative is presented below.

Excerpt 17

[*Entering with loud noise from the audience*] Good evening. I grew up in South Africa. So, still live... I enjoy it. I grew up there during the time known as Apartheid. Ah for those who don't know, apartheid was a law in our country that made it illegal for black and white people to interact with one another, you know. It's against the law. And so this, this was awkward for me growing up because I grew up in a mixed family. Ah, well with me being the mixed one in the family (*laughter*). My mother is black woman, Xhosa woman born in South Africa. Ah that is one of the languages we use the clicks, Xhosa. Xhosa, so black woman and ah my father is Swiss but they didn't care, you know. They were marvellous, fighting the system. My mom was arrested for being with my dad, she will get fined, she will get thrown into prison for the weekend, but still she would come back, she's like *whoo* I don't care. I don't care *hoo*. You can't tell me who to love (*demonstration – laughter*). I want a white man *whoo* (*dancing demonstration – laughter*). It was crazy mama, it was crazy, you know. And my dad was also like, oh you know how the Swiss love chocolate (*laughter*), so he was (*laughter applause*). And so they got together and they have me which was illegal. So, so I was born a crime (*laughter*) which is, which is something I don't think they ever thought through because as a family we couldn't live together, you know. Like in the street, we couldn't even be seen together. My father would have to walk on the other side of the road; he would just wave at me from far (*demo*) like a creepy paedophile (*laughter*) or like a paedophile. I don't have to say creepy, like paedophile (*laughter*). My mom couldn't walk with me, my mom couldn't walk with me but the police, the police showed up, so she had to let go my hand, and they drop me and like I wasn't hers every single time. So, because we weren't suppose to exist as a family. So my mom would let go. It was like who gave you him? Police will show up *whoooooo* (*siren sound*) and she was like I don't know, I don't know (*laughter*). No, it's not mine, it's not mine, oh no. I don't know. It's horrible for me. I felt like a bag of weed. It was a tough time (*laughter applause*).

Here, Trevor Noah summarises the true story of his birth and growing up in apartheid South Africa before the audience in London. He enters the stage with a loud noise from the audience, he uses the click /q/ sound as he pronounces Xhosa as he mentions the nationalities of his white father and black mother. Also, he makes a *whoo* sound and dancing demonstration to connect to the audience as he tells how his mother was fighting the apartheid system. He walks on the stage as he describes how the mixed family could not live or walk together because the law was against the marriage union between white and black people. Thus, he 'was born a crime' because the union of his parents was illegal. He uses the metaphor of 'chocolate' to show how love can be so strong in a very difficult circumstance. He demonstrates a kind of Japanese greeting and dancing style, imitates a siren sound, gestures to illustrate rejection when saying 'it's not mine' and shakes his head while narrating how they could not walk together as a family. Trevor gestures for illustration throughout the

performance and the contained jokes are historical truths. Through the “reconstruction of reality” (Iedema, 2003), Trevor places the context of oppressing blacks during the apartheid system into the context of comedy until he becomes an object to be laughed at, but the incidences he mentions are not funny. In fact, the different semiotic resources that he muddled together in this comedy performance make the audience laugh and applaud him, but the meanings embedded in the performance shows that it was a difficult time for him.

Trevor Noah touches on the shooting of his mother in 2009. This is not a funny incident whatsoever, but Trevor Noah reworks it for humour before the audience. However, he exemplifies his comedic dexterity, weaving the storyline around the shooting of his mother. I present his performance in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 18

Three years ago, my mother was shot you know. She was shot twice; once in the ass (*touching his buttock*) (*laughter*), ha haa, funny now, funny now. ...a picture like ass something pshew pshew pshew (*demonstrating – laughter*). It is funny now (*laughter*). She was shot in an ass and she was shot in the head. Now you got serious (*laughter*), and it was a Sunday morning. I was in bed, still asleep. My phone rings early in the morning maybe like nine or ten o'clock (*laughter*). And the phone rings and it's my baby brother using my mummy's phone. Isaac, he's nine years old. I now took the phone, hello (*hand on the ear*).

Isaac: Hello, hello Trevor (*mimicking boyish tone*).

Trevor: Hey Isaac, what do you want?

Isaac: How are you? (*laughter*)

Trevor: I'm fine thanks.

Isaac: I'm also fine thank you (*laughter*).

Trevor: I'm fine thank you. How are you Isaac?

Isaac: I'm fine thank you. How are you?

Trevor: Thank you (*laughter*)

Isaac: Is a pleasure (*laughter*), ehn Trevor, are you busy?

Trevor: Aah sort of, why?

Isaac: You know, because mum has been shot (*laughter*)

Trevor: I'm sorry, what?

Isaac: Mum has been shot and is in the hospital. Can you come?

Trevor: Mum has been... okay what do you mean... ah okay... yah, what is the name of the hospital? What is the name of the hospital? (*turning to the audience*) can you come! Like he choose it for his own good, he choose like: can you come! (*laughter*) Like I just shot mum into my schedule: ooh coffee, ... and eish ... okay mum. Come on, can you come! I'm panicking. I jumped out of bed, I'm running around. I'm trying to put my cloth on something. I don't even notice, I don't even care. Grab the car keys and I'm looking for the car keys, I'm running around, and now I'm losing my mind. I jumped into the car, into the street. As soon as I get out the gate, the tears started coming out. I can't even control it. I'm driving, all of a sudden ... (*demonstrating emotional crying – laughter*). I'm driving, I'm trying to hold it back (*laughter*). But then I get to the traffic light, the robot is red, and I just let it out like ... (*demo emotional crying – laughter*). no, no, no, don't wipe my window, no, haa, haa, haa, haa, hey, haa, haa, (*laughter*), haa, hey, no, hey, no, haa (*demo crying*), no, hey, haa (*demo crying – laughter*). me, I'm driving to the hospital like a mad man. Get there. Jumped out of the car, my brother standing there, emergency section. My mum is there. He is just standing like nothing happened.

Trevor: I ran ... him, Isaac, Isaac, what happened?

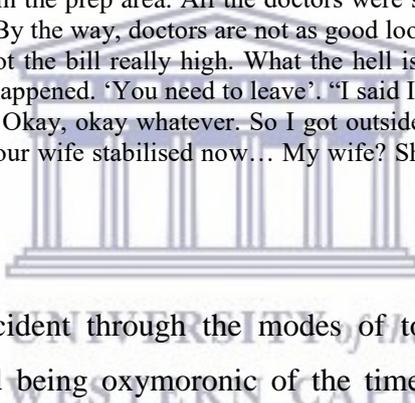
Isaac: Mum is shot she's inside

Trevor: I was like, are you okay, are you okay?

Isaac: Mum was shot not me (*laughter*)

Trevor: No, that's not what I'm saying, idiot. I'm coming back.

I ran inside. My mum was in the prep area. All the doctors were standing around, there with blood ... I'm looking at the doctors. By the way, doctors are not as good looking as they are on the TV shows eh (*laughter*). Is like they shoot the bill really high. What the hell is ...going on here? (*laughter*) Sorry, that's inappropriate. What happened. 'You need to leave'. "I said I was sorry, what happened?" No you can't be here, please leave. Okay, okay whatever. So I got outside. The nurse came to me. She's like: okay Mr Noah we've got your wife stabilised now... My wife? She's Mrs Noah, right? Yes, that's my mum.



Trevor Noah reworks the incident through the modes of touching his buttocks, making gunshot sounds, laughing and being oxymoronic of the time he woke up to suppress the terribleness of the shooting. Also, he mimics his brother's boyish tone, reiterates his childish questions and remediates his own emotional crying before the audience. Moreover, he remediates his inappropriate use of language with the doctor and nurses, his apology, the instructions to stay outside and how a nurse mistook his mother to be his wife. Trevor Noah deftly deploys these semiotic resources to achieve immediacy and also mitigate the severity of the shooting and earn the audience's endorsement of his intended entertainment. He astutely infuses playfulness by describing this very serious incident throughout as the playfulness of comedy does not negate seriousness; rather, it represents a sense of not-too-serious side of reality and ridicules and compares instead of opposing certainty (Afolayan, 1999). Furthermore, Trevor jabs at the childish behaviour of his brother to impress the audience in assuaging the shooting and spurs the audience to laugh. A further chunk of the joke is the drama between Trevor Noah and Isaac as presented in excerpt 19 below.

Excerpt 19

I realise through all these things my brother who is just standing the whole time with big eyes (*grimace – laughter*).

Isaac: Trevor

Trevor: Hey Isaac, hey Isaac, what's on your mind, big boy?

Isaac: Trevor

Trevor: Yes

Isaac: Can I come to your house and play playstation later today? (*laughter*)

Trevor: how can you be asking me about play station? Mum is shot... what is wrong with you, stupid child. You know what? You will never play PlayStation ever again. No playing PlayStation ever, ever in your life. Go sit down. Go, go ...

[...]

In this unit of his performance, Trevor continues to trivialise the unpleasant shooting of his mother by remediating the childishness of Isaac. The childish tone that Trevor Noah employs to mimic his brother's question is meant for immediacy. This helps the audience to see Isaac through Trevor and decipher the simplicity of the question in relation to the sombre incident. It is this incongruity that pulls out the laughter; otherwise, the story Trevor is telling could not be funny in any way. He succeeds by grimacing to remediate the question, crying and imitating the voice of Isaac. The fact is that age is a factor in the way that Isaac is reacting to the circumstance and Trevor takes his brother's immaturity to charm his audience.

Basket Mouth reacts to the public criticism to his performance on social media in his performance before the audience. The original platform of his criticism is social media, but he responds to the criticism in a comedy show and adds some stunts to re-contextualise the people's censure of his assertion as we shall see in the extract below.

Excerpt 20

I know say some people talk say dem dey hit me for *eh* social media say I talk say Jonathan government dem thief money. Make una no vex. I no mean to talk am. I think say everybody know (*laughter*). I no know say na secret (*applause laughter*). I no know say I wan talk something wey nobody know o, ehn ehn. But me I think ... you know say everybody with their own opinion. You get your own opinion, me I get my own. My own opinion be say the guy no dey try. No be say e no dey try. The people wey dey around am no dey try. And I thank God say e no win. Na my own opinion [That is my own opinion]. I don talk am [I have said it]. Anybody wey wan die, make he die [Anybody who wants to die, let him die] (*loud laughter*). *Yeah*. I go talk am again and again. You know wetin dey

happen? Na so our economy.... You know say as... Buhari ...as our economy don dey shake (*shaking his body*). See as ...you go see am how they go dey thief up and down. Like say this one....like say that guy win again, by now Nigeria for dey borrow money from Greece (*long applause laughter*). Hello, (*hand on ear mouth as if phoning*) una get five thousand dollars? Abeg make una just borrow us, abeg (*laughter*). I go (*stamping the ground*) talk am again and again. [See appendix for full translation].

Basket Mouth uses the Pidgin English to address a criticism of one of his performances in the past about his abuse of President Goodluck Jonathan and those in his government. Here, after unapologetically reaffirming the original abuse, he calls the bluff of anyone that is uncomfortable with his personal opinion and gives his concern for the terrible condition of the economy as his reason for abusing those in Jonathan's government. As he interprets the criticism in the context of this specific social situation (van Leeuwen, 2005), Basket Mouth adds other statements and demonstrations to reaffirm his conviction that the Jonathan government is really corrupt. In the comedic context, he shakes his body to animate how the Nigerian economy could have been shaking if President Jonathan had returned to power because corruption could have thrived tremendously. Also, he demonstrates making a phone call to insinuate how Nigeria will be begging bankrupt Greece for bailout money because the Nigerian economy could have been in a terrible mess. Furthermore, he stamps his right foot repeatedly on the ground to emphasise that he will repeat his controversial statement again. Here, Basket Mouth translates the remediation of his criticism on social media into material for comedy before the audience. By resemiotizing the social media criticism in this way, Basket Mouth brings his serious attack of Jonathan's government to the comedy stage, altering the meaning of the original context. As he moves the incident from social media, the meaning moves from the context of the serious to the context of jovial. Going by Iedema's (2003) idea, Basket Mouth co-opts the different semiotic resources of sound, dancing and the mixing of English and Pidgin to develop from the situation of a serious academic towards a relaxed, quotidian form of interaction with the audience.

In this perspective of Prior and Hengst (2010), Trevor Noah gives the audience a clue on how comedians reuse semiotic resources and chains of activity. He is responding to the criticism of one of his jokes, specifically his joke about Oscar Pistorius. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 21

How was I going to be a comedian without a voice. You need voice to do comedy. No voice no comedy, no comedy, nothing I can do. I was stressed. It was over. No you know Trevor... what? It's never over. You can make... you believe. Maybe you be a comedian without a voice (*laughter*). Yes, *yeh* you may laugh at me, you laugh, you laugh. But look at Oscar Pistorious huh, huh. Look at him, yes, no legs, no legs. But he didn't let that stop him from becoming a killer huh (*laughter*) huh? No, no (*applause laughter*) *yah*. You can say what you want about him. But he truly makes us see all people as equal, yes. Didn't he? Yes, because ...like I'm say it, I'm not going to say it. I need to say it.... But now you ...say it, yah. ...before that, now anything is possible.... Some people get sensitive when you make such jokes. I love it. When they get sensitive, they come up to you. Hey Trevor, Trevor, Trevor, you know what? The Oscar joke, too soon. What? No, no, no, too soon. When people say too soon, what they are basically saying is: that's a great joke, but not just now, alright. Let's talk about it sometime next time when we all laugh together (*laughter*). Too soon! You got really ...soon. I'm ... coming in the craziest things. Trevor you know what, you know what? I wish you know where to draw the line most times, you know. Because there is a line and you cross the line okay. Because there is nothing funny about that situation, there is not. Like... no, no, that's not true. There is nothing funny about the incident, the actual incident. But there is something funny around what happens. That's where comedy comes from. You laugh through the pain, alright. It's just like there is nothing funny about having a corrupt government but we laugh everyday, huh (*laughter*).

In the performance, Trevor Noah demonstrates to joke about losing his voice, but analogises the loss of his voice to Oscar Pistorius who, despite his physical disability, committed murder. By remediating material from the criticism he received from people (Bolter and Grusin, 1996), Trevor remakes the fact that people become sensitive at making fun of murder, and connects the statements directed at him to make another joke. Unfortunately, the scene of the murder has changed, Trevor has already made a joke of it, and some people are uncomfortable with the joke but he tilts the reaction to humour. For example, he says: "Hey Trevor, Trevor, Trevor, you know what? The Oscar joke, too soon. What? No, no, no, too soon". Trevor lectures the audience by saying that the "too soon" means that it was great joke despite people's umbrage that he crossed the line. More than that, he elucidates a tragic incident may not be funny; however, the circumstances surrounding such incidents offer comedians material to explore for humour. Surprisingly, the audience keep applauding Trevor as he makes the analysis and shows that the actual incident may not be funny, but people laugh through the pain just as we laugh at a corrupt government. Here, the murder incident has been placed in a relaxed atmosphere of comedy, some people have reacted to making jokes about murder and Trevor is reusing what people have said. Thus, the shift in discourse about the murder incident from one space to another (Iedema, 2003) as demonstrated in Trevor's performance, has altered the severity and expected discussion about murder to humour. Also, it has given Trevor the opportunity to lecture the society about how a grave incident can be trivialised and be made a joke of.

In Bolter and Grusin's (1996) opinion, the new user who is reconstructing anything that is previously presented will either replace or add to what already happens because the new user will measure their success by the new usage. Hence, let us see how Loyiso Gola reuses a court's proceeding for the purpose of communication and humour in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 22

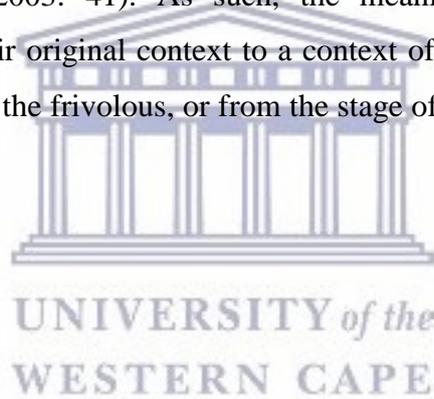
You don't want to be like that guy Mr. Dixon, Mr. Dixon the sound expert. His only job was to differentiate between a cricket bat hitting a door and a gunshot. And they brought the expert, they could have just bring any black person. Any black person (*laughter*) knows the sound of a gun A gunshot! [*elongating the vowel /p/ and adding /l/ at the end*]. If a gunshot went off now, black people in the parking lot quickly will be in the parking lot, paying for parking, gone N2 (*laughter*), home. White people will still be here. I wonder where that sound was (*demonstration*) (*laughter*). I'm not sure. I wonder. It was like a big bang. I'm not sure (*laughter*). No, chief (*laughter*), there is no expert needed; ask a black person-*ni* [*using Nguni accent*]. Black people will tell you exactly a gun shot. So, Mr. Dixon only job was to differentiate between a cricket bat hitting a door and a gunshot, fucking it up (*laughter*). He was in court, they ask him questions, couldn't answer the questions, stupid questions, I mean stupid answers, giving stupid, stupid, stupid answers. They put it to him: "Mr. Dixon, what instrument did you utilize to examine the sound?" And I swear to God, Mr. Dixon looks, he looks at the court and said: "My ears my lady". Hey, (*turning backward*) (*laughter*), you come here as a sound expert and you brought your fucking ear. Hey..... "sundi qhela amasimba, uyanya, perhaps" (*which means: "Don't take us for a fool, you must be crazy, perhaps"*).

In the above excerpt, Loyiso Gola reworks Mr Dixon's statement by adding Bantu phonology to English pronunciation. Also, he assembles multimodal resources of making mocking giggles, gestures, turning his head backward and shouting *hey*, calling Mr Dixon's answers stupid and switching to Xhosa language. Given the context that the original incident happened in a courtroom, Loyiso Gola reiterates some of the proceedings before his audience to belittle Mr Dixon. In fact, the meaning of this performance is painting Mr Dixon as unqualified in his field of profession. Instead of using this performance to create empathy with Oscar Pistorius, in whose case Mr Dixon was giving a testimony, Loyiso Gola insults Mr Dixon. The expressions *fucking ear* and *you must be crazy* and other semiotic resources added are what Iedema (2003) believes add weight to the original material and the new use achieves new meaning.

6.8 Summary

In concluding this chapter, I realise from this analysis that every facet of society is the outpost of the ridiculous that produces fertile ground for comedy to flourish. The comedians

draw on their self-reflections, events in their individual localities, global phenomena, religious happenings, sports, identities, and other aspects of life during performances. They situate original materials in comedic spaces which enable them to alter their original meanings and thereby strike the chord of laughter in their audiences different from the purposes the materials serve. In this way, the comedians stretch multiple semiotic modes comprising sounds, gestures, dancing, body movements, action demonstrations, running, to reconstruct a series of scenarios and thereby enhance how factual meanings mutually transform one another (Iedema, 2003: 30). As revealed within the context of their performances, the comedians re-contextualized issues of grave concern to the points of the excitingly laughable. They divorced the original materials from the social contexts that created them, involved the audience in the recreation, and thereby distanced the materials from their origins. With the increasing distance from its origin, each re-contextualization adds to the 'weight', the institutional importance, the authority, in short, the 'facticity', of what is said and written (Iedema, 2003: 41). As such, the meanings of all the events they recontextualize shift from their original context to a context of hilarity, from the practice of the germane to the practice of the frivolous, or from the stage of the critical to that of humour (Iedema, 2003).



Chapter seven

Analysis of Semiotic Remediation as Discourse Practice in Stand-up Comedy

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse how the comedians reuse ideas from diverse media for new or extended meanings in the context of comic production and consumption. I focus on how semiotic remediation accounts for the ways in which stand-up comedians re-perform others' gestures and actions, repurpose objects, and re-present ideas in diverse media for communicative and aesthetic effect. I illustrate how the comedians demonstrate their competence and capability to strategically deploy the logic of immediacy and the double-logic of hypermediacy to communicate new meanings from the materials they are remediating. Thus, they create 'virtual reality' by which their presence effaces, and the audience are made to 'see' the exact person(s) or events they are remediating in performing comedy. They achieve 'hypermediacy' by which they use hermetic overlapping modes for communicating humour and messages (Bolter and Grusin, 1999/2000) as part of their performance. In this way, they remediate the actions of 'others' and their personal experiences before the audience.

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7.2 Remediation of personal background experience

It has been argued that comedians tailor their materials to suit their temperament or their stage personas as they weave storylines around their personal backgrounds, life-styles, attitudes, beliefs, etc. (Limon, 2000). By creatively distorting issues through the use of exaggeration, stylization, incongruous context, and burlesque (Mintz, 1985), the comedians in this study also seem to enjoy remediating their personal lives. For instance, Basket Mouth remediates one of his experiences in secondary school during a mathematics class and the audience laugh at his marginal status. Let us consider the performance in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 1

Basket mouth Video 1: Basket mouth Stand up part 1

06:18

And back then, we used to sit at the back. Me and my colleagues, we did not know anything in school. So, we go and hide at the back. When the teacher walked into the class, and goes like, okay, I want you to recite the 2times table. E...h, those ones that are brilliant in front they will just stand up: Two times One – Two; Two times Two – FourWe wey no no book, we go dey back would be adding bass: hunhunhun – huun (*applause laughter*). One day I was carried away I was adding bass: hunhunhun – huun, hunhunhun – huun (*dancing*). The teacher was hearing bass from the back. It was like: haa, haa, and he told everybody to keep quiet. I did not hear him (*laughter*). So, I was the last person to do huuun (*laughter*)[Video 1 ends – Video 2 begins]

Basket mouth Video 2: Basket mouth Stand up part 2

00:01

.... He said: ‘You stand up’. I stood up. He said: ‘You recite it alone’. I say ‘Teacher, I no well o’. The guy that was sitting next to me knew that if I don’t get it, they would call us, they would call him. He said: ‘I sir’. Teacher said: ‘What?’ He said: ‘He say he no well now, you no go leave am?’ Teacher said: ‘You too, stand up, you recite the two-times table’. The teacher told me to sit down.

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

To achieve transparent immediacy by which he wants the audience to be in direct connection with the episode he is remediating (Bolter and Grusin, 2000), Basket Mouth employs sound, dramatisation, dancing, gesture and other demonstrations to put the audience in immediate relationship with the classroom event. Here, he recreates the scene of a classroom event about himself as a debased dullard who was keeping the company of morons at school. Debasing himself in this manner is what Limon referred to as “abjection” which means “abasement, grovelling prostration” and a “psychic worrying of those aspects of oneself that one cannot be rid of” ... “Abjection is self-typecasting” (Limon, 2000: 4). Thus, he presents himself as a member of a mischievous group of dunce students who constituted a nuisance to the teacher. He portrays himself as the chief mischievous element in the group who carries imbecility too far until his folly attracts the teacher’s attention. To achieve immediacy, he restates how the teacher asked him to stand and recite the two-times-table alone but he gave an excuse that he was sick. Basket Mouth’s performance corroborates the findings in a study by Double and Wilson who observed that the comedian, ‘Valentin’, presents himself as someone “caught on a ladder of social decline at the much lower rung” (Double and Wilson, 2004).

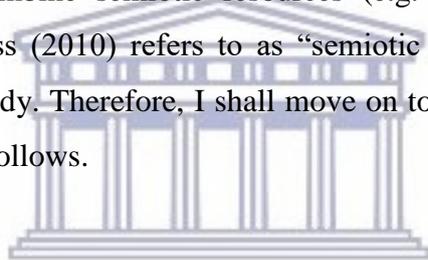
Ordinarily in the classroom context, these responses from students to their teachers would be considered a deliberate act of insolence or chronic hooliganism and will attract severe punishment. However, in the process of remediating this event, Basket Mouth nailed the humour with a blend of the modes of English language, the Pidgin English (e.g. “We wey no no book, we go dey back”: those of us who are not intelligent sit behind”), the sound, exaggeration and nonsensical behaviour that leaves much to the imagination. It could be argued that Basket Mouth reminisced about his secondary school days, subtly activates nostalgia in the audience to recollect the naughtiness of that time which he now packaged as humour for commercial purposes.

Similarly, Trevor Noah draws on his life story as semiotic material to enlighten the audience about a historical fact with the intention to expose the evil of the apartheid system in South Africa. During the performance, he expresses how under the apartheid regime, it was tough for him growing up as a child born of mixed parents (a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa woman). The excerpt below contains the trajectory of the narrative before the audience in London. In it, he reconstructs his life story into a comic act.

Excerpt 2

[*Entering with loud noise from the audience*] Good evening. I grew up in South Africa. So, still live... I enjoy it. I grew up there during the time known as apartheid. Ah for those who don't know, apartheid was a law in our country that made it illegal for black and white people to interact with one another, you know. It's against the law. And so this, this was awkward for me growing up because I grew up in a mixed family. Ah, well with me being the mixed one in the family (*laughter*). My mother is black woman, Xhosa woman born in South Africa. Ah that is one of the languages we use the clicks, Xhosa. Xhosa, so black woman and ah my father is Swiss but they didn't care, you know. They were marvellous, fighting the system. My mom was arrested for being with my dad, she will get fined, she will get thrown into prison for the weekend, but still she would come back, she's like *whoo* I don't care. I don't care *hoo*. You can't tell me who to love (*demonstration – laughter*). I want a white man *whoo* (*dancing demonstration – laughter*). It was crazy mama, it was crazy, you know. And my dad was also like, oh you know how the Swiss love chocolate (*laughter*), so he was (*laughter applause*). And so they got together and they have me which was illegal. So, so I was born a crime (*laughter*) which is, which is something I don't think they ever thought through because as a family we couldn't live together, you know. Like in the street, we couldn't even be seen together. My father would have to walk on the other side of the road; he would just wave at me from far (*body demonstration similar to Japanese greeting*) like a creepy paedophile (*laughter*) or like a paedophile. I don't have to say creepy, like paedophile (*laughter*). My mom couldn't walk with me, my mom couldn't walk with me but the police, the police showed up, so she had to let go my hand, and they drop me and like I wasn't hers every single time. So, because we weren't supposed to exist as a family; so, my mom would let go. It was like who gave you him? Police will show up *whooooo* (*siren sound*) and she was like I don't know, I don't know (*laughter*). No, it's not mine, it's not mine, oh no. I don't know. It's horrible for me. I felt like a bag of weed. It was a tough time (*laughter applause*).

As he enters the stage with a rouse from the audience, Trevor Noah's history is reconstructed from fact into comic story on stage. The comic effect is enhanced by his announcing the nationalities of his parents, and particularly, the pronunciation of the click /q/ sound for the consonant /Xh/ in the word 'Xhosa'. Furthermore, he walks on the stage, makes *whooo* sound to parrot a police siren, demonstrates a kind of Japanese greeting and dancing style, gestures to illustrate rejection when saying 'it's not mine', and shakes his head as he describes how it was terrible for the mixed family to live or walk together in public. Through the "reconstruction of reality" (Iedema, 2003), Trevor combines different modes to remediate the context of repressing blacks during apartheid into the context of comedy until he becomes an object to be laughed at. In fact, the different modes that he mingled together in this performance create immediacy which makes the audience applaud him. However, the meanings embedded in the performance show 'man's inhumanity to man and a tough growing up' for Trevor Noah. At this point, it is essential to point out that only Basket Mouth and Trevor Noah combine semiotic resources (e.g. sound, dancing, other body demonstrations) as what Kress (2010) refers to as "semiotic affordances" to recreate their personal life stories into comedy. Therefore, I shall move on to how the comedians lampoon politicians in the section that follows.



7.3 Exploiting semiotic resources to deride politicians

In this section, I examine the different ways that the comedians exploit political matters for communicating different meanings in a comedy setting. Though the performances of the comedians appear giddy, they nonetheless expose politicians as quintessential emblems of corruption in both South Africa and Nigeria. For example, Trevor deals politicians a dirty blow by portraying political parties in South Africa as unworthy of the people's votes. He draws material from a football match between South Africa's Bafana Bafana national soccer team and Botswana's national soccer team and touches on the ineffectiveness of the big political parties in South Africa. I present his performance in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 3

Trevor Noah Video 2: It's My Culture Full Show – Best Stand Up Comedy Show

07:53

It was good time though. It was a good game to get Bafana against Botswana. A lot of people came out to the stadium to watch, you know. There were dignitaries among the politician, the ANC was in full force attending, you know. The DA didn't come (*laughter*). They don't do soccer, fine. Thank you, thank you. But the ANC was there. Jacob Zuma was at the balcony waving at everybody everywhere (*laughter*). Now, elections are coming up. You're going to see everybody now on the street (*laughter*), see them in rallies, ready dancing, shaking hands, kissing babies mostly his babies (*gives kissing sound – laughter*), good for me (*laughter*). Because you know what? He has to connect with the people. The ANC has a tough time right now. This is one of the worst times in ANC history, huh: high level of corruption, lowest level of service delivery. The ANC is a shadow of its former self, yea. People in the ANC are disgusted by the ANC (*laughter*). They stand there like 'em ANC, ha haa man, ha haa man, ha ha no man, enough man, no, come on ANC'. They say this while looking at the mirror, 'come on ANC' (*laughter*). You can do better man. It's coming back, who do you vote for? I'm knowing you know, I'm knowing. People are like yah, I'll stand for the DA you know, stand for the DA. Stand for the DA? Eish, not yet. There is just the problem with the DA, they don't, they don't have solutions. They complain. That's what the DA is good at you know, very good at complaining. They always tell you: this is wrong, that's wrong. Etoll probably brought in by ANC. This is wrong, that's wrong. Yeah, that's wrong. What would you do fix it? Haa, well, well, we didn't think that far ahead (*laughter*). We just know that's wrong (*laughter*). So do we, you know. We can't vote for you. Who do you vote for uhn? This new party coming over, that's eeh AGAN, AGAIN, AGAN, yeah (*laughter*), AGANG? Yes, Mamphela Ramphele (*laughter*), it's a fun name won't make me vote for you though (*laughter*). Yes, Dr Mamphela, she used to date Steve Biko because she knows about the struggle, she's intelligent ...black woman. She came out, she denounced the ANC. She said the ANC is not what it used to be in this country. As black people, we need to stand up and realised that change is needed. Vote for AGANG, ...and vote for change. We were like yeah, you go girl (*laughter*). But she made a big mistake. She challenged Jacob Zuma directly, yah head to head because she used money as a platform. Big mistake! Never bring money up around Jacob, never (*laughter*). Look at what is going on. Our president never admit to money. There is always money around him but never his (*laughter*), always the Shaik's money, the Guptas money. He's always saying like: no it's not mine; it's not mine, not mine (*laughter*). It's not mine. I don't know. It's not mine, it's not mine. Building a house for two hundred and fifty million rand, Jacob! Where in hell does that money come from? I have a bond (*laughter*) for eight hundred thousand with FNB (*laughter*). Eight hundred thousand? Two hundred and fifty million? That's not my problem (*laughter*). My calculator said it's fine (*laughter*).

Kicking off his storyline around a football match between South Africa and Botswana, Trevor Noah gesticulates, moves on the stage, waves, dances, demonstrates a kissing sound, stretches a handshake gesture to reconstruct President Jacob Zuma's attitudes at the stadium. Moreover, he shakes his head to remediate ANC members' protest against their own party, shakes his body to mock Mamphela Ramphele (the AGANG party leader), makes 'it's not mine' gestures, mimics president Zuma's voice, and acts as different characters as semiotic modes to criticize the politicians. Thus, he creates the impression of giving the audience direct access to the events rather than going through him. In addition, he plays on words by saying "AGAN, AGAIN, AGAN" to rename the AGANG party and also personifies president Zuma's calculator. Indeed, these modes are meant to illustrate Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of immediacy, and they also serve as affordances (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Hull and Nelson, 2005) that Trevor Noah exploits to reconstruct new meanings from the actions of the politicians. Thus, Trevor Noah makes use of all these political roughshods and repulsive expressions to educate the audience to doubt the sincerity of the present democratic

establishment in South Africa. This political comedy is subversive, full of humour, entertaining and enlightening as Trevor Noah astutely utilises the freedom of speech of the democratic dispensation unlike in the strict apartheid era. He adeptly utilises modes to freely slaughter the integrity of those in government and political parties. This is what Seirlis calls “permitted disrespect” which has not been censored or banned (Seirlis, 2011: 526), contrary to Sturges’ (2010) opinion that “comedians shrink away from introducing personal abuse towards politicians”.

Another notable South African politician that Trevor Noah ridiculed is Julius Malema. Julius Malema is a former ANC Youth Leader who left the ANC to form his own political party, the ‘Economic Freedom Fighters’ (EFF). He is well known in the South African political theatre because of his outspokenness. Interestingly, Trevor Noah re-performs an encounter he had with Julius Malema and it is presented in the excerpt below.



Excerpt 4

Trevor Noah Video 2: It’s My Culture Full Show – Best Stand Up Comedy Show

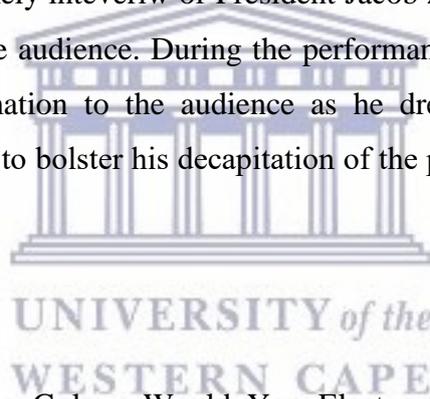
17:36

There was something I have always wanted to know. I’ve noticed on twitter there was a Julius Malema account with hundreds of thousands of followers. And every day he posts things: motivational quotes, jokes, things that make sense (*laughter*). I was like: this is not Julius. It can’t be him. This is too light hearted. This is not Julius Malema. But now he was here next to me and I got to ask him; and I did. So Julius, do you know about twitter? He said: ‘Yes, I know it’ (*mimic Julius’ voice*). I said: there is an account there with your name. Is that you? ‘Yes, that’s me, at Julius underscore S, underscore Malema. You must follow me’. I said: *ha haa*, that’s cool men. Waah! I was shocked; not that he was on twitter; I just never thought I heard Julius say the word *underscore* (*laughter*). No, because of some ... keys on the keyboard you know. I don’t know why. I never thought he was. I’m sure he seats there every day by himself: keyboard keys go (*demo*): F1, F5, F7 enter (*laughter*), space delete Zuma (*laughter*), PVNM control the minds, QWART for slash escape from science (*laughter*), VPNM colon semi colon, dash...(*demo*), down-dash (*laughter*), dash small-dash, dash dash-underground, dash, dash; dash is being oppressed by other keys on the keyboard (*laughter*). Why don’t they allow this dash to come up from below (*laughter*). This dash to (*laughing himself – laughter*)

In this denuding performance, Trevor Noah recreates the idea that Julius Malema could operate a computer and even a Twitter account. He parodies Malema’s voice as he talks and reads out some of the keys on a computer keyboard and demonstrates pressing the keys. There is a hint that Malema cannot be on Twitter and he light-heartedly portrays him as a character expected to be distant to social media. Also, he uses the mode of reading

laboriously in a monotone voice that lacks expression and fluency to remediate how Julius Malema reads out the functions keys on the computer keyboard in order to achieve immediacy. Thus, the audience could see the real flaws of Malema and laugh at him. Furthermore, the performance unveils part of Malema's political struggle to take out Jacob Zuma, control people's minds, and fight oppression. Therefore, this performance validates scholars' views that the "sense of the continuingly undemocratic nature of many aspects of formal democracy provides a key stimulus for the current comic portrayal" (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 32). The manner in which Trevor Noah portrays Julius Malema also corroborates the fact that in our modern societies, comedians attack politicians by biting stimulating sentiment to symbolically fight back against leaders through well thought-out impudence (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013).

Loyiso Gola reconstructs a likely interview of President Jacob Zuma as semiotic material for a different meaning before the audience. During the performance, he also employs different modes to divulge the information to the audience as he dresses down the president by mentioning some deficiencies to bolster his decapitation of the president's integrity. Consider the excerpt below.



Excerpt 5

Loyiso Gola Video 5: Loyiso Gola – Would You Elect a President with 783 Criminal Charges

00:01

You know, I was, I was in the UK and then the crazy thing like, like in the UK you know the people who busk in the tube? Who's ever been in the tube here, in the underground? That thing is like ten stories underground, ten stories! And then under there, there're buskers like a station, is the whole underworld underneath. But underneath there, people will busk they busk ...pa, pa, pa, pa, playing trumpet or whatever. Then I found out this people have to audition to be street performers (*laughter*), audition *jo* you have tough ...every man can audition amongst like a thousand people and then the best, when you see that guy, he went through some shit to be there *jo* (*laughter*). He's the best, he's the best at that level (*laughter*), no really don't. You guys laugh because we in South Africa don't even audition the president *jo* (*laughter*). Like what are you doing for the next four years? Yah, swagger (*giving dismissive gesture*) (*laughter*). Imagine auditioning Jacob Zuma. Okay, first thing first: matriiik (*long pronunciation, standing still with open teeth – laughter – he giggles and moves his eyes with an attitude and then follows it with an 'I have no idea' gesture*). Okay, okay, okay let's be lenient. We are being lenient. Let's keep matric. Can you read a speech without giggling (*laughter*)? Already failing, failing, hi hi hi hi ha (*laughing himself*). Okay, okay, okay, okay you don't have to read speeches (*laughter*). Have you ever faced any criminal charges? Heeee (*shouting*) seven hundred and eighty three [783] (*laughter*) crime; 783 is heavy charges. You know you have to break

the law every day for a ... for two years (*laughter*). Just walking around the street just smacking people *paa* (*demonstrating hitting someone – laughter*). Hardy boy, bendifuna assault, assault yashota lana, kwi wrap sheet yam iyashota, ayikho. [Translation: *Hardy boy, I wanted assault, assault is not enough here, in my wrap sheet it is not enough, it's not there*]. So I just wanted to add assault he he he he he he (*laughter*). Haa, the president eeee, because I don't think Jacob Zuma knows that he is the president, president. He thinks he's the president of something but not.... (*laughter*). I don't think he's sure guti [that] know this is the real...is a country (*laughter*). He thinks maybe it's something, njanyana [puppy] (*laughter*) ha ha ha ha ha ha ha (*laughter*).

In the excerpt, Loyiso Gola reworks a make-believe interview with President Jacob Zuma. He starts off the storyline using the analogy of busking by mimicking smacking sounds as the set-up base to launch insults at the president. He combines the modes of giving dismissive gestures, giggling, stressing the second syllable of the word 'matric' with a Nguni accent, moving his eyes and giving a gesture that implies the president is oblivious of the benefit of having a matric qualification. The netting together of these modes accentuates the attitude of mockery and emphasises a fact that the president does not know what it entails to be a president. Furthermore, he demonstrates derogatory laughter to satirise the president's typical style of giggling when making public speeches, and also shouts to express alarm at the crimes that the president has amassed for himself which Loyiso Gola calls 'heavy charges'. Loyiso Gola smartly employs all the modes mentioned earlier together with standing still with open teeth, making a gesture to imply "I have no idea", code switches from English to Zulu language, and gives a mischievous laugh to smudge the president. He ends the joke with the metaphor of being the president of *puppy* to debase the president as someone who does not know the weight of his office. His performance substantiates the notion that comedy sets up a space in which there is licensed abuse, because once the comedian and the audience have established a relationship, which is an unwritten social contract, the laughter elicited appears harmless (Parker, 2002: 11). Loyiso Gola assembles these techniques for hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) by which the busking joke leads to the derogatory joke about the president. Also, being a South African, he is a "temperamental" and "cynical insider" (Timler, 2012) who knows some flaws of the president and this knowledge emboldens him to shred the president for derision before the audience.

In the Nigerian context, Ali Baba presents to his audience an interview which parodies Mrs Patience Jonathan (wife of former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan). Mrs Jonathan was outspoken but made grammatical errors as she made public speeches and interviews

when her husband was in power. Goodluck Jonathan lost in the general election of 2015 to President Muhammadu Buhari. Still, Mrs Jonathan has been a target of public jokes and Ali Baba employs the talents of other comedians to parody a formal interview aimed at imitating Mrs Jonathan. In the interview, Ambassador Wahala acts as Ali Baba, Yaw is the questioner, and Seyi Law brings a sachet of water to the stage. Some segments of the comedy performance are analysed in fragments below.

Excerpt 6a

Ali Baba Video 3: [Alibaba 2016 concert www.mobitechplaza.com](http://www.mobitechplaza.com)

00:01

Ali Baba: (*standing by a lectern mimicking Mrs Jonathan's accent*)...no be dead body (*laughter*). I'm okay (*laughter*).

Yaw: Eh, Your Excellency, the bring back campaign is still on. What do you think about it?

Ali Baba: You come again (*mild laughter*).

Yaw: I mean the bring back our girls campaign is still on. Em, what do you think about it?

Ali Baba: (*turning to the Yaw*) Na me be Aisha Buhari? (*laughter*) [English translation: *Am I Aisha Buhari?*]. Abi na my responsibility to go find them? (*mild laughter*) [[English translation: *Or is it my responsibility to go and find them?*]. Eh hen, make dem bring these girls back (*laughter*) [English translation: *Eh hen, let them bring these girls back*]. We are watching. No be part of their campaign say when they come to office after two weeks dem go bring back our girls? (*mild laughter*) [English translation: *Is it not part of their campaign that when they come to office, they will bring the girls back after two weeks?*]. After two weeks dollar will turn to one naira. How much is dollar now? We are watching (*applause and laughter*).

Female voice in the audience: Eish, o my God.

As the excerpt shows, there are different layers of repurposing as Ambassador Wahala becomes Ali Baba and also impersonates Mrs. Jonathan on behalf of Ali Baba. In the process of remediating the woman, we can see multiple layers of repurposing and impersonation in the performance. Ali Baba use the modes of parroting the idiolect of Mrs Patience Jonathan, blending English and Pidgin English, giving answers off the tangent, mentioning Aisha Buhari, and asking questions in contrast to statements. The utilisation of these modes enables Ali Baba to create immediacy for the audience to see Mrs Jonathan before them. However, the remediation of the “bring back the girls” movement rubs in the failure of the government of Muhammadu Buhari to deliver on his campaign promises to secure the freedom of over 200 abducted girls by Boko Haram in 2014. Thus, by parodying Mrs

Jonathan, Ali Baba indicts President Buhari, considering the worrisome condition of the girls still in Boko Haram's captivity. Also, he repurposes the terrible exchange rate of the American dollar to the Nigerian naira and a female voice express astonishment about the exchange rate. We can see the audience become part of the performance. In continuation of the performed interview, another layer of remediation is identified as contained in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 6b

Ali Baba Video 3: [Alibaba 2016 concert www.mobitechplaza.com](http://www.mobitechplaza.com)

01:00

Yaw: *Ah*, we notice ma that since you left Aso Rock, you have not visited. Why?

Ali Baba: None of my property dey there again (*laughter*). So, what am I looking for?

Yaw: Em, did Dasuki give you anything? As in any...

Ali Baba: I be Linda Ikeji? (*walks on the stage with his left hand in his pocket – loud laughter*). Abi if money wey dem give Linda Ikeji dey carry am give me you thinks say Goodluck go lose the election? (*laughter*) We go use am campaign very well and he no go lose election. So, no ask me. But in case I have any access to him now, he can still bring it (*laughter*).

Ali Baba is remaking the fight against corruption and to make the message sinks, he brings in the names of some people and the names connote different meanings. From their literal usage, they serve as identity markers for the individuals mentioned; but they serve different functions in the context of this comedy performance. First, Aso Rock is the seat of power in Nigeria, Dasuki is the national security adviser to former president Goodluck Jonathan, and Linda Ikeji is a blogger. However, Dasuki was arrested for allegedly stealing two billion dollars; thus, he connotes corruption; and Linda Ikeji is alleged to have unduly benefited from Dasuki. The mentioning of Dasuki and Linda Ikeji in the answers connects the performance to the audience, because the audience understand the context that these names are being used in. The remediation of the Dasuki's corruption case in this comedy performance is an intellectual exposition that corruption is still going on unquestioned in Nigeria. Also, in consonance with scholars' positions, these comedians bank on the fact that the audience has knowledge of the subjects they scoff, and invite the audience to "fill in the gaps" left open in a more allusive mode of delivery (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 33 – 34). Moreover, Ali Baba employs the modes of moving on the stage and putting his hand in his pocket to create immediacy because he accentuates the seriousness that Mrs Jonathan will

infuse when answering questions. Therefore, the expression: *But in case I have any access to him now, he can still bring it*, ridicules Mrs Jonathan's predilection for enjoying Nigeria's money. Interestingly, this performance validates Westwood's (2004) argument that comedians reveal the absurdities and limitations of the political system by subverting those in public offices to open ridicule. Next, the performance progresses to recontextualise the current state of the Nigerian economy in the following manner:

Excerpt 6c

Ali Baba Video 3: [Alibaba 2016 concert www.mobitechplaza.com](http://www.mobitechplaza.com)

01:54

Yaw: Would you take eh position as minister for women affairs?

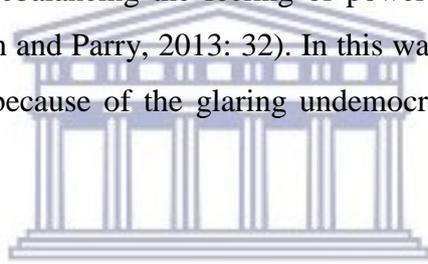
Ali Baba: Dem dey paydem? (*laughter*) All of them wey be minister now na voluntary work dem dey do (*clapping and laughter*). Make una give me water drink. I'm thirsting.

Yaw: Ah please water for her Excellency please, water. (*Seyi Law brings a sachet water and a cup, cuts the sachet water open with teeth, the audience roar in laughter as he pours the water into the cup and gives it to Ali Baba who yells and complains*)

Ali Baba: Nigeria (*saying it in a crying tone and the audience laugh*). We never reach one year (*laughter*), so no more bottled water, no glass cup. Na "purewater" you carry come for me (*laughter – takes the cup of water and pours it on Seyi Law and shouts*) If na your mama, you fit bring am come. Come on, go here, you are stupid, idiot, stupid (*throws away the cup – laughter*). Make una give me correct water, you carry purewater come (*laughter*). If na another business wey Ali Baba and the wife wan do, we dey watch them (*laughter*), useless idiot boy. Ali Baba is a criminal (*laughter*) and I'm telling General Muhammad Buhari, sorry President Muhammad Buhari you will probe Ali Baba and his wife (*laughter*). If they are not thief, how can you do a show you're selling table five five million? (*laughter*) If I hear here you buy a table for five million naira, your name will be out tomorrow (*laughter*). You will tell me where you get the money from (*laughter*).

As portrayed in excerpt 6c with, Ali Baba involves other comedians who utilise different modes to communicate messages to the audience. The modes include the technique of answering a question with a question, using a crying tone, using purewater as a physical object, tearing the purewater with one's teeth, pouring the water in the cup as a physical object, pouring the water on the one who brings it, and swearing to communicate his message to the audience. In this sense, the combination of these modes to remediate Mrs Jonathan's voice validates what Irvine (2010: 236) refers to as a broader communicative practice which uses on many kinds of signs and not only language. The Pidgin English expression: "Dem dey pay dem? All of them wey be minister now na voluntary work dem dey do" (Translation: *Are they paying them? All the ministers are now doing voluntary work*), ridicules the government of Muhammadu Buhari for his poor performance on the economy. Also, the intention of bringing purewater instead of bottled water is to intimate that the Nigerian

economy fared better under Goodluck Jonathan than Muhammadu Buhari. In addition, Ali Baba uses the mode of crying tone to mimic how Mrs Patience Jonathan cried when she addressed the parents of the abducted Chibok girls. Thus, with reference to Irvine (2010: 238), this performance serves social purpose because all the modes contribute to show the sorry state of the Nigerian economy less than one year after Goodluck Jonathan left power. In essence, he hints that Nigerians can no longer afford their basic needs. Thus, as illustrated by Afolayan (1999), this comic dimension to the Nigerian postcolonial predicament is necessary for confrontation with the situation and also the health of the body as the political system is being exposed. The audience enthusiastically collaborate with the comedians by bountifully rewarding the joke with loud laughter and comments. Therefore, it could also be argued that, as corruption is still endemic in Nigeria, this comedy show is latent with catalysts to provoke serious, critical thinking about the credibility of the Nigerian government. In line with scholars' suppositions, comedians strongly activate emotions and symbolically get back at the leaders, thereby temporarily rebalancing the feeling of power relations through considered disrespect (Corner, Richardson and Parry, 2013: 32). In this way, Ali Baba makes a mockery of the Nigerian government because of the glaring undemocratic nature of the democratic institutions of the country.



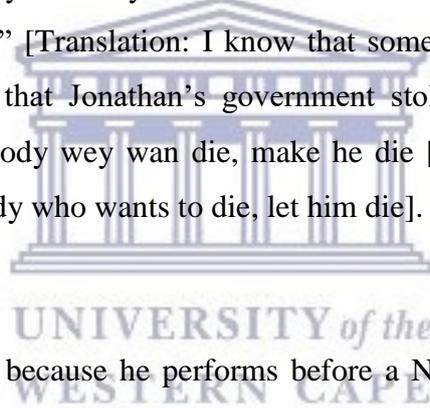
Basket Mouth recontextualises the criticism of his comic art on social media for the purpose of lambasting politicians in his comedy performance. He reacts to the public criticism of one of his performances on social media in which he has criticised the government of President Goodluck Jonathan for corruption. The extract below shows how he remediates the criticism with some stunts to reaffirm his initial position on the matter.

Excerpt 7

I know say some people talk say dem dey hit me for *eh* social media say I talk say Jonathan government dem thief money. Make una no vex. I no mean to talk am. I think say everybody know (*laughter*). I no know say na secret (*applause laughter*). I no know say I wan talk something wey nobody know o, ehn ehn. But me I think ... you know say everybody with their own opinion. You get your own opinion, me I get my own. My own opinion be say the guy no dey try. No be say e no dey try. The people wey dey around am no dey try. And I thank God say e no win. Na my own opinion. I don talk am. Anybody wey wan die, make he die (*loud laughter*). *Yeah*. I go talk am again and again. You know wetin dey happen? Na so our economy.... You know say as... Buhari ...as our economy don dey shake (*shaking his body*). See as ...you go see am how they go dey thief up and down. Like say this one....like say that guy win again, by now Nigeria for dey borrow money from Greece (*long applause laughter*). Hello, (*hand on ear mouth as if phoning*) una get five thousand dollars? Abeg make una just borrow us, abeg (*laughter*). I go (*stamping the ground*) talk am again and again.

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

In the excerpt, as Basket Mouth reworks the criticism of one of his performances, he unapologetically expresses his opinion about the economic situation in Nigeria by blaming the leaders in government. The combination of the modes of shaking his body, his demonstration of making a phone call, and stamping his right foot repeatedly on the ground for emphasis, contribute to re-emphasising his point. This performance corroborates Prior and Hengst (2010: 6) believe that all the range of modes that are used and important in communication contribute to meaning making rather than a single-mode as sufficient communicative domain. The issue of a president being corrupt, and leaving the economy hanging in the balance to the extent of begging bankrupt Greece for bailout money, could not be funny. Thus, he uses some expressions that are capable of generating anger, such as: “I know say some people talk say dem dey hit me for eh social media say I talk say Jonathan government dem thief money” [Translation: I know that some people are criticising me on social media because I said that Jonathan’s government stole money]; and Na my own opinion, I don talk am. Anybody wey wan die, make he die [Translation: That is my own opinion, I have said it. Anybody who wants to die, let him die].



Also, he uses Pidgin English because he performs before a Nigerian audience in Houston, Texas, in the United States, and this will endear his message to the hearts of his audience. Basket Mouth unapologetically promises to repeat his controversial statement and calls the bluff of anyone who is uncomfortable with his personal opinion. This is a brazen utilisation of his freedom of speech in post-colonial Nigeria as he refashions the social media material in his comedy performance. As he remediates the criticism in the context of this specific social situation (van Leeuwen, 2005), he exploits biting statements, gestures, and other demonstrations to reaffirm his conviction that president Goodluck Jonathan and his cabinet are really corrupt. Indeed, as he moves the incident from context of communication on to social media, the meaning shifts from the serious to the jovial. Going by Iedema’s (2003) idea, Basket Mouth co-opts the modes to divorce the serious criticism towards a relaxed, quotidian form of passing information across to the audience because his expressions in this performance are not civil. In the next section, I will consider how the comedians remediate religious texts in their performances.

7.4. Remediation of religious practices

In this section, I examine the remediation of religion as another theme noted. Religious content does not feature in the selected videos of the South African comedians, but the Nigerian comedians exploit religion as semiotic material for the purpose of stereotyping and also teaching morals. Indeed, a typical Nigerian appears to fit in into the traditional, Christian or Islamic religion. As such, Ali Baba draws on the moral cleavage around practising Christianity and refashions the manner in which people give offerings in Warri churches for a different meaning. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 8

Ali Baba Video 5: Alibaba 2012 Night of a Thousand Laughs

00:05

You know say when you dey do offering for other churches, usher go pass the bucket. Dem go carry am in line im go go round, collect am (*mild laughter*). E no fit try am for Warri (*laughter*). Usher dey enter the audience (*laughter*), drop your own (*demonstration movement*), drop your own (*laugh continues*), drop your own, drop your own (*laugh continues*); because if you no do like that, Warri people dey collect change (*laughter*). He go drop twenty naira, collect fifteen naira change. Then some of them go collect change, and dey no drop anything. They will say ‘oh boy, why you dey collect change now?’ He say last week *eh* (*laughter*) change no dey the pocket. I come say this week. Na im make me come church sef (*laughter and applause*). As I just collect change (*hand in pocket*), I dey go, I dey go back (*laughter*).

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

From the excerpt above, Ali Baba assembles the modes of descriptive gesticulation, walking on the stage, hand demonstration of dropping money into the offering basket as he describes how Christians drop offerings in the basket. Also, he demonstrates how ushers must take the offering basket(s) round in Warri churches because the congregation there want to collect change despite not paying offerings. He further takes his right hand to his back pocket to remediate how they pocket the change they collect. In using these modes, he assigns this weird attitude of Warri Christians and this represents an illustrative example of stealing from the church, but he rouses the audience to laugh. This joke stereotypes Warri Christians as untrustworthy and hypocritical, and sheds new light on the implications of Reid’s (2015) assertion that this performance is a “deliberate denigration of their religion and community” (Reid, 2015: 9). Because the Warri people from the Niger Delta area of Nigeria are avid

speakers of Pidgin English (Akande and Salami, 2010: 78), Ali Baba uses Pidgin English to achieve immediacy as he tears the integrity of the Warri Christians to shreds before the audience. Also, Pidgin English helps him to flavour the skit more than the English language would have, and the audience welcomed every strand of his joke with laughter throughout the performance. Here, Ali Baba not only mocks the Warri Christians but his performance fortifies the notion that comedians' "penchant for entertainment adopts a moralising dimension" (Afolayan 1999: 163), because he is indirectly teaching the audience not to emulate the Warri Christians. Thus, I would argue that stand-up comedians embellish circumstances to let out incongruous comparisons, depreciate identity, and mischievous dishonesty of their subjects for derision.

Just like Ali Baba, Basket Mouth also reworks religious discourse as he remakes the church on the stage. Corroborating Afolayan (1999) claim that Lagos and Warri are the two places that stand-up comedians easily find notorious materials for ridiculous behaviours in Nigeria, Basket Mouth talk about actions of churchgoers from both places. Ordinarily, it is expected that high impeccable moral uprightness should be the bedrock of the Christian religion. However, as insincere practices are found among Christians in Nigeria, Basket Mouth likewise wittily derides Christians before the audience. In one of his performances, he talks about churchgoers in the following manner:

Excerpt 9

Basket Mouth Video 3: Basket mouth Stand up part 3

00:19

Seriously, and there is this thing that these women dey do nowadays that really trips me. They will come to church and they will sit in front and they confuse the pastors. Why? Because they wear short skirts. In Lagos, they do, you see fine girl, short skirt because they in front of pastor, confuse pastor (*laughter*). Lagos pastors, they try as much as possible not to look, not even get distracted. Like a Lagos pastor might be preaching: my brothers and my sisters....aah, glory, glory, glory, glory. You see, I want to tell you that you have to be born again....glory, glory, glory, glory (*laughter – demonstrating a preacher turning from distraction – the audience laugh more*), Jesus, Jesus. So, what they do is that they try not to go to that part because they don't want to be tempted. But in Warri, Warri pastors, they will look. But he has to look because you're on top and she's below. So, they will turn the preaching to something that will make them go down. You see the pastor preaching about repentance. My brothers and sisters, praise the Lord. You see, I want to tell you that you have to be born again to enter into the kingdom of ...God (*elongate the vowel [o]*). Glory be to God (*low voice – laughter*). Before I talk about repentance, I want to tell you that Abraham was a man that was assigned by God to look into the future. So, Abraham was directed by God to be moving majestically. Abraham was moving spiritually. Abraham was moving steadily and God told Abraham to bend down and look into the future (*comedian bends – laughter applause*), o glory, glory, glory. Jesus is Lord (*laughter applause*). The future was not clear (*laughter*). The future was not clear but Abraham was a man that has hope and faith and wisdom.

Abraham did not give up (*hysterical laughter*). He still moved and moved and bend down again (*bends – laughter*). This time he look and the future was clear (*laughter*).

In order to refashion the pastors' actions in his comedy performance, he exploits the modes of movement, turning, low voice, repetition of 'glory' by elongating the vowel [o] in glory, to show how Lagos pastors feel uncomfortable and try to avoid looking at such ladies. He utilises the marching and stamping his feet on the stage, bending down on both knees and hands, and turning his head to look at the audience, remediating how Warri pastors whet their appetite for immorality by stylishly looking in between the legs of such ladies. The use of these modes is meant to achieve virtual reality (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) to make the audience see the real church scene. Basket Mouth implies this joke is real by using the word 'seriously' and it means he is recreating real deficiency in churches by comparing Lagos and Warri pastors in a comedic context. He tells of ladies wearing skimpy skirts to churches and sitting in the front to be visible to pastors. Thus, the figure below shows how a man and a woman are so enthralled with the performance that they stand in the audience to laugh.



Figure A: @01:51 – a man and a woman could not resist standing to laugh)

The point that Warri pastors bend to stylishly look at ladies wearing skimpy dresses to church leaves much to the imagination, but Basket Mouth thrills the audience with the modes he exploits for communication. In this way, blending these multiple modes enhances his jab at the pastors. The combination of these modes for the purpose of revealing some Christians' attitudes constructs the dynamics of how the comedian coordinates semiotic resources to create comedy. In fact, that is why a member of the audience rises to dance-laugh at how Basket Mouth discredits the pastors before the audience. The dexterity with which he models the pastor's action with new modes buttresses Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of remediation, and it also substantiates the conception that typical Nigerian comedians mix entertainment with impoliteness in order to teach some lessons (Afolayan, 1999: 163). Thus, this is similar to how the Ghanaian comedian Bob Okalla ridicules pastors by saying profane

things as quotations from the Bible without giving consideration to whether he was offending Christians (Donkor, 2013: 272), Basket Mouth's performance here exposes a dirt among pastors.

Furthermore, Ali Baba draws semiotic material from a pastor's sermon and the interpretation of the sermon from the English language to Pidgin English at a Warri church in Nigeria. However, he exploits multimodal resources in making the sermon humorous. The remediation of the sermon with the interpretation is presented in excerpt 10 below.

Excerpt 10

Ali Baba Video 4: [nigerian-comedian-wale-gates-ali-baba – codedwap.com](http://nigerian-comedian-wale-gates-ali-baba-codedwap.com)

00:50

First of all, let just start like this: Warri is the beginning of Pidgin English. All the ones una dey speak for this side, na broken English. There is a difference between broken English and Pidgin English. If someone dies outside Warri, you will say the person don late, the person don die, the person don penmeh. That is broken English. In Warri, we speak pidgin. If somebody dies in Warri, we don't say die. We say the person don delete (*laughter*). Alright? So, most of the time when you have pastors from here come to Warri to preach, Adefarasin, Chrisfarasin, we always find an interpreter to make the words get across to the people that are listening. So, most often you will hear something like: "And Jesus went into the wilderness. The guy take off (*laughter*). For forty days and forty nights he fasted. The guy hear wen-ehn (*laughter*). And the devil came and tried him. Devil wan try gbege (*laughter*). But after all the temptation, Jesus did not fail. The guy stand well well (*demonstrates standing posture – laughter*). But you know when it gets to the end, you normally will hear something like "And Jesus turned to the devil and said: get thee behind me Satan". Warri interpretation goes like this: "As soon as Jesus said "Get thee behind me Satan", you hear the Warri say "Jesus turn face devil say: you go wound o" (*laughter*).

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

In the remediation of the sermon, Ali Baba transforms the Christian religion to construct new message again by targeting the Warri Christians in the manner above. To achieve the licence of comedic effect, he employs the modes of blending Pidgin and English together, standing stiff for seconds, moving to a position, turning as if talking to someone close to him, and using a low tone to sway "*you go wound o*". Very important also is that he exaggerates the meaning embedded in the Pidgin interpretation's version. In fact, without the pidgin, the English part will also fall because the Warri people are avid speakers of Pidgin English. The English version: '*Jesus went into the wilderness, fasted for forty days and nights, was*

tempted by the devil, did not succumb but rather told the devil to depart from him'. The remediated pidgin version: *'The guy took off, he encountered many troubles, the devil wants to play pranks on him, but he took his stand, he turned and warned the devil, that you would certainly be injured'*. Ali Baba's performance confirms Garner (2004) claim that comedians possess the ability to twist things in the direction of the humorous. Also, the use of body posture, facial expressions and falling vocal tones (Timler, 2012) contribute essential aspects to modifying the subject matter of the sermon and elicit forth the humour. Furthermore, the modes create immediacy, as advocated by Bolter and Grusin (2000), where Ali Baba places the audience in direct connection with the church setting and see the Warri style of pidgin as hilariously distinct. In the next section, I shall elucidate on how the comedians exploit terrorism, racism, court proceedings and police brutality as semiotic resources for communicating different meanings.

7. 5. Remediation of make-believe and factual events

7.5.1 Terrorism

Surprisingly, the comedians perform rhetorical narratives which are not only fictitious but presented as facts in order to make a point. For instance, only Trevor Noah draws on terrorism as a semiotic resource for either commenting on the menace of terrorism, or using it as a communicative resource to stereotype others, or condemn racism and similar stereotypes. He sometimes employs "team acts" (Mintz, 1985) or 'singularly acting two characters' on the stage to remediate scenarios in order to create virtual reality. For instance, Trevor Noah dramatises the disarming of a terrorist trying to blow up a plane. Because of the dramatic nature of this joke, I present the purported dialogue between the terrorist (T) and someone challenging him (C) as dramatized by Trevor Noah.

Excerpt 11

Trevor Noah Video 1: Trevor Noah – Stand-up Comedy 2015 –Best Comedian Ever

54:55

Just... this is a lot of things that makes me think there is a chance someone understands the language. They may be able to talk the guy down. There could be ...there could be a terrorist on the plane, the guy with a suicide vest, we're flying 40,000 feet in the sky, the man jumps up losing his head, and is:

T: Alah al chukalwa chulkau ...allahu akbaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrr.

And just maybe, maybe some guys would be opposite him like:

C: 'Hey, what are you doing?' (*laughter*)

T: I am going to blow up this plane to show everybody that Allah is graaaaaaaaaaaeeeet (*closing his eyes seriously*).

C: Yes, but eh,... we know this (*laughter*). Everybody here knows this. So, what are you doing?

T: I wanted to show all of you the power of...

C: What are you showing us that we don't know ah (*laughter continues*). What are you showing us? Are you saying look, look we are not good Muslims? Is that what you are saying, ah? Are you showing us we don't know the power of Allah? Is that what you are saying? You are saying we are bad Muslims? What are you saying?

T: No my friend, please I was not trying to offend you. I was just trying to kill you (*laughter continues*). Listen to what I want to...I wanted to show you.

C: What are you showing me, ah? Are you saying I didn't pray, is that what you're saying? You're better Muslim than me? You think I'm not good Muslim just because I'm watching "Cloudy with a chance of meatballs" ... (*laughter continues*), is that what you think? (*laughter*) what are you saying?

T: I'm not saying, I wanted to ...

C: What are you showing us?. You show nothing, you are making us looking bad. Why don't you preach? Why don't you talk to people, *eh?* This is not Islam. What are you doing with your stupid vest? Ba, ba, ba, (*laughter*). You make us all look bad (*laughter*).

T: No, no, I was not trying to....

C: No, no, you will not try nothing (*laughter*). No, you just put your vest back, because you don't even know what you're doing here (*laughter*).

T: So, this is my first time, I never done this before.

C: Yeah, yeah, story, story, sit down; shut up; eat something.

T: I don't know if I can eat...

C: Yah, you can eat it. Don't worry you can eat it, all of that, yeah, yala, yala, yala, yala, yala, stupid (*laughter continues*).

The excerpt above is a product of Trevor Noah's creative acumen of make-believe stunts, but he touches on a very sensitive issue which is one of the daunting predicaments of the world. He wittily recreates a scenario of what could transpire on board an aeroplane that is prone to be brought down by a terrorist on a suicide mission. To sound funny, he blends the modes of serious facial expressions, shouting 'Allahu akbar', long shouting of the word 'great', and closing his eyes as he performs before the audience. He dexterously acts a discourse between a suicide bomber and terrorist and another passenger who bombarded the terrorist with questions. As if he is remaking a real scenario by either replacing or adding to what already

exists (Bolter and Grusin, 1996), Trevor Noah designs the hilarious discourse factually and reeves up the audience in the process. Thus, questions such as *Are you saying we are not good Muslims? Are you showing us we don't know the power of Allah? You are saying we are bad Muslims? Are you saying I didn't pray? You're better Muslim than me?* are meant to create virtual reality.

In continuation from the above, the allusion to the cartoon, *Cloudy with a chance of meatballs*, serves as an anecdote to mitigate rejection of the joke and also to sustain the attention of the audience. Acting the questioner and responder technique represents an exemplum possible of orienting the society about how a terrorist could be disarmed or disoriented. Furthermore, the articulations of *trying to kill you, stupid vest, eat something* and other colloquialisms are a cluster of diversion techniques that makes the performance nonsensical to the audience and could be shoved aside as just a joke. This performance creates verisimilitude as Trevor Noah deliberately contrives the terrorist and challenger before the audience, and the toning down of a grave situation in this manner is indeed unreal. Thus, Trevor Noah's performance corroborates the idea that out of the serious and chaotic coercive world, comedians carve a reality of their own through playfulness and make-believe chaos (Afolayan, 1999). Trevor Noah represents a scary scene illusorily to stimulate the audience to laugh and no one feels umbrage about dishonouring their religion. Otherwise, the menace of terrorism is never a material for comedy. Nevertheless, Trevor Noah hints on an initiative that could reverse the act of terror by persuasion, and this performance beats imagination and expectation.

It has been argued that “as semiotic material is reused for something else it creates another chain in intersemiosis, and with this new meanings are achieved” (Banda, 2016: 15). Still on terrorism, Trevor Noah remediates another make-believe narration of his personal experience on board of an Emirate Aeroplane for the purpose of educating the society on another possible way of curtailing terrorism. The performance is presented in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 12

Trevor Noah Video 1: Trevor Noah – Stand Up Comedy 2015 – Best Comedian Ever

51:21

Really, really, we have our prejudices...don't get me wrong. It's not like I ...I tried to be better, I really do. I realise even now again I do things I'm not particularly proud of. Like for instance, whenever I fly into America, if I'm out of the country and flying back into America, I will try to fly on Middle Eastern Airline, specifically (*laughter*). So, I'm flying on Emirate, or Qatar, or ATL or one of those... And the reason I do this is because I feel there is less chance (*laughter*) that somebody (*raises right hand as if drawing in the space as he talks hesitantly – laughter continues*) ah ... that somebody ... and it may sound a little bit crazy, you have every right to be afraid (*loud noise*)... but I feel eh there's less chance somebody will attack one of those planes (*laughter*). For a few reasons: Number one: because they're not proving a point (*laughter*). The plane is already Muslim own, Muslim run, they're not converting anybody. And secondly and more importantly, on my side I think there is a small chance. Somebody could defuse the situation. Somebody could talk them down just because they speak the same language (*laughter*). That's half of terror for me, the fact you don't understand what the person says (*laughter*). The guy is speaking Arabic, Arabic. They put fear in the heart of all men, Allah lahi la watalah Allah... (*mimicking speaking Arabic – laughter*). You never think good things when you hear Arabic, never, never. We watch too many movies and TV shows. Whenever you hear Arabic, you heard something bad happened; then immediately after that what happened. Allah la illa la wa taillallah (*mimicking speaking Arabic*) ...*pfuuuuuuu*... It's never something cool or sexy. It's never ah Allah la waillallah ...(*mimicking speaking Arabic – laughter*)*puuuuuuuuuuf* (*laughter*). It's never that. And so it makes you think ... it makes you think that certainly... I know, I know I'm not any different (*mild laughter*). I was on a flight, my first Middle Eastern flight, finally Emirates plane. And this man emerged from the galley, a long beard, he was carrying a box. And he just went up, and he's like ...Allahuwa la chuka la walailah la, kah la waillah la...and I say *haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa* (*making modulated high to low pitch frightening sound and gesture*), chicken please (*loud laughter for long time*). Chicken, sorry I *heh heh* (*laughter continues*). I get really excited for chicken (*laughter continues*). I'm sorry for that, sorry. My friend, excited? You look petrified. I said I am, of the flavour (*laughter continues*). Chikeeeeeeeeeeeen, wah, I love chicken, I love chicken so much. Ohhhhh, is that eh... is that a black thing? (*laughter*). I said that's racist (*laughter continues*).

This excerpt is another deft adjustment of jokes by Trevor Noah as he moves from talking about prejudice to talking about terror in a string of jokes. In re-performing the actions of a suicide bomber and himself in stream of semiotic trajectory, he takes the audience back to what transpired inside the aeroplane. As he remediates the story, he makes descriptive gesticulations; he raises the right hand and demonstrates as if he is drawing. Also, to create immediacy, he resounds the Adhan (Muslims call for prayer), implying the terrorist is about to carry out the suicide bombing assignment. To soothe the critical issue and sound funny, he speaks hesitantly as he describes how somebody could talk to defuse the situation and mimics the Arabic chanting which is capable of setting passengers on edge on a plane. To solidify the creation of virtual reality before the audience, he makes *pfuuuuuuu* sound and describes how he as a principal actor shouts *haaa*, modulating it from high pitch to low pitch, but surprisingly requests for chicken after such a long frightening shout. Trevor Noah adeptly speaks hesitantly, gestures, uses facial expressions, and a low tone of voice, and these modes defray the negative reactions that could follow the performance. As the joke builds up in layers, he connects the terror to the issue of racism by saying that a man asked if his drama is a black thing and he quickly retorted “that's racist”. Though, these characters could either be real or imagined (Gilbert, 1997), Trevor Noah combines all the modes mentioned to help him to achieve virtual reality as if making the audience witness the real event live. Trevor Noah

exploits these modes to reveal this critical issue, and thereby his performance corroborates scholars' belief that "proffer a potential exigency as a viable plan for persuading" (Grabill and Blythe, 2010:186) a suicide bomber who is willing to bring down a passenger plane. He springs humour from illustrating his apprehension of calamity by "wittingly sounding humorous, ironical, or philosophically elimination of mischance, and thus aims to allay and assuage the impulse of sullenness, thereby fending off calamity by means of laughter" (Wood, 1988: 25-26). Comedians talk about issues that are pertinent to the society including religion (Arpan et al., 2011; Parkin, 2010; Young, 2004; Baum, 2002), the stimulating delivery of the modes enables Trevor Noah to warm himself into the hearts of the audience, with no feeling of umbrage. Let us look at racial segregation next.

7.5.2 Remediating Court Proceeding

Loyiso Gola draws on a real court proceeding where a case of murder was being entertained and used it as a semiotic resource to communicate different meanings in his performance. Given the shock that spread throughout the world, it is surprising that the incident of Oscar Pistorius' shooting his girlfriend in 2013 can be material for comedy. However, in invoking the comic licence in which no topic is a taboo, Loyiso Gola flagrantly crosses that boundary as he trivialises the mishap before the audience. In his performance, he re-enacts the court proceeding about a qualified geologist testifying in the case. His remediation of the scenario is presented below.

Excerpt 13

Loyiso Gola Video 3: [Loyiso Gola - Waptubes.Com](http://waptubes.com)

03:09

You don't want to be like that guy Mr. Dixon, Mr. Dixon the sound expert. His only job was to differentiate between a cricket bat hitting a door and a gunshot. And they brought the expert, they could have just bring any black person. Any black person (*laughter*) knows the sound of a gun A gunshooti! [*Nguni accent*] If a gunshot went off now, black people in the parking lot quickly will be in the parking lot, paying for parking, gone N2 (*laughter*), home. White people will still be here "I wonder where that sound was (*demonstration – laughter*). I'm not sure. I wonder. It was like a big bang. I'm not sure" (*laughter*). No, chief (*laughter*), there is no expert needed; ask a black person-ni [*Nguni accent*]. Black people will tell you exactly a gun shot. So, Mr. Dixon only job was to differentiate between a cricket bat hitting a door and a gunshot, fucking it up (*laughter*). He was in court, they ask him questions, couldn't answer the questions, stupid questions, I mean stupid answers,

giving stupid, stupid, stupid answers. They put it to him: “Mr. Dixon, (*walking on stage*) what instrument did you utilise to examine the sound?” And I swear to God, Mr. Dixon looks, he looks at the court and said: “My ears my lady”. Hey, (*turning backward – laughter*), you come here as a sound expert and you brought your fucking ear. Hey..... “sundi qhela amasimba, uyanya, perhaps” (“Don’t take us for a fool, you must be crazy, perhaps”).

Loyiso Gola reworks the court proceeding by acting as both the judge and the witness (Mr Dixon). He starts off by using an Nguni accent and demonstrates someone who is confused to commend black people prowess because black people will not stress to distinguish between gunshots and other sounds. Furthermore, he harmonizes the modes of giggling, shouting, gesticulating, turning his head backward and code switching from English to Xhosa to mock Mr Dixon. These modes enable Loyiso Gola to transform the serious court proceeding into humour. However, by turning backwards and mockingly saying ‘my ears my lady’, he demeans Mr Dixon to augment the laughter from the audience. Also, in using the American slang term ‘fucking’ as add-ons to the preceding modes he is remediating for a different purpose. Thus, as he recounts how Mr Dixon answered questions, he rubs him in the mud, berating him for performing lower than expected for an expert. In line with scholars, this performance is a demonstration of “licensed abuse” (Parker, 2002; Afolayan, 1999), because Loyiso Gola deliberately denigrates Mr Dixon and the audience laugh at Mr Dixon’s inefficiency. Therefore, I would argue that Loyiso Gola humorously employs graphic narrative, accent, slang and grimace to depict Mr Dixon as someone who fails to display his professional capability as a qualified geologist.

In addition, by peppering his performance with dirty words such as ‘stupid’ and ‘fucking’, Loyiso Gola’s communication here could be placed in a what Seizer believes is “off the record”, and it implies that he is speaking from the heart as he exaggerates and plays loosely with “the truth” (Seizer, 2011: 214). Hence, the remediation of the court’s proceeding offers Loyiso Gola liberty to downgrade Mr Dixon, and with the support of the audience, he paints him in the image of mediocrity. Having shunned the decorum of speech and due respect, Loyiso Gola uses ‘piercing words’ to designate Mr Dixon as stupid in the manner he answered questions in the law court. I would further argue that stand-up comedians talk about people with disdain as they conveniently heave contempt on people without sanction and the audience enjoys every filament of the joke.

7.5.3. Police brutality – unnecessary killings

Trevor Noah draws on a factual event to communicate different meanings in his performance. The excerpt below is part of the long narrative about his experience with the police in Los Angeles, in the United States. The excerpt below shows how Trevor Noah demonstrates how he throws himself out of his car's window.

Excerpt 14

Trevor Noah Video 1: welcome to America

15:03

My dad left when I was five. It makes no sense. So, I don't know how not to die. Here I am in my car on the side of the road riding in the streets of Los Angeles, and the whole time was like I don't want to die, I don't want to die. And the policeman gets out of his car and he starts walking towards me. And his hand is by his side and he's doing this (*shaking fingers by his right pocket side – laughter*). And now walks towards me (*laughter*). I know what this means (*hand by the right pocket – laughter*). This is never good (*laughter*). This (*hand by the pocket side*) never turns into friendship (*hand stretched as if to have handshake – long loud laughter*). So, I'm starting to stress I'm looking at him in the side mirror of my car and I'm panicking because objects in the mirror are closing as they appear ...(*laughter*). So, he's going to get there any moment. And I don't know why, I don't why I did this. Like I see this, I panic I completely panic. And I launched myself out of the window. I took my body and I threw it out of the window (*bending his body in demonstration of how he hung on the car's door*) (*laughter*). And I fell on this side of the car just like puu unto the side of the car. I basically went back to nature. I thought of a predator, you don't make eye contact and you play dead. That's all I did (*laughter*). I just stay doing this on this side of the car. Shame, it freaked him out. He was completely ... he was just like hey, hey, hey what's going on? And I say I'm sorry officer (*imitating toddler's voice – laughter*). I'm sorry. So, what do you sorry for? Sir, whatever it is that is going to make you shoot me, I'm sorry. I'm sorry officer. He said: "Sir, get back in the car, get back in the car". I said: "Noooo", (*laughter*) I don't want to die please, I'm not falling for that trick please officer I'm sorry sir, I'm sorry. He said: "Sorry! You know I'm not going to kill you. Just get back in the car, get back". I mean this guy was just as freak out as I was I'm not going to lie because I'm putting myself in his shoe (*laughter*). What does he do?



Figure B: @16:06 – Trevor Noah demonstrating hanging out on the car's door

In the strand of this performance, Trevor Noah considers black people experience with the police in the United States, and alludes to the time his father left him as the reason for his phobia of death. To reenact how being prone to the policeman's bullet causes him to panic, he puts his right hand in his pocket and thrusts the pocket with his fingers to demonstrate that pointing a gun at someone is not a friendly trait. Also, he bends (Figure B) to demonstrate how he locks the door, hangs himself downward on the car's window and avoids eye contact with the police for fear of being shot. He mimics sobbing with a juvenile tone to reiterate his discourse with the policeman when he says: "*I'm sorry officer*". Thus, Trevor Noah redesigns and recreates the black Americans' fear of the police⁴ before the audience. He synchronizes the communicative modes of gesture, movement, bending, shaking fingers by his right pocket side and sounding childish to create immediacy, and the audience become invested in the performance as they continuously reverberate in laughter. Trevor ornaments this real encounter with embellishments to make the joke acceptable and his playful style enables him to adjust the police procedure of work to communicate about police brutality. As one mode opens onto another (Bolter and Grusin, 1996), in this representation, Trevor Noah effectively moves from one idea to another in the long narration of his encounter with the police. Also, being conscious of his American audience, Trevor Noah situates the joke in the American context, and validating Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009), he displays ad hoc humorous

⁴ Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some black communities, which merely call on black people to love black, live black and buy black, keeping straight cis black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the black liberation movement (<http://blacklivesmatter.com>).

performance while constantly building an interaction with his audience to facilitate the acceptability of the joke. Thus, I would argue that, in the process of remediating the original incident, Trevor Noah is quirky, spontaneous and reveals how insecure black people feel with the white police officers in the United States. At this point, I shall move from jokes about factual and fictitious issues to jokes about disability.

7.6. Repurposing disability in stand-up comedy

Even more surprisingly, Ali Baba draws on disability as semiotic resource with the purpose of bringing about a change in the society. He specifically enacts a stammerer making a phone call articulating how the stammerer utters words with involuntary pauses and repetitions. The performance is presented in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 15

Ali Balb Video 5: Alibaba 2012 Night of a Thousand Laughs

05:22

Now, something dey happen. A lot of una don hear say e good make all network: MTN and all other networks, get special price for stammerer. It is not easy for them and e dey very hard when stammerers wan borrow your phone to make one minute call. You no dey know say na stammerer until e don dey make the call (*mild laughter all through*). And you know say stammerer no dey like make somebody help them to finish a sentence. When they wan ask you for the phone, dey go just talk am straight. L, l, l,let me use one minute. You go give am. Before im start to dey make the call, naim you go know you don enter trouble. They will say: “is one small con, co, con, contract I so, so, so, so, so, ... oh, is, is, is, ring... is rin-in-ging. And they don’t normally pick their calls, qui, qui, qu, qui...” you will say: quick. He say: “eh... they don’t pick it qui, qu, qui, qu, qui, qui, quick”. Then, the person go pick the call: “Cha, cha, chairman is me; I’m the one that so, so, so, so, so...” You wey get the phone know how much credit you get. You go say: let me help you talk to the man. They say: “wha, wha, are you the one that so, so, so, so, so, supplied it” (*laughter*).

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

As the excerpt shows, Ali Baba recreates a stammerer’s mode of speaking, but he blends both English and Nigerian Pidgin very conveniently to make a vital societal point. He points out the challenge that stammerers deal with and suggests that all telephone communication networks should consider giving special prices to ‘stammerers’ considering that they need more time to produce utterances during communication. He employs the mode of mimicking a stammerer by repeating the consonants ‘l’, and syllables ‘con’, ‘qui’ and ‘so’ and abruptly connecting the last consonant or syllable of words to achieve immediacy. By acting as a

social commentator (Roozen, 2010), Ali Baba recreates a typical stammerer making a phone call for the purpose of making a recommendation. This re-contextualization shifts the manner in which a stammerer makes a phone call to suggest that telecommunication companies could adjust their charges and consider special rates for stammerers, because their articulation is usually characterized by longer involuntary hesitations during communication. Ali Baba appears to make a laughingstock of stammerers, but in line with scholars' opinions, this joke educates and can lead to changes in social behaviour and social policy (Reid, Stoughton and Smith, 2006).

7.7 Remediating entertainment media

The comedians draw semiotic materials from movie acting and music. Basket Mouth and Ali Baba draw materials from the entertainment industry in the videos examined. Basket Mouth specifically uses music and movies from Nollywood (Nigeria film industry) as semiotic resources for the purpose of underrating the entertainment industry somehow. First, he jabs at the shortcomings in some films he had watched by re-enacting some characters. One of his reworking of the scenes is presented as follows.

Excerpt 16

Basket Mouth Video 2: Basket mouth Stand up part 2

05:31

Nigerian films most times some of their movies are good. Some of them, they are not too good. I watch one the other day. There was thethe wordsthey were talking slowly because they wanted to kill time. Nothing dey to talk. Kanayo O Kanayo just came out (*demonstration gesture*). 'You, I'm going to shoot you now and you will die'. (*He acts the two characters by moving to two opposite positions A and B*) Saint Obi said: oh why do you want to shoot me, what did I do (*laughter*). (*Moves to position B*) 'Shut up, shut up, now die'. The gun shots always sound like knockout pa, pa, pa; 'aah, aah (*demonstration*) aah, you have shoot me; now, I will die' (*applause laughter*). Thank you.

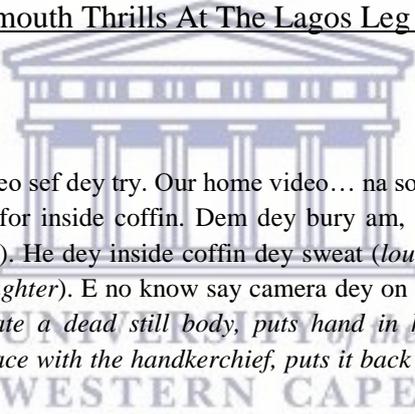
In the excerpt, Basket Mouth reenacts movie acting as he moves on stage in the process of creating immediacy when repurposing acting techniques of some characters in Nigerian films. After he accentuates the fact that the production of films in Nigeria has both good and bad sides, he re-acts the acting of the two characters and alternates between opposite positions. In the process of remediation he becomes two actors in one. To create aesthetics, he amusingly rearranges a Nigerian the movie scene by using the mode of moving from point

A to point B on the stage to demonstrate the amateurish way the shooter and victim's scene was acted. In tandem with Bolter and Grusin's (2000) opinion, these modes achieve immediacy because the audience can see the movie acting through Basket Mouth and connect to the real characters he is remediating. However, the purpose is to pick a flaw in the scenes and present the actors as unskilled and bereft of professional training. In this way, the audience should laugh at the actors in the movie as well as the Nollywood movie industry in a light-hearted context. I would argue that replicating these unpolished acting skits before the audience shows Basket Mouth's re-formation of movie acting to convince the audience that some of the Nigerian movies are deficient and only worthy of being scoffed at. In what follows, I shall present Basket Mouth's ridicule of a scene in another Nigerian movie in excerpt 17 below.

Excerpt 17

Basket Mouth Video 4: Basketmouth Thrills At The Lagos Leg Of GLO LAFFTA Fest

03:00



Our Nigeria... our home video sef dey try. Our home video... na so I watch one home video, one burial scene. The person wey die for inside coffin. Dem dey bury am, he dey dance (*dancing movements, mouth-drumming – laughter*). He dey inside coffin dey sweat (*loud laughter*). As una know the name of the film I for tell una (*laughter*). E no know say camera dey on top am, he dey sweat. Na so im dey (*standing still to demonstrate a dead still body, puts hand in his pocket and brings out a white handkerchief and wipe his face with the handkerchief, puts it back and joins the audience to laugh*). O boy!

As the excerpt shows, Basket Mouth holds Nollywood movies in derision as he scornfully describes a Nigerian movie scene where an actor is acting as a corpse stuffed inside a coffin. Basket Mouth's remediation of the errors of the 'make-believe-corpse-actor' in the Nollywood movie is conveyed through the modes of dancing, using a handkerchief to wipe his face, and standing motionless before the audience. He links meaning to these various modes of expressions (Saferstein and Sarangi, 2010: 159) in order to repurpose this scene to downgrade some of the movies produced by Nollywood. He demonstrates the stiff posture and wiping his face with a handkerchief to create virtual reality for the audience to see the corpse placed in the coffin. Beyond the humorous denotation of this performance, Basket Mouth portrays sectors of the Nigerian film industry as 'learner' in the movie production and this shortcoming makes their acting sub-standard and laughable. In this manner, he creates another version of the movie acting which can be juxtaposed with the original actions in the

movie he is re-enacting. However, this skit could not have generated laughter but for what scholars consider an exhibition of physicality which warms his demonstration to the audience (Double and Wilson, 2004).

Basket Mouth uses music in his performance; he remediates the lyrics of some Nigerian musicians by parodying lines from their songs. The repurposing of the songs is presented in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 18

Basket Mouth Video 4: Basketmouth Thrills At The Lagos Leg Of GLO LAFFTA Fest

02:18

(Song 1) And our Nigerian musician, make una no vex o. I no know sha. But our Nigerian musician no be... e don teywey this problem... wey we don get this problem o. E don tey... from Felix Liberty: Ifeoma, Ifeoma, Ifeoma, she don hear you now (*laughter*). Ifeoma, Ifeoma, Ifeoma, Ifeoma, Ifeoma, Ifeoma, I... She be deaf and dumb? (*laughter*). "Give me your love". Buy am drink first (*laughter*).

(Song 2) Then, *eh* wetin be dat boy song? Eh... Chris Daniel (*singing*)...

"No be you I carry come

But na you I go carry go".

Ha haa, you are arrogant (*laughter*). You no even ask her why she get boyfriend. You just wan carry her go house.

In recycling the song of Felix Liberty, Basket Mouth bobs his body forward as he repeats 'Ifeoma' for aesthetics and to perform exactly like the musician. This technique achieves the notion of immediacy because the musician might have utilised this repetition for rhythm and musical aesthetics. However, Basket Mouth counters the musician's repetition of Ifeoma because he sarcastically questions the rationale behind the repetition of Ifeoma as if she is deaf and dumb. Moreover, he gives a rejoinder to the line in which the musician sang: 'give me your love' by saying that the musician must first buy Ifeoma a drink. Since music involves a lot of body movements and rhetorical devices, Basket Mouth utilises body movements and gestures to accompany the singing with the purpose of passing his own comment and discourage the uncivil manner in which Felix Liberty tries to win the love of Ifeoma.

Coming to the second song, Basket Mouth also uses the modes of gesture and Pidgin English to re-enact Chris Daniel's song. The lines, '*No be you I carry come, but na you I go carry go*' (Translation: 'You are not the one I came with, but you are the one I'm taking home') prods his rejoinder in the subsequent line thus: "you are arrogant". In context, this song implies telling a lady that I have not brought you (perhaps to the club), but I am taking you home. Basket Mouth remediates what people experience every day when listening to songs, but he sounds domineering while playfully berating the musician. His tone sounds jovial and fun, similar to what Mintz (1985) notes; also, his performance reprimands the musician before the audience and the audience vibrate with laughter, which Limon (2000) considers the essence of the comedy. Thus, Basket Mouth reframes the lines in both songs to efface himself and make the audience interact with Felix Liberty and Chris Daniel so as to see the silliness in these musicians and laugh at them. I would argue that the modes exploited for repurposing these songs serve as dosages to make them sound absurd and become semiotic resources for sarcasm.

Dancing is another semiotic material drawn from the entertainment media and remediated for different meanings. For instance, Ali Baba and Ifedayo Lucian Olarinde (stage name: Daddy Freeze) engage in an on-stage dialogue to achieve immediacy, prompting the audience to see agreements and disagreements between them. However, they brought ladies from the audience to the stage and the ensued drama involved making the audience part of the mediation of comedy performance. Scenes from the drama are presented below:

Excerpt 19a

Ali Baba Video 1: ALIBABA-FREEZE COMEDY AT NIGHT WITH THE MASTERS

00:39

Ali Baba: Now, all of you are... if you don't know the kind wahala that you people are into now. Look at *eh* Ebenezer Obey. He can do night dance. Five years that shoe, its bottom will be brand new (*Starts simple dancing moves*).

Ketekete nlo lofo (Donkey is walking empty);

Baba pelu omo re (Father and his son);

Won n'feserin tele (They are walking behind it);

P square one leg of shoe, they have to change the sole (*starts a hard dancing moves – laughter*)
Skelewu.

Freeze: Who can do skelewu here?

Ali Baba: Which one is skelewu?

Freeze: Eh?

Ali Baba: Which one is skelewu?

Freeze: Ali Baba say: which one is skelewu? Ali baba, you're officially sixty (*laughter*).

Ali Baba: What is Skelewu? Skelewu, is it one kind of food?

Freeze: You, you know what? I will enter inside the crowd, person go explain quickly now.

Ali Baba: No, no, no, because I know, look ... This people have started. This Yoruba people dem different names for this ...food. Madam, give me two skelewu and (*laughter*) one...

Ali Baba Ali Baba becomes a dancer as he recycles the old dancing as semiotic material. He starts the performance with the semiotic integration of the easy-going music of yesteryears of Ebenezer Obey and hints that dancing to music of the P Square is problematic. His demonstration of hard dancing moves creates immediacy that such dancing wears off soles of shoes easily and the culprit is a new song with its dancing called 'Skelewu'. However, Freeze wants to rectify Ali Baba's mockery of energetic skelewu dancing by requesting that someone from the audience volunteer to dance 'Skelewu' (a more contemporary dance in Nigeria) for Ali Baba. There are multiple dialogues using different semiotic materials keep the performance moving forward without which the performance may collapse. Also, there is dialoguing between the languages such as blending Yoruba and pidgin English into the performance without which the English part falls. Moreover, Freeze considers Ali Baba's calling skelewu a kind of food ridiculous and detached from the reality of the present. The stringing together of different modes expands the meaning in this performance beyond the singing, dancing and exchanges between the comedians. Thus, they are symbolic expressions of meaning (O'Halloran, 2011) in which Ali Baba represents the old generation, Freeze represents the new as the performance remediates the contemporary music and dancing in Nigeria. Music is entertaining but it is hereby remediated as humorous.

Furthermore, Freeze scouts the audience for someone to demonstrate the skelewu dance as we shall see in excerpt 19b below.

Excerpt 19b

Ali Baba Video 1: ALIBABA–FREEZE COMEDY AT NIGHT WITH THE MASTERS

01:27

Freeze: Who knows what skelewu is? Who can show Ali Baba skelewu? (*noise from the audience*). Anybody in the house? Who? Ha haa, people dey protest from that side (*going down to the audience*) ehn, who?

Ali Baba: Come, come, hey leave those girls (*noise and laughter*) leave those girls.

Freeze: For how much? (*bringing a lady from the audience to the stage and talking to her*) come, can we all put our hands together for ...

Ali Baba: Hey, no, no...Freeze, Freeze, don't bring her just take her this thing there she will go and put it on her DV (*Freeze is bringing the lady to the stage*).

[cont'd @02:18]

Ali Baba: Wait, wait, wait, wait...is she... (*talking to the lady*) Do you like drinking champagne? Are you the brand ambassador for MOEP Beep Oil? (*noise laughter*)

Freeze: (*ignoring Ali Baba and talking to the lady on the stage*) Come, come, come, yes, bros don old...

Ali Baba: (*Looking at the lady's shoes*) Chineke! All these shoes na go get visa for America (*loud laughter*). In Jesus' name they must give you the visa (*camera shows the lady's shoes*).

[cont'd @03:10]

Freeze: Alright, alright, alright, alright, for one minute she's going to demonstrate skelewu for all the olden days people that are here, for all the daddy's and mummy's... (*putting microphone in the lady's mouth*): What's your name?

Lady: Ugo

Freeze: Ugo? Ha haa! You're Ibo? (*she nods in agreement*)



Figure C: @06:45 – Ugo is dancing Skelewu on the stage – the band at the background

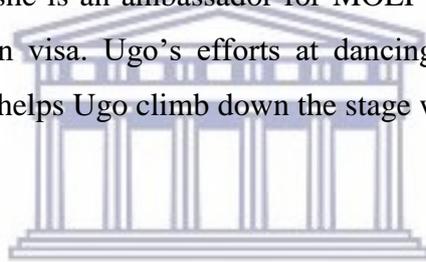
[cont'd @06:53]

Ali Baba: Em (*holding Ugo's hand and helps her climb down the stage steps; now talking to Freeze*) come, come, you're, you're, you're a liar. You say you are going to bring somebody to come and dance skelewu, this one is skinnywu (*laughter*). Le...

Freeze: Abeg, abeg, abeg

Ali Baba: Skelewu should be somebody that can break a scale (*closing and expanding his hands – laughter*), skelewu, skelewu, skelewu.... This one is skelewi (*laughter*).

As dramatised in the excerpt above, Ali Baba and Daddy Freeze deploy several modes to communicate meaning. Freeze brings Ugo from the audience to demonstrate the skelewu dancing and the on-stage chemistry of their exchanges keeps the performance going. As we can see Ali Baba and Daddy Freeze engage in dialoguing involving questions and statements, the contention is that Ali Baba believes skelewu is a recycling of old dancing while Daddy Freeze prefers someone should dance skelewu to show that it is a different dance of the new generation. As a result, there are several remediations and repurposings. Ali Baba is having a dialogue with Daddy Freeze and the two of them have dialogue with the audience – multiple dialogues taking place at the same time. In that process, Ali Baba mocks Ugo’s shoes using Igbo exclamation ‘Chineke’ (God), and with other ridiculous questions such as whether she likes drinking champagne, if she is an ambassador for MOEP and even the remark that her shoes would get an American visa. Ugo’s efforts at dancing skelewu (Figure C) do not impress Ali Baba and he later helps Ugo climb down the stage while he returns to the stage to upbraid Freeze.



All these stunts are modes to create immediacy and the blending of linguistic representation with non-linguistic representation for the audience to see the ‘skelewu dance’ directly in front of them. By mocking Ugo’s physique, calling her *Skinnywu* (implying that she is a skinny person) and distorting her dancing as *Skelewi*, we can see that this dialogic style affords Ali Baba, Freeze and Ugo to achieve immediacy as they occupy one physical and ‘diegetic’ space (Harbridge, 2011) – a sphere in which the performance occurs. In addition, the audience forms part of the mediation of the humour by their participation and applause reaction. Hence, stand-up comedy is not a one-way presentation; rather, it is a form of performance in which both the performer and the audience are co-constructors (Brodie, 2008). In like manner, the connectedness of modes to communicate meanings continues to hold the audience’s attention as the performance progresses below.

Excerpt 19c

Ali Baba Video 1: ALIBABA–FREEZE COMEDY AT NIGHT WITH THE MASTERS

07:20

Freeze: Ladies and gentlemen, can we have an *eyyah* for Ali Baba wey don old (*the audience erupts ineeyah*). Ali, which die you dey take die your head?

Ali Baba: You say? (*noise and laughter. He did not answer the question but continues sarcastic singing*) skelewu, skelewu. Oh, (*pointing to the audience*) there is somebody there that wants to do skelewu.

Freeze: Oya, come, come, come, fine sister, sharp, sharp, sharp, sharp.

Ali Baba: Haaaaaaaaa, (*applause as a voluptuous lady comes from the audience. He shouts, applause and laughter continue*) Heeeeey, skelewi...

Freeze: Jesus!

Ali Baba: (*pushes Freeze aside*)

Freeze: (*as the lady approaches the stage steps and climbs*) Watch ... now...one, two, three, four....

Ali Baba: Bless this food O Lord we are about to have in Jesus name (*helping the lady as she moves on the stage and surveying her bodily figure – applause and laughter continue*).

Freeze: This kind backside, ...

Ali Baba: Hey, (*facing the audience*) come, come. This why I say Road Safety is not working (*laughter*). This should come with a number plate (*audience noise and laughter*), BB Botswana (*the lady confirms she's from Botswana*). You're Botswana? Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa (*making japing movements*). That is how I went to South Africa. We were driving pass all the streets. My friend say where are we going? I say ha haa, we can't see their radius. Won ti n ya wa lori (*laughter – turning to look at the lady*) hey ...

[...]

Ali Baba: Omoge show me your back (*the lady stats swinging her waist*)...

The audience: Dig it right, dig it left, jowo show me your...

Freeze: (*talking to the lady*) No, you're wasting it (*holding the lady's hand and turning her back to the audience for correct bodily response*) Like this, eh, ehn...

Ali Baba: Bobo show me your back... (*rushes to stand in between Freeze and the lady, pushing Freeze away from the lady and turning to upbraid him*). When you bring your own, did I interrupt? When you brought your own, did I interrupt?



Figure D: @10:27 – Ali Baba (in front), Daddy Freeze behind him, the two Botswana ladies dancing

Also, there is interaction of different modes in the performance. We can see that the audience participate by saying ‘eeyah’ in response to Daddy Freeze’s request to mock Ali Baba which the latter ignored. On the contrary, Ali Baba sarcastically sings another song different from skelewu and points to someone coming from the audience. In addition, the modes include both Ali Baba and Freeze making exclamation of astonishment, Ali Baba pushing Freeze aside, blessing the lady as food and surveying her body figure. Daddy Freeze acknowledges the lady’s backside, but Ali Baba dialogues with the lady, makes a loud shout and japing movements. Thus, we can see all these modes achieve hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) because the modes multiply as Ali Baba and Daddy Freeze try to efface themselves and make the audience see skelewu dance.

Since the purpose of the performance is to actualise skelewu dance, the comedians have to bring back the audience’s attention to demonstrating skelewu by asking the DJ to play the skelewu song. The lady dances and willingly allows Ali Baba to touch and turn her on the stage. The context of the performance accounts for her cooperation without feeling offended; rather, another Botswana lady (Figure D) joins her to dance on the stage. This performance style creates virtual reality (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) because the audience can see the skelewu dancing as they participate actively to actualise the performance. As demonstrated in this comedy show, stand-up comedy indeed thrives on objectification (Gilbert, 1997); that is, using someone as object. Thus, Ali Baba and Freeze achieve immediacy by bringing the

ladies for the audience to see the real objects being ridiculed. They achieve hypermediacy by replacing one person with another, one song with another and keep dramatising throughout the performance. In this way, they remediate stereotypes because Ali Baba brings in his experience in South African where he finds that ladies have huge hips. This performance also shows they need more than basic comedic skills to survive in that environment and they need to bring in human material from the audience, as what Banda and Jimaima (2015: 648) termed, “additional or intricate input in repurposing natural objects”, in this case, human beings for meaning making. Very importantly, as Scarpetta and Spagnoli (2009) argue, the environment where the jokes are performed account for the acceptability of the jokes and the audience not only allies in the creation of the humour but also co-responsible for the humour.

7.8 Remediating factual and fictitious subjects to make comparison

Just as John Stewart in *The Daily Show* circumvents traditional conventions by using comedic techniques of parody and satire to mock mainstream news and thereby provide people with information about politics and the world than many news media (Feldman, 2007), the comedians in this study draw materials from both the electronic and print media. For example, Basket Mouth also blatantly mocks the Nigerian Television Authority by comparing it to the British Broadcasting Corporation to stimulate the audience to laugh. The following excerpt contains how he remediates news reporting from the CNN, BBC and NTA.

Excerpt 20

Basket Mouth Video 5: Basket Mouth in Houston LOL COMEDY SHOW (2011) by Golden Icons

00:15

Newscaster Christiane Amanpour, I don't know if you guys no am. Yeah, she, she, she covers the war. She covers every war. She's like a veteran, a war veteran without shooting any gun (*laughter*). She's a war veteran. She goes to the war front and she reports from there. Oh my, we're here and in back, oh my God. You can't believe what's happening right now. They're soldiers, they're doing this and that, *eh...puum*. Bomb dey blow *puum*. She still dey there. CNN they cover..., BBC they cover anything. NTA (Nigerian Television Authority), ... (*laughter*). Have you ever seen any reporter for NTA covering even riot? (*laughter*). Never! (*laughter*) The best they can do..., maybe they are fighting one small riot around *eh...VI* (Victoria Island). Let's start... let's say VI. You see the reporter. Em, alright, the guy no go dey... maybe they are fighting around Ozumba Mbadiwe. The guy go dey at Ahmadu Bello near bar beach (*laughter continues*). Alright, my name is Usman *eh* Mohammed, and *eh, em...*

I'm reporting live for NTA (*laughter continues*). If you walk straight down this road (*laughter continues*), and turn right, that is where they are fighting the riot (*laughter*). So please don't pass that road (*laughter*). Let's just wait here, a witness will pass eventually. You see somebody just running (*running on stage*). They say come, come, come, what's happening over there? People are dying. As you can hear, people are dying (*laughter*). He no send now. You see, oyinbo ...they are never afraid (*laughter*). Look at the... look at animal planet. What's that guy, the crocodile guy, that guy (*laughter*), that guy, crocodile don dey right... cro... crocodile...right? Do you watch that guy when he was doing those stuffs? He go go forest, rain forest. O boy, come, come, come, come, come closer, come closer. You see over there? Over, there, that's the most dangerous snake in the world. With one bite, you're dead in five seconds. You know what? Let's go closer (*laughter*). You just said that you'll die in five seconds, and you're going closer (*laughter*). Let me pull the tail and see the reaction, *pum* (*moves forward*). Oh my God, it almost bit me (*jumps backward – laughter*). You go die (*laughter*).

From the excerpt, Basket Mouth uses the journalistic practice of veteran CNN war reporter, Christiane Amanpour to mock the NTA reporter, Usman Mohammed. He paints a picture of Christiane Amanpour's skills at delivering objective news while he mocks the NTA reporter for unprofessional news reporting. In this segment of the joke, Basket Mouth utilises modes of sound (*puum*), running on the stage, jumping backward, mannerisms (*O boy*), and Pidgin English to remediate the reporting for humour. Basket Mouth partially releases some of his clenched fingers and closes them quickly to make inviting signs, uses descriptive gestures, moves to his left, turns his head to the right, moves back to the right, leaps to the left, leaps back to the right as modes to achieve immediacy. He uses this fusion of multi-semiotic resources involving linguistic and non-linguistic modes to realize different meanings, enabling the audience to visualise the reporters somehow. Thus, he presents the BBC and CNN reporters as brave professionals, because they report live from the real scene of chaotic incidents such as wars and riots, including the sound of bombs that go with them.

On the contrary, Basket Mouth suggests that NTA reporters spinelessly report far away from the action spots and depend on stories from people escaping from the real scene of the incidents they are reporting. Also, by drawing on how animal documentaries are reported, the modes of voice, rhetorical questions, movements and gestures (Van Leeuwen, 2005) used by Basket Mouth to remediate news reporting, demonstrates how CNN animal documentary reporters will fearlessly enter into territories of wild animals and even risk to stroke dangerous animals. On the other hand, the NTA reporter will never venture into that, but will rather tell people to visit the animals if they wish to see them. In this way, he reworks the bravery of CNN reporters having physical contact with wild animals to venerate the CNN reporters as heroes, while he downplays NTA reporters as a coward who lack journalistic

intrepidity. Indeed, this performance shows that “contemporary comics serve as both cultural barometers and cultural critics” (Gilbert, 2004).

Trevor Noah continues reconstructing factual issues in his performance for creating different meaning. In another segment of the performance, he puts the focus on prejudice as he condemns extrajudicial killings provoked by racial bigotry; he draws semiotic material from the biased way of reporting killings in poor neighbourhood versus rich neighbourhood. Consider the following excerpt.

Excerpt 21

Trevor Noah Video 1: Trevor Noah – Stand Up Comedy 2015 – Best Comedian Ever

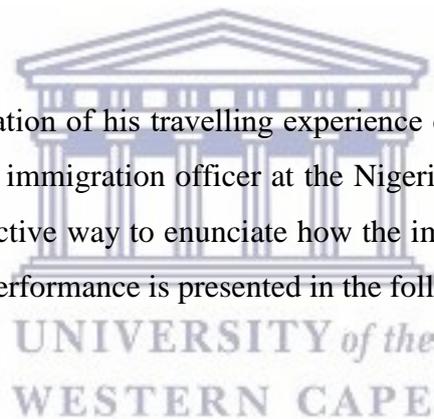
45:32

If you're a Middle Easterner, you're doing something to a black person, black person got shot in the bad neighbourhood; the first story always leads with...always leads with the same thing. And today in Gauteng, a man was shot in what was suspected to be gang related violence. It's always gang-related violence. They never say it's anything else, maybe it just two guys, gang related, probably gang related. Why do you say that? Why? Because you know in the area there is (*neck twisting movement*) hip hop (*laughter*). Well is gang related. Because it doesn't matter who it is. It could be two kids, someone got shot. A three year old was shot today by a four year old in what is suspected to be gang related violence. But they were kids here. Yeah, they were cruel very young (*laughter*). Wasn't it a mistake? No it's not a mistake. It's never a mistake. But if it's in a rich neighbourhood, the story changes. Because you will never hear them reporting the same thing about the Hamptons. And today in the Hamptons, a man was shot in what is suspected to be gang related violence. The probable gang have been known to operate around this part (*laughter*). And recently, they never say those things... In fact the more likely you see the police commissioner going out ah, a lot of ...ah, with ah... just we commence our investigation ...and we em...find out that em a firearm was discharged earlier today; and em ... the bullet left the *em* the weapon (*laughter*) penetrating a victim and em we are going to investigate whether em whether it was misfired and em... I'm sorry to say ... Did someone shoot the gun? We, we're not, we're not ruling anything out right now. But em, we are going to check to see if there was a mechanism failure and em.... What about the person? We, we don't think that this was intentional. We don't. So we're living in the world where you investigate the gun before you investigate a rich white man? Is that what you're saying? (*laughter*) No, no, no, that's not what we're saying. But I mean you must remember that the gun is black (*laughter*). But that's not the point (*loud long laugh*), the point is ah.... (*he moves silently not talking – laughter continues*). So weird how our prejudices has given everyone their name. Middle Easterner does something, term it terrorist. Black person does something, they are gang related; they are thugs. But if a white guy walks to church killing nine people there and what do they lead us in the news? And today, in an isolated incident, a lone gunman walked into a church opening fire and killing nine people. It's always a lone gunman, yes. A lone gunman with no tie with society whatsoever (*laughter*). They will separate it as quickly as possible. I love how they do that.

As he performs on the stage, he exploits the modes of movement, twists his neck, walks without uttering a word and acts as two characters as the news reporter and police

commissioner, asks multiple questions, and provides answers to them all. Also, he mimics the police commissioner's voice when saying '*in the area, there is hip-hop*' and that '*the gun is black*' in order to achieve Bolter and Grusin's (1996) notion of immediacy. These modes generate excitement and sterling entertainment and help him distribute punchlines throughout the narrative. From the excerpt, Trevor Noah mocks the upper class for their nepotism and degradation of the lower class in the society. Indeed, Trevor Noah here reveals how the upper class amplify the report of violent incidents in the neighbourhood of poor people, but they will play down heinous crimes in their own areas. Moreover, by saying "*They never say it's anything else, maybe it just two guys, gang related, probably gang related*", he expresses his displeasure at the segregation in which police officers will be euphemistic when reporting crime in rich communities, but will be stern when reporting violence in poor communities. Considering Trevor Noah's style of analysing social problems, we can agree that comedians are "spokespersons and anthropologists of our contemporary society" (Mintz, 1985: 75).

Part of Loyiso Gola's remediation of his travelling experience concerns how he reconstructs one of his encounters with an immigration officer at the Nigerian airport. He chooses words that he pronounces in a distinctive way to enunciate how the immigration officer grilled him to confirm his identity. The performance is presented in the following excerpt.



Excerpt 22

Loyiso Gola Video 3b: Loyiso Gola _ Life & Times DVD - Waptubes.Com

00:28

Who's ever been to Lagos? If you've ever been to Lagos, men you'll know what I'm talking about. I went to Lagos, I went to Lagos last year, it was crazy. I got to immigration, the guy looked me in my eyes and say "brother (*laughter*), where is your Nangeriaun passport?" (*mimicking Nigerian accent and rolling his eyes – loud laughter*). Now I do... I'm not Nigerian. "Brother me I watch Nigerian every day ah (*laughter*). Me I know a Nigerian ah (*laughter*). You're tall, you've got around here, you're a Nangerian. I can see it (*laughter*). Where is your Nigerian passiport?" (*laughter*). And they locked me up, lock me (*smiling*). For like two hours, and I was like, no I'm not Nigerian I'm not Nigerian. We are different. You guys speak like: gi la ba kai, yo ba la ga da (*laughter*). We speak normal like hello, how are you (*demonstrating hand shake – laughter*).



Figure E: @ 00:43 – Loyiso Gola remediating the immigration officer looking at his passport

From the excerpt, Loyiso Gola recreates his true experience and that is why he deploys facial expression (Figure E) to recreate how the Nigerian immigration officer seriously interrogated him while verifying his international passport. In the performance, he utilises the modes of mimicking the Nigerian accent by pronouncing brother as /brʌðə/ instead of /brʌðə/; Nigerian as /nɒndʒɪərɪən/ instead of /naɪdʒɪərɪən/; and passport as /pɑːsɪpɔːtɪ/ instead of /pɑːspɔːt/ to generate another meaning. This mimicking of “phonological shibboleths” (Woolard, 1987: 109) is part of the stunts to corner the audience into accepting the joke; and create immediacy because the audience will see the immigration officer rather than seeing Loyiso in front of them. Besides the mode of accent, he rolls his eyes, acts as two characters, says some woolly words, and demonstrates handshakes. All these modes also create immediacy for the audience to see the working attitude of the Nigerian immigration officer.

Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (2006) believe that teases are risky and could be taken as insults if directed at a person unfamiliar with the speaker. Ali Baba, being a recognizable comedian in Nigeria, playfully directs teases at people from any part of Nigeria. Thus, he draws on the attitudes of some people from Warri to enlighten the audience. Consider his performance presented below.

Excerpt 23

Ali Baba Video 5: Alibaba 2012 Night of a Thousand Laughs

08:16

I think, I think, what should happen these days is that if you see us from Warri, our performing, it is not because we like talking about Yoruba people or talking about the Hausa people or is talking about them an..., it is because of bringing you stories from the Warri part so that you understand us. Like I give you a simple example, you know when armed robbers operate and they see you later, you know say dem go dey dodge because dey no want you to see their face. They say: eh, Taju maa bo, maa bo (*moving to his left side and dropping his head as if hiding his face*), man t'a lo sile e lojo yen niyen o. Ma wo'be, ma wo'be. (*Moving back to his right side*) But Warri boy no dey do like that. Warri boys actually, they come introduce themselves, "hey bros, bros (*stretching handshake*) na we come your house that day when you dey shake (*laughter*). Wey we carry that TV but we come there again, you don move? Where you dey now? (*laughter*)



Figure F: @ 8:58 – Ali Baba stretching his hand in demonstration of handshake

[See appendix for English translation of the excerpt]

Ali Baba's performance here is a recreation of communication between armed robbers. In order to achieve immediacy, he moves on the stage, drops his head to mimic hiding his face, and stretches his hand initiating a handshake (Figure F), gesticulates, blends English, Pidgin and Yoruba languages to compare the guts of Yoruba people to that of Warri people by weaving a narrative around post-armed-robbery discourse. Though armed robbery is undesirable in the society and not to be proud of, as Ali Baba performs it before the audience, he employs these modes to tone down the awfulness of armed robbery. However, the purpose is to use armed robbery as comedy material to communicate and tease the Warri people as being chronically audacious, while the Yoruba people are predictably lily-livered. By remediating this scenario as factual, Ali Baba emphasises Stebbins' (1990) opinion that comedians demonstrate a high level of humour through unique verbal and theatrical expressions which make his story and presentation humorous. Indeed, he appeals to the cognitive instinct of the audience who laughed throughout as he portrayed the Yorubas as spineless people who chicken out when the heat is on, unlike their audacious Warri counterparts.

7.9 Mocking the culture of others

Loyiso Gola remediates a part of his travel experience in Nigeria where he was given some restraints. Due to some religious and other political concerns, he was told not to use some issues as comedy materials. His remediation of the warning is presented below.

Excerpt 24

Loyiso Gola Video 3b: Loyiso Gola _ Life & Times DVD - Waptubes.Com

02:55

So I went to do my gig, I went to do my gig in Nigeria. I went to do my gig, we get to the gig and I say okay my brother very simple rules in the gig in Nigeria don't talk about *religion*. Don't talk about sex (*mild laughter*). Don't talk about our president, which was funny because their president had just gone to Saudi Arabia for medical care. And the guy who took over was Goodluck Jonathan (*laughter*). So to me, this is all hilaaaarious. Don't talk about it eh. Don't come here with your democracy, hun hun hun hun. This is Lagos (*/lagos/ instead of /leigos/*). I was like okay cool. Can I just talk about president just one thing? Don't do it. 'Just one thing' Don't do it (*saying it emphatically – laughter*). I was like okay, just religion. Don't do ... and then Nigerians have this thing when they now encourage you to do it and then you see what happen (*laughter*). Do it and then (*loud laughter*) I will show you what will happen (*loud laughter continues*). Do it now, do it and see if you will make it back to South Africa alive. Do it now, do it, am watching, do it. I said no, no I don't want to do anymore. No do it (*giving permissive warning gesture*) I'm watching, do it (*laughter*). Please I want to show you, do it please. Do it please, please do it (*laughing and the audience continues the laughter*).

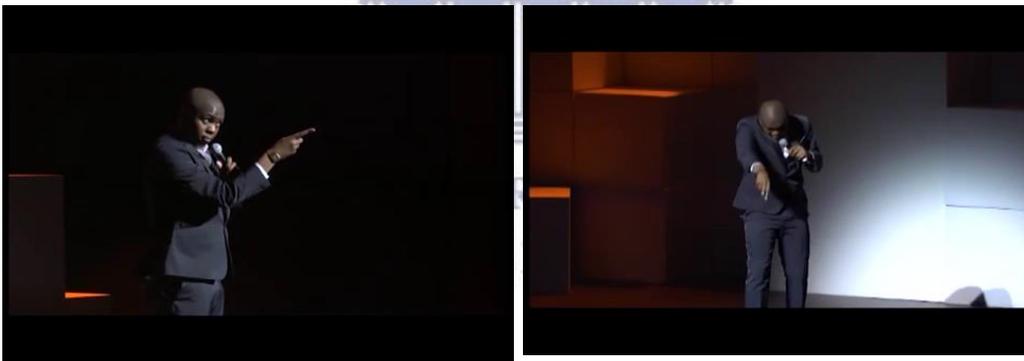


Figure G: @ 02:38 and Figure H: @ 03:04 – Loyiso Gola acting out the warning gestures

Loyiso Gola utilises the modes of pointing a warning finger by Nigerians (Figures G and H), mimicking a Nigerian accent by pronouncing south as /souθ/ instead of /sauθ/, pronouncing Lagos as /lagous/ instead of /leigɒs/; and religion as /rɪlɪdʒən/ instead of /rɪlɪdʒən/ in order to create immediacy and sound funny. Also, Loyiso Gola parodies the Nigerian accent to bond with the audience. His explanation is meant to paint for the audience mannerisms that are sometimes associated with Nigerians. However, the simulation of these phonological contours, sarcastic vowel elongations, gestures, body postures, emphatic expressions and exaggerations (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006) enable Loyiso Gola to generate new meanings from these materials exploited for comedy. Thus, his performance achieves

immediacy, because he effaces himself by making the audience see a Nigerian through imitating accents; and achieves the logic of hypermediacy by also continuously placing himself back in front of the audience through the repeated use of the first person pronoun 'I'.

As Trevor Noah glides effortlessly from one skit to another, he reworks his experience in Zambia to comment on some real social issues in the country. We shall see how Trevor Noah exaggerates and schematizes absurd identity and his performance buttresses the opinion that the art of comedy itself is 'creative distortion' that "disrupts and reorders expectation differently from its original state" (Mintz, 1985). Trevor Noah lampoons the Zambian government by remediating the advice given him not to be 'gay' in Zambia. Consider the excerpt below.

Excerpt 25

Trevor Noah Video 2: It's My Culture Full Show – Best Stand Up Comedy Show

49:50

And the second one Ali gave me was even stranger. We're driving through Lusaka the capital, and Ali looks over me in the car and was "Trevor you know here in Zambia we are a very God loving nation neh." I said oh okay Ali that's a very good thing to know. Yes, so while you are here, don't be gay (*laughter*). I said what? He said I know it can be tempting sometimes, but don't do it eh (*laughter*). Don't be gay? I've never been one of this in my life, don't be gay? Hey bru, don't be gay, don't be gay (*laughter*). Don't be gay? Crazy, crazy wanted to get... but then I find out why Ali was warning me. It turns out that in Zambia being gay is illegal. If you are found to be gay, you will be arrested and sent to prison for more than thirty years yah, which is a bit of a weird punishment (*demonstrating babyface – loud applause and laughter*) when you think about it (*applause and laughter*). I mean, I'm not saying gay guys will enjoy prison. I'm just saying that if I was gay... that's the worst thing you could do to me. I'll be like, you're going to jail. I'll be like, oh no (*laughter*). Don't be gay? I couldn't believe this. Gay is a crime in Zambia which got me thinking. If gay is a crime, that means the police have to monitor it. That's how to police gay which means in their police force, they have a gay division (*laughter*); is a crime; is a crime. So that means they have the murder unit, they got the robbery unit, or a white collar crime unit, and then they got the gay unit huh. They got a little G Unit in their police force (*laughter*) that's responsible for all things gay. That would be the most funny police force to be in the whole world. You get to go under cover, dress up really nice, then you touch the flamboyant side, (*laughter*) have a good time. That brings the sergeant there in the morning greeting the detectives "good morning detectives, welcome everybody; today we will be launching stern operation, we have just been informed of fashion show that will be taking place and as you know the gays cannot resist the latest trends. Therefore, we will be in full attendance to apprehend each and every one of them. Let us make sure we are here": (*now performing roll call*)

Detective Chipua

Present

Detective Table

Present

Detective Mungau

Presennnnnt (*swinging arms, grimacing and leaning on his hips with attitude in a flirty model-like fashion*) (*laughter*).

I think is in too deep (*still grimacing and grinning– laughter*). How do you... how do you police gay? (*laughter*) Do they stop you if you look suspiciously gay on the street, you know. I mean gay doesn't have a look maybe you just got a bounce about it (*swinging hips like a model*) maybe you just a little bit pizzas, you know. Then the police pull up, *who-hoo 'who-hoo'* (*microphone close to mouth making police siren sound*). You over there (*amplifying his voice*), what is the purpose of that flamboyant scarf? (*putting scarf across his neck in a lady's fashion – laughter*). Put your hands up (*raising both hands and swaying body like a woman*). Turn around, don't tempt me (*demonstrating blocking the person with one hand and turning face away from that direction*) don't tempt me (*laughter*). You're going to jail (*laughter*). How do you police gay?

Here, we see Trevor Noah remaking his experience in Zambia for the purpose of directing a jab at the anti-gay policy of the Zambian government. He demonstrates a 'babyface' while calling the Zambian law on gay rights weird and expresses his fear for the gays in that country. He demonstrates giving a roll call to suggest how a policeperson who is gay will encounter difficulty enforcing the law against gays. Thus, he forms his hand into a bend on his waist, grimacing and leaning on his hips with attitude in a flirty model-like fashion, putting a scarf across his neck like a lady and swaying his body like a woman to stimulate the audience to laughter. In line with scholars, these modes of operation enable him to create the simulated intimacy (Fairclough, 1995; Brodie, 2008) and transport the audience from the realm of the serious to the realm of the jovial. In this way, we can see how Trevor Noah spontaneously builds up historical fictions with ease and break them down for the audience to entertain as well as enlighten them.

Lastly in this analysis of semiotic remediation, in continuation of remediating life events, Trevor Noah recreates what he observes and calls 'angry culture among the people of South Africa'. Another content concerns remediation of the actions of a cashier at Checkers where he went to buy groceries. I now present the performance in the excerpts and figures taken from his video.

Excerpt 26

Trevor Noah Video 4: Trevor Noah Its My Culture Service with a Smile

00:00

that in this performance, Trevor Noah purposely remediates this attitude of the cashiers to intimate that Checkers needs to take some steps to nurture their cashiers to enjoy their work and be people friendly. By demonstrating Bolter and Grusin's (1996) logic of immediacy and hypermediacy, Trevor's imitation is for the audience to see ladies while the rhetorical questions he asks enables him to put himself as the performer. Again, the behavioural attitude of ladies may be improved. Similar to the study by McCarron and Savin-Baden (2008) where the comedian 'Kevin', forces students to be alert by provoking them to think, Trevor Noah here is putting the cashiers working at Checkers on their toes. The communicative competence Trevor demonstrates in excerpt 26 above succeeds as other semiotic resources play a major part in the delivery of the punchlines in the storylines. In essence, this performance "helps us to see beyond language, but also recognize how much communicative weight other semiotics can and routinely do bear" (Hengst, 2010: 110).

7.10 Summary

It is argued that "modes are the result of social and historical shaping of materials chosen by a society for representation" (Kress, 2010). In this chapter, the analysis has delved into the strategies that comedians use to perform on the stage. As the data reveal, the comedians employ dramatic effects, interactions with the audience, blending of languages, sounds, and movements among other semiotic resources into their performances to hit punchlines while the audience respond with applause and laughter. They manipulate these semiotic materials to achieve transparency by effacing themselves (Bolter and Grusin, 1996, 2000) from the eyes of the audience, hold control over the show, while also later engrave their personas into the mimics and at some points, involve the audience in the performances. These techniques help them to describe the ills going on in all spheres of society including religion, government, terrorism, racism, etc., and even suggest ways they can be rectified. The next chapter will deal with discussions on the themes found in all the analyses done in this research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion of Interconnectedness of Multimodality, Resemiotization and Semiotic Remediation in the Performance of Stand-up Comedy

8.1 Introduction

The social semiotic theory of multimodality and the related notions of resemitization and semiotic remediation have been explored by analysing stand-up comedy as a social communicative practice in the previous chapters. This chapter presents how the modes and semiotic material selections are interconnected in stand-up comedy performances. Specifically, the chapter shows that the modes and semiotic material selection that connect the comedians' performances include drawing on modern/urban versus traditional/rural cultures, religious and traditional materials, making local and international comparisons, use of family backgrounds, reworking facts into criticism, remaking stereotypes and myths into 'facts', the use of accents, and drawing from their multilingual repertoires. The essence of this chapter is to show similarities in semiotic resource choices in comedians' performances. The first area of confluence between the comedians is the way they exploit issues of family background as semiotic resource.

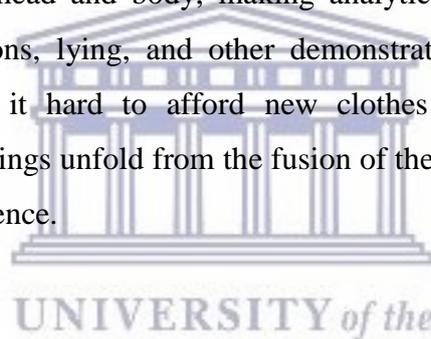


8.2 Repurposing childhood experience for meaning making

In this section, the discussion centres on how the comedians' performances are connected through the use of their personal childhood experiences as semiotic resource for communication. For example, Trevor Noah uses more than language(s) to talk about growing up during the apartheid era in South Africa because he synchronises the modes of dancing, ululating, questioning looks, body movements, sounds, gestures, moves on stage, and other demonstrations into the performance. Also, he draws from his linguistic repertoire by blending the Xhosa and English languages to reconstruct how the police used to arrest his mother for being married to a white Swiss man during the apartheid era. All these modes enable him to repurpose the painful experience and also offer him enough angles to keep the audience's attention so that they continue to laugh during the performance. Thus, when he calls himself 'born a crime' because he is a product of a mixed family when marriage between white and black people was outlawed, the audience did not feel sorry for him; rather,

they laughed even though he reminds them of the emotional distress caused by the apartheid system. In this way, the modes function to translate the painful experience he is resemiotizing from ‘the serious’ to ‘the jovial’ while at the same time, he exposes the harsh reality of the apartheid system. Hence, his reconstruction of the apartheid issue substantiates Iedema’s (2003) argument that as texts move from their original context to another context, they become modified from the original condition that created them. Trevor Noah uses the modes to create immediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 1999), in which he demonstrates for the audience as they are watching the event he is reconstructing before them.

Similarly, Basket Mouth uses his childhood experience as semiotic material to communicate different meanings in one of his performances. He specifically talks about the extreme poverty condition of his family when he was growing up. He combines an assortment of modes such as swaying his head and body, making analytic gestures, using complaining tones, exaggerating expressions, lying, and other demonstrations to resemiotize how the penury in his family made it hard to afford new clothes and chicken for Christmas celebration. In this way, meanings unfold from the fusion of the numerous modes he employs to communicate with the audience.



Both Trevor Noah and Basket Mouth draw on their tough upbringings as semiotic material in their stand-up comedy careers. From the foregoing, the performances of both Trevor Noah and Basket Mouth show that they use more than language(s) in their performances. These kinds of performances substantiate the notion that stand-up comedians exploit self-depreciating humour to portray themselves as personas whose domestic lives had one time been a disaster (Mintz, 1985). Though they performed in different places, they used similar semiotic resources and meshed different modes to ridicule themselves by performing what Limon (2000) calls “abjection” or “self-typecasting” or “abasement” of the self as if something is sinking one’s life and has become part of one’s personality. As they ridicule themselves, position themselves as powerless at the base of the society, they empower themselves to sarcastically criticise the society and “their social critique is potent because it is offered in a comedic context, safe from retribution” (Gilbert, 1997: 317). As a result, all the modes are the multimodal semiotic assemblages that the comedians exploit to resemiotize

and remediate their childhood experiences. In reality, the performance of their life history shows the toughness of their lives when they were growing up.

Put slightly differently, Trevor Noah uses the prevalent penury in Soweto (the township where he grew up) as semiotic resource for meaning making during his performances. He coordinates the multimodal resources of pointing his right hand forward, dropping his head down, and raising his right hand and bringing it down to be emphatic when explaining that being poor in Soweto (a major black township in South Africa) is a norm. In line with the notion that modes act together to create meaning in a multimodal communication (Van Leeuwen, 1996), the modes become ingredients for Trevor Noah to construct new meaning from that the standard of living among black South Africans is still pitiable even after apartheid.

8.3 Linguistic and cultural practices as semiotic materials

This study shows that the comedians' performances are connected by drawing on cultural materials from the urban versus rural, modern versus traditional and local versus international material for communicating intended meanings. The contrastive cultural materials are directed at subjects of race, religion, political parties, generational dancing, media reporting, and hospitality, among other practices in society. For instance, Ali Baba compares old and new dancing in Nigeria using the modes of dancing moves, singing, walking gently, bringing ladies to the stage from the audience, shouting, holding and turning the lady in a funny way, nodding his head like an agama lizard, making japery movements, and using a live band to play music in the background. The performance is based on the contention that a new dance called 'skelewu' is just a remediation of the 'old' dancing. Skelewu dance is basically for entertainment but by bringing together these modes, Ali Baba repurposes the dancing to become a communicative resource for comparing two generations. The modes constitute a multilingual and multicultural mix of Yoruba, Pidgin and English languages for communicative and aesthetic effects. The multilingual/multicultural and multi-generational modes become material affordances (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Hull and Nelson, 2005) that Ali Baba exploits to enlighten the audience about the multilingual/multicultural and multi-generational blend in the changing and advancing Nigerian society.

Loyiso Gola uses his travel experience as semiotic material to point to incongruities in what he calls ‘how Nigerians speak’ and the breakfast served to him in Nigeria versus ‘how South Africans speak’ and breakfast in South Africa. By mimicking a typical Nigerian accent, he weaves together the modes of shouting, smiling, uttering inconsequential syllables, making handshake gestures and ‘word play’ to compare how South Africans speak to how Nigerians speak. In addition, he combines the modes of making emphatic gestures, loud and mild laughter, sleeping and drum beating demonstrations when explaining that eating a full chicken for breakfast, as he was served in Nigeria, could result in drowsiness and sleeping at work. Through the mixture of these different modes, Loyiso Gola exploits Nigerians’ linguistic and cultural modes of hospitality as a semiotic material in a comedy show.

Basket Mouth and Trevor Noah utilise the informative practice of “live on-the-scene reporting” as semiotic resource to compare news reporting in different environments. Whilst Basket Mouth compares reporters of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable Network News (CNN) to that of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Trevor Noah compares the lopsided reporting of events in rich neighbourhoods versus poor neighbourhoods. To achieve immediacy and also sound funny, Basket Mouth harmonizes the modes of language, movements, demonstrations, gestures, giggling and his mannerisms together to show the different styles of reporting news live. He portrays the BBC/CNN correspondents as bold who present “live-shot” reporting from the field; however, the NTA reporter is the petrified one who reports secondary news sourced from witnesses of the incidents. The deployment of modes enables him to invigorate the reconstruction of news reporting to create the reality that the NTA reporter is ineffective and must be laughed at. Thus, through the resemiotization of news reporting from BBC/CNN and NTA, Basket Mouth shifts the purpose of news reporting from keeping society informed to eulogising the BBC/CNN reporters while downgrading the NTA reporter. As Flewitt (2006: 28) points out, using these modes add new dimensions to understanding these media.

Trevor Noah’s similar use of news reporting as semiotic resource reveals the lopsided way that news reporting shows racial and class prejudice in our society. The combination of the modes of voice modulation, neck twisting, rhetorical questions, playing different characters, and moving on the stage without making utterances enable him to point out the prejudice of

the rich/white people against the poor/black people. He specifically takes umbrage at the remarks of categorising any act of terrorism as ‘Islamic terrorists’, and black people as ‘bunch of thugs’ and ‘criminals’; whereas any act of murder done by a white man will be categorised ‘an isolated incident from a lone troubled man’. Indeed, in the findings from the analyses of multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation, these modes work together for the co-deployment of different semiotic resources to construct meaning in this performance. Therefore, they are the stunts that enable Trevor Noah to validate Bolter and Grusin’s (2000) notion of immediacy, especially the voice modulation that directly brings the personas he is impersonating before the audience. Exploiting different modes lets him mitigate furore because of the acidity of this issue which is capable of making the audience grouchy, but he generates humour instead. However, he successfully tones down the biasness of portraying all terrorists as Muslims and black people as thugs and gangsters.

Furthermore, Basket Mouth draws on movie production as semiotic selection as he compares the Nigerian movies (Nollywood) to that of Americans, Chinese and Indians. Interestingly, as found in the analyses, he reworks movie acting through demonstrations of shooting, verbalizing gun sounds, demonstrations of moving in slow motion, mimicking sonorous female voices, using descriptive gestures, moving his lips without uttering words, standing still, and using Pidgin English. Basket Mouth’s communication corroborates the assertion that multimodality entails that language alone does not capture all strands of communication, it is harmonized with and heavily dependent on other forms of meaning making (Iedema, 2003: 40). The purpose is to deride the unimpressive and mediocre way Nollywood actors act in comparison to the professional ways of their counterparts in America, China and India. In this manner, he draws on the content of films in comedy, and the remediation helps us gain insight into the shortcomings of Nollywood (the Nigerian movie industry) and could perhaps draw their attention and provoke them to improve the quality of their movie production. Thus, the clever utilisation of modes serves as a rudder to steer the original incidents being described to the aura of humour.

It is also observed that Loyiso Gola uses the comparison of white people to black people as semiotic resource in his comedy shows. He compares how white people commit murder to how black people also kill people. He chides the white people for their appetite for mass

shooting in comparison to black people who observe restraint from killing many people indiscriminately. As he creates a storyline around the war on terrorism, he specifically indicts President George Bush, being a white person, for bombing Afghanistan and Iraq in search of Osama Bin Laden. However, he applauds President Barak Obama, who is a black man, for killing only Osama Bin Laden instead of bombing the whole of Pakistan. By utilising the modes of demonstration, gesticulation, shooting sounds, and rhetorical questions to convey his intended meaning, he lambasts Americans and the white people in general, especially for their incurable passion for committing mass murder.

Therefore, the performances discussed in this section could be viewed in Prior's (2010: 230) argument that the remediation of these semiotic materials garners meaning from historical chains of activity. It could help black people to be humane to their children; it could help white people to have restraint and not just kill innocent people in numbers. Thus, we see in this section that each of the three analytical tools used for data analyses contributes to the flexibility of conveying the unsavoury message that erodes the dignity of some people/group while praising or lionising some other people/group, by indulging in making real and fictitious comparisons. In the next section, I shall discuss how the comedians repurpose religious practices in their performances.



8.4 Unmasking bizarre religious attitudes

The study has shown that the comedians' performances are connected through exploiting attitudes of some churchgoers as semiotic resources to show that the Christian religion has been bastardised in Nigeria. Both Ali Baba and Basket Mouth talk about improper behaviours among Christians when comparing churchgoers in Lagos and Warri parts of Nigeria. Though the semiotic choices are similar, their executions are different. In his performance, Ali Baba points out that some churchgoers in Warri cheat in church by collecting change despite not giving offerings. Through the assemblages of the modes of descriptive gesticulation, walking on the stage, hand demonstration of dropping money into the offering basket, taking the right hand to his back pocket and speaking Pidgin English, he is able to embellish the churchgoers' practice for the purpose of exposing religious duplicity before the audience. Therefore, his performance is embedded with the proclivity of enlightening the society to see the decadent

among churchgoers and sneer at them. In a sense, his performance corroborates the argument that the stand-up comic functions as an ethnographer, a participant-observer who reports field-work findings (Gilbert, 2004).

Basket Mouth draws on the attitudes of pastors and ladies in Lagos and Warri to expose inconsistency among Christian devotees. He remarks how Lagos pastors avoid looking at ladies sitting in the front row with skimpy dresses and how Warri pastors adjust their sermons to bend down on the podium to peep under the ladies' skirts. The modes he employs to convey his message include imitating the walking steps of pastors, turning away from something, using a low voice, imitating pastors' repeating words, marching on stage, stamping his feet on the stage, bending down on both knees and hands, and turning his head to look at the audience. These modes create virtual reality and show that this communication involves more than using language alone. Thus, Basket Mouth intimates that while some pastors try to uphold uprightness in church, some will creatively acquiesce to debauchery. Also, the fusion of different semiotic modes together with language (Flewitt, 2006) emboldens him to expose this 'anomaly' in churches. Therefore, he easily utilizes the mode of physicality (Dicks, Soyinka and Amanda, 2006: 92) to enable the audience to see the pastors' actions. While he exonerates Lagos Christians from this attitude, he exposes the unfaithfulness and hypocrisy among the Warri Christians as he re-enacts preaching styles on the stage, but the purpose of actually revealing indiscreetness among churchgoers.

However, contrary to Ali Baba and Basket Mouth's performances here, Loyiso Gola mentions his experience in Nigeria when he went to perform stand-up comedy and was warned not to joke about religion and some other things. As he remedies this experience, he also utilizes the modes of demonstrations of pointing a hand and other illustrative gestures to mimic how Nigerians passionately show an attitude of being emphatic when stressing the point. Interestingly, religion was a no-go area for him in Nigeria; however, it becomes comic material in the South African context. Though comedy can serve as a lubricant in social interaction, be a feature of rapport and closeness that is capable of erasing the social boundary of 'us' and 'them' (Kuipers, 2013: 15), as we can see from Loyiso Gola's subject of performance, the taste of what is comic or not comic marks heated boundaries in cultures. In the next section, I shall discuss how the comedians draw on racism and stereotypes.

8.5 Incongruity in denouncing racism but stereotyping others

In continuation of their engagement in social commentary, the analyses show that the comedians like to synthesise different semiotic resources to denounce racism but that they also like to stereotype others. For instance, having utilised various modes to express his disdain for the stigmatisation of black people as thugs, Trevor Noah further expatiates that stand-up comedy makes him discover different types of racism such as ‘Classic American Charming Racism’; South African ‘Real’ or ‘Quality Racism’; the ‘Made in China Racism’, and others. He mixes the multimodal resources of moving on stage, hand illustrative gestures, and shaking his head to lecture the audience about types of racism. The conglomeration of these semiotic resources enables him to decontextualize and translate the hostile side of racism to jokes, because the biting feeling of experiencing bigotry is far from being humorous. Indeed, Trevor Noah’s intelligent on-stage charisma keeps his African American audience invested in the joke and they laugh over the burning issues of stereotyping and racism that keep harassing our contemporary society. Research has shown that comedy is social, and serves as an enlightening indicator that gives discernment to happenings in our contemporary society (Gilbert 2004). In my view, the palliative effect of his performance could enable his African American audience to cope in the face of racism, and could serve as a release from the pains of resentment and hostility.

In addition, Trevor Noah creatively exploits a myth of how he fought racism. By narrating a myth of how he fears a terrorist attack inside an Emirates plane and how he responds to an Arab co-passenger on board the plane, he utilises the modes of mimicking the Adhan sound (Islamic call for prayer), demonstrates being frightened, shouts *haaaa* (for a long time and modulates it from high pitch to low pitch), and makes a surprise request for chicken. The modes create a virtual reality of the incident he is remediating and these modes enable him to control the performance and intelligently repurpose a serious Islamic subject to fighting racism. Contingent upon Trevor Noah’s attitude, an Arab man’s reaction to him: *‘Is it a black thing?’* evokes Trevor Noah’s retort: *‘That is racist!’*. Clearly, the combination of multimodal semiotic resources mitigates the delicateness of attaching terrorism to specific people, but Trevor Noah situates his condemnation of racism against black people in an act of terrorism in a comedic context. In line with Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996: 39) perspective, the different semiotic resources endear Trevor Noah to the audience as he communicates his

condemnation of racism. Although Trevor Noah is relaying what is common knowledge, his performance is imparting the public with vital knowledge that could help people brace themselves to avoid calamity.

Surprisingly, Loyiso Gola draws from murder as semiotic material in his performance for the purpose of exhibiting racism. As explored in the analyses, Loyiso Gola exudes utmost self-confidence to treat the murder of Reeva Steenkamp (shot by Oscar Pistorius) lightly, but he uses the performance to reify the barrier of race in South Africa. To efface the grief that usually follows murder, Loyiso Gola piles up the modes of drinking (perhaps beer) from a cup, makes mocking giggles, putting his right forefinger on his face, code switching from English to Xhosa language, gesturing open hands, calling Oscar Pistorius' father's comment and that of the judge (in charge of the murder case) stupid. Giving the context that Loyiso Gola is remediating a courtroom proceeding, the content is now being performed by one man performing three characters before the audience. Therefore, the meaning has changed from serious legal content to jovial stunt before many people and the murder has lost its soberness. The performance synchronizes through the analyses of multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation for communication considering how Loyiso Gola tweaks this tragedy to comedy material. Indeed, Loyiso Gola mentions that black people are happy that a white person killed another white person, black people are thanking Jesus for not being involved in the murder, and restates Oscar's father's claim that the ANC does not protect white people. These points attest to the flourishing state of racism in the post-apartheid South Africa. Of course, Loyiso Gola is restating the obvious and this indeed is a cause for concern in South Africa. However, Loyiso Gola as an innocent and shrewd stand-up performer crosses the boundary by jokingly resemiotizing the murder of an innocent soul.

On the issue of stereotypes, it is also noted that the comedians create myths as facts and utilise multimodal semiotic resources to stereotype others. Interestingly, both Ali Baba and Basket Mouth compare the behaviour of people from Lagos to people in Warri as semiotic materials to perpetuate stereotypes. For example, Ali Baba talks about armed robbery and through the combination of the modes of dodging movement, hiding his face, and walking away, he succeeded to stereotype Yoruba armed robbers as lily-livered. However, he stretches a handshake and shakes his body in demonstration of how the Warri armed robbers

are audacious. Ali Baba artistically presents a fiction as real in order to stereotype the Yoruba people and that is one of the things that make him funny. In essence, the modes he uses enhance his performance to the characterization of the Yoruba ethnic group as timorous in comparison to the intrepid Warri people. Ali Baba also uses the modes of sarcastic giggling, distorted accent, running on the stage, whimpering like a dog, and hopping forward and backward to remediate dogs' characteristics to put his message across to the audience. Ali Baba metaphorically recontextualizes the characteristics of typical dogs that we take for granted to typecast the Calabar people of Nigeria as people who eat dog meat. In line with Mintz's (1985) belief, the ensemble of multimodal semiotic resources and context embody the view that context helps the audience process and understand the meaning contained in a joke. Indeed, the modes used in this performance enable him to resemiotize and remediate the stereotype material successfully.

For Basket Mouth, his myth represents that Warri people brazenly circumvent paying the rider of motor-cycle taxis in comparison to the Lagos people who pay for similar transport services. He also blends the modes of explanative gestures, asking the audience questions, demonstrates mounting a motorbike, and dramatises three characters to remediate how Warri people cheat motor-cycle taxi riders. His demonstration validates Kress *et al.*'s (2001: 5) viewpoint, because he feels motivated to express the machination of the people he wishes to expose. As Ali Baba and Basket Mouth target Warri and Lagos as notoriously impoverished places for telling their jokes (Afolayan, 1999), an interesting aspect of their performances is translanguaging (multiple semiotic resources). In this sense, Ali Baba blends Yoruba, Pidgin English and English languages to re-render the Warri armed robbers' bold communication with their victim, while Basket Mouth blends Pidgin English and English to act as three characters before the audience. Thus, these modes validate that analysis of multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation respectively convey the message for the purpose of making them real and achieve ethnic stereotypes. Thus, stereotypes are created into facts, but they are facts that make people laugh. They present some things that are fictional as if they are real, because they are performing them for the audience to see how good they are, and therefore what they perform becomes real before the audience. The discussion of how they reveal the incongruities among politicians will now follow.

8.6 Unbridled tongue-lashing of politicians

As expected in this thesis, all the comedians remediate political material as semiotic selection to expose and disdain corrupt practices among politicians. Ali Baba, for instance, stages a make-believe interview to mock high ranking politicians in Nigeria. He employs multiple modes to perform the act. Ali Baba stages a structured interview to parody Mrs Patience Jonathan (wife of President Goodluck Jonathan) as he was being critical of corruption in Nigeria. By aesthetically meshing together English language, Pidgin English and other modes, he exposes the incorrigible corruption in President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. Also, he uses a physical object, i.e. 'pure (sachet) water' instead of bottled water to depict how President Muhammadu Buhari's government has failed to solve the economic problems in Nigeria. Thus, under Buhari's government, the Nigerian economy deteriorates. However, the performance produces the social meanings capable of provoking resentment towards the leaders, but the audience responds hilariously to the sarcastic portrayal of the corrupt politicians. The language and other non-verbal modes used in the performance characterise the politicians with negative identities because the audience have acquired what scholars call a 'language of textures' which enables people to associate certain connotative meanings to some sort of awareness (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).

In the South African context, Trevor Noah harps on politicians, especially President Jacob Zuma of the African National Congress (ANC), for the high level of corruption and the low level of service delivery during his time as president. Trevor Noah combines the modes of gesticulation, moving on the stage, waving his hand, dancing, making kissing sounds, and stretching a handshake to portray President Jacob Zuma as corrupt and self-centred. Also, he criticises the ANC, the DA party, Mamphela Ramphele (the AGANG party leader) and fictitiously mimics Julius Malema's voice while demonstrating Malema pressing a computer's keyboard buttons. The modes he used to convey his message made the audience laugh at the harsh way he is expressing his dissatisfaction with these politicians and that their promises to solve South Africa's problems are illusory. All the verbal and non-verbal modes achieve re-contextualization of these politicians' actions and words to humour though the re-enactments are criticisms of the political bigwigs in South Africa. Therefore, the performance exemplifies the use of more than language for communication, as already analysed in the

social semiotic theory of multimodality and its offshoots of resemiotization and semiotic remediation in this thesis.

Similarly, Loyiso Gola analogises the practice of auditioning buskers to that of auditioning a president in order to mock President Jacob Zuma's educational qualification. He employs the modes of demonstrating dismissive gestures, using Nguni phonology to pronounce English words, giggling and code switching from English to Zulu language to bluntly humiliate President Jacob Zuma as academically inept, criminally deplorable, politically corrupt, and morally unfit to be the president of a country. He specifically dresses down the president using Zulu language to say Jacob Zuma thinks he is president of 'njanyana' (puppy) which compromised his commitment to build a virile South Africa. The combination of these modalities verifies the use of more than one language for communication, and the modes enable Loyiso Gola to rework the practice of doing auditions to lampoon President Jacob Zuma. In the semiotic remediation, these modes imply that the political system in South Africa is flawed, because Jacob Zuma became president without proper screening.

Basket Mouth re-presents a social media criticism of one of his performances. He connects the modes of shaking his body to animate that the Nigerian economy is shaking, demonstrates positioning his hand for making a phone call, stamping his feet on the ground for affirmativeness, and using Pidgin English to relay the message. These modes contribute weight to the reassertion of his previous claim that President Goodluck Jonathan's government is corrupt. By using these modes to convey meaning, it reinforces the social semiotic theory of multimodality that communication involves more than language, because all other semiotic resources contribute to shaping meaning as well (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). Also, by resemiotizing and remediating this material, it shows how Basket Mouth reworks the social media criticism to strengthen his position.

The discussion in this section shows how stand-up comedy performance is inherently capable of pushing thoughts from merely hilarious to profound levels, because these are a systemic erosion of the politicians' dignity. Thus, I agree that comedians acquaint their audience with the going-ons in our societies and how to be unprejudiced to affairs in society (Ciccione,

Meyers and Waldmann, 2008: 311). In the next section, I shall discuss one more societal ill observed in the data analyses.

8.8 Summary

In view of the above discussion, as the comedians operate in different areas and contexts, they tilt away from the practice where language dominates their communications. As such, they exploit modes and semiotic resources to achieve communicative and aesthetic effects. In some instances, they repurpose similar semiotic resources and modes, but the contexts in which they are performing are not similar. Therefore, the meanings the modes convey are dependent on their performances, topics and contexts of the production and consumption of the humour. Hence, their performances manifest interconnectedness of modes or semiotic selections, or semiotic artefacts that they use to enliven the creativity and performativity of stand-up comedy for the purpose of communicating messages to the audience. As they almost talk about similar issues, they exploit “semiotic linkages to create linguistic and visual representations” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001: 480), as discussed above. Hence, modes enhance their performances and manifest that stand-up comedy validates that there is an interrelationship between the analytical tools of multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation, explored in the analyses for this study. Thus, the interplay between multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation simply reveals that harnessing multiple modes for communication transcends remaking meaning, but it signals generating distinct meanings entirely (Hull and Nelson, 2005:225). In short, the comedians’ creativity and performativity with collaborations from the audience reinforce the uniqueness of stand-up comedy as a genre that upholds and also probes cultural, political, religious and other areas of our society values. The next chapter contains the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER NINE

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I present the conclusion of the current study. I highlight the details of the main findings of this research in consonance with the set objectives for the thesis. In line with the specific objectives, I utilised the social semiotic theory of multimodality (Van Leeuwen, 2001), and the notions of resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) and semiotic remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) to analyse stand-up comedy performance by the comedians under study. These conceptions are interconnected by mode selections as discussed in chapter eight of this study, and using them for analysis enabled me to discover how they complement each other (Iedema, 2003) in the performance of stand-up comedy. From the analyses in chapters five, six and seven, the following conclusions can be made.

9.2 Exploiting modes for aesthetics and communicative effects

In addressing objective one of this research, I examined the trajectories of semiotic materials that the comedians used across modes, contexts and practices and their effects on the production and consumption of humour. As found in chapters five, six and seven, the comedians draw materials from political scenes, religious practices, their personal lives, sports, travelling, banking scenes and traditional names. Also, they take materials from crime and murder, police duty, the Ebola disease, catwalk on the runway, sounds, music and dancing. Furthermore, they exploit classroom events, grocery shopping, movies, court proceedings, terrorism, Islamophobia, immigration interviews, air hostess announcements, and some physical objects like cups, water, shoes, and the human body. Very importantly however, they deploy languages effectively as one of the semiotic resources working with other non-linguistic modes such as gestures, stances, movements, running on stage, postures, random chuckles, mimicking punching, touching parts of the body, facial expressions, mimicking accents, shaping of the mouth, pausing, using code switching and other demonstrations to perform before the audience. Hence, their performances are characterised by what Flewitt (2006: 28) refers to as “interdependent assemblage of different semiotic modes” for aesthetics and communicative purposes. Indeed, the exploitation of these modes

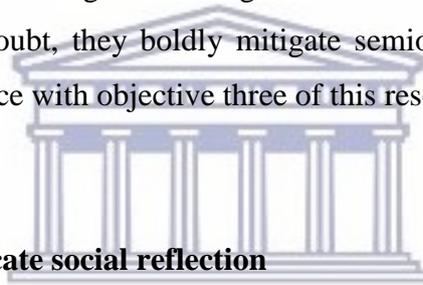
further buttressed the argument that language alone is not at the centre of all communication (van Leeuwen, 2001; Iedema, 2003). I consider the use of these modes as what Iedema (2003) called “material affordances” which the comedians exploit as “multimodal ensemble” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) to remediate semiotic materials from the past to systematically communicate new meaning intentions. I consider the modes “hermetically separated” (Rutherford, 2000), because they coordinate to bring to light how the comedians adroitly blend linguistic and non-linguistic modes for the construction of new meanings in comedy settings. Thus, the comedians’ performances are characterised by ample deployment of modes across contexts and practices to communicate intended messages to their audiences.

9.3 Stand-up comedy as medium of communication

In this section, I relate the findings to objective two of this research. The objective shows how the comedians utilise modes to translate semiotic materials they draw from different sources to communicate different meanings in the comedic contexts. The direction of the modes is multidimensional. In terms of success, they take from all sources of ordinary day-to-day subjects, but they change the meaning to be something else in their comedy performances. Though they are exploiting the same materials at times, they translate them through reformation and re-performance, because they want to achieve different meanings. For instance, a political interview ordinarily will expound serious topics about the government. However, in Ali Baba’s comedy, he shifts this expectation by using the modes to emphasize the fact that corruption and ineffectiveness has ruined the Nigerian economy. Additionally, through exploiting of various modes, he shows how the old music and dancing are giving way to modern music production and performance in Nigeria. Trevor Noah lends his voice to condemn police brutality and extra judicial killings with reference to the shooting of Walter Scott and also condemns racism, prejudice against black people and stereotyping Muslims as terrorists. In fact, he highlights the likelihood that black people are unsafe when they come in contact with the police in the United States. While Basket Mouth exploits modes to expose hypocrisy among pastors in Nigeria, Ali Baba talks about dishonest churchgoers in Nigeria as well. Put succinctly, the data addressed objective two of this research because the comedians altered the semiotic materials they draw on and redesigned or remodelled them for communicating new conceptions in comedic settings.

9.4 Exploring humour to express opinion

Similar to communicating information as summarized in objective two above, to answer objective three of this research, this thesis examined how the comedians mitigate the materials they draw from different sources to express personal opinions. Corruption is one of the materials that offer the comedians leverage to categorically or artistically express their opinions. In this regard, the study suggests that Trevor Noah constructs all the political parties in South Africa to be untrustworthy. In fact, Both Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola exploit modes to take a swipe at South African politicians especially President Jacob Zuma. Similarly, Basket Mouth bluntly declared that the government of President Goodluck Jonathan was corrupt. Loyiso Gola insinuates that black people are more decorous than white people. Ali Baba believes that contemporary dancing in Nigeria is refashioning of the old dancing. As the comedians tilt grave incidents towards the light-hearted, they are unequivocally defusing tension though informing and educating their audience on germane issues in society. Without doubt, they boldly mitigate semiotic materials to express their personal opinions in consonance with objective three of this research.



9.5 Different choices of intricate social reflection

Moreover, as the comedians communicate meanings and express opinions through effective deployment of semiotic materials drawn from different sources to communicate different meanings presented in objectives two and three above, the findings also address objective four of this research. This means that the socio-cultural contexts of South Africa and Nigeria have differential effects on the choices of semiotic resources that they reconstruct for meanings. In the analyses, the menace of terrorism, insecurity, corruption, hypocrisy, and other ills of our contemporary societies are spreading across the world; hence, the comedians did not struggle to find words and acts that create the position that capture the expectations of their audiences.

In the South Africa post-apartheid and socio-cultural context, Trevor Noah intelligently uses modes of sound, running, bending, gestures, sobbing, a juvenile voice, rhetorical questions, and a questioning face, among others, as semiotic resources to talk about the evil of racism, extra judicial killings by police, white people's prejudice against black people, prejudice

against Muslims, and corruption perpetrated by those in government, among other cogent wrongs in the society. Loyiso Gola also utilises multi-semiotic resources such as questioning looks, rhetorical questions, gestures, giggling, and other demonstrations to point out that racism is still a formidable force in South Africa and also offers advice to white people to desist from mass shooting. He also talks about the need for proper screening for anyone contesting the position of president of South Africa. As this study reveals, the choice of talking about apartheid, murder, politics, segregation, white versus black, gun shooting, etc., are reflections of the comedians' consciousness to the ambient occurrences in South Africa and beyond.

Coming to the post-colonial Nigeria context, Basket Mouth and Ali Baba both used gestures, movements, preaching, together with other expressive demonstrations to expose insincerity and deceitful practices among pastors and congregations in Nigeria. Also, they demonstrated antisocial behaviour by comparing the guileful pranks some people play in Warri to the seemingly considerate demeanour of people in Lagos. Basket Mouth utilised multiple semiotic resources to hint that the quality of Nigerian movies are poor when compared to American, Indian or Chinese movies. Through the use of a music band, dancing, and involving some ladies from the audience, Ali Baba talks about the difference in old and new generations of music and dancing in Nigeria. Thus, the choice of semiotic resources to talk about churches, antisocial behaviour, ethnic stereotypes, movies, news reporting, etc., help them to artistically comment on issues within and outside Nigeria.

However, there are areas of similarities between the South African and Nigerian comedians. They all mimic the idiolect of 'others', condemning rampant corruption among politicians, mentioning names, comparing cultural and professional practices across boundaries and groups. Basket Mouth and Trevor Noah tell narratives of their personal lives and also make fun of ladies. On the other hand, certain differences were also noticed in their performances. The Use of the English language dominated the lingo of the South African comedians, while Pidgin English dominated the lingo of the Nigerian comedians. The South African comedians talked about racism and segregation, while the Nigerian comedians talked about ethnic stereotyping. The Nigerian comedians make commentaries about religion concerning pastors who under the pretence of piety did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery, while the South

African comedians comment about sports. The Nigerian comedians talk about antisocial behaviour, music and movies, while the South African comedians talk about crime.

Very important in this study is the fact that the South African comedians handle more fundamental issues globally compared to the Nigerian comedians, who narrow their performances to issues that are peculiar to the Nigerian environment. Also, through reconstruction and re-performance, all the comedians utilise multilingualism as a mode for different meanings. They are using different modes and performing in different contexts, and in some instances, the modes are similar but with different touches. Therefore, there are similarities and differences in the modes they exploit to convey messages. These findings are consistent with objectives three and four of this research. This means that the socio-cultural contexts of the different settings of their performances influence the choices of semiotic resources they remodified for communicating new meanings.

9.6 Comedians crossing cultural taboos and boundaries

To address objective five of this research, this thesis shows how the comedians cross cultural taboos and boundaries with little or no social sanctions. As a result, the data reveals that the comedians flagrantly employ semiotic resources to denounce others in their performances. For instance, Trevor Noah and Loyiso Gola unapologetically joke about the murder committed by Oscar Pistorious and this is unexpected. Loyiso Gola calls Mr Dixon's answers concerning the murder case in the court stupid. Basket Mouth calls President Goodluck Jonathan and members of his government thieves. Thus, in consonance with this objective, these comedians are not in any way courteous or intend to placate criticism; rather, they meant to crush, and if possible, to bury the person or thing their jokes are being directed at. As they report things that are going on in all spheres of society and even suggest ways they can be rectified, they are not genteel in their presentation of some facts. In accomplishing this, for example, they downplay their subjects, humiliate people, directly mention names, stereotype race, ethnic people and culture. Thus, this thesis shows that the comedians deliberately go beyond accepted norm of decorum of speech without being asked to account for their uncivil utterances.

9.7 General conclusion

In this thesis, I analysed a wide range of semiotic resources or modes that stand-up comedians used to communicate and make meaning as emphasized by scholars (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005); and following Martin and Rose (2003: 255), I have systematically described many modes the comedians manipulated to create socially meaningful performances. Therefore, it can be concluded that the comedians distort events out of patterns, represent them in new forms and create humour, often infused with social commentary and serious messages. They inundate their performances with the mixture of illusions and reality for the purpose of providing subjective views that mirror factual reality and cold hard statistics. This style helps them to maintain flexibility, curve their narratives to the requirement of the moment (Greenbaum, 1999) and judiciously engage their audiences both in South Africa and Nigeria in the delivery and reception of humour. Thus, this prowess of stand-up comedy serves as ‘release’ from both outward and inward pressures and help people to cope with life situations. The embellishing of their performances with different modes mitigates the sternness of delivery as they expose inanities in societies and humiliate people before their audiences. In fact, I believe this is how they catch taboos and modes help them to neutralise backlash. Therefore, these comedians are veritable public speakers that put on imitation, distortion and re-imagining to figure and configure storylines which hold control over their shows and also involve the audience in the production and evaluation of stand-up comedy.

Furthermore, the electrifying and relaxed atmosphere pervading the venues of their performances enable them to daffily bury their *subjects* in ridicule while their audiences remain silent but the silence is terminated immediately the comedians hit punchlines. At every instance of the performances, there is no holds barred and the audiences are vociferous in their vocal support. As they successfully navigate around the implication of freedom of speech with the cooperation of the audience, they move events outside their isolated occurrences and expose them to “critical gaze and fresh understanding in the society and leave them for normalizing judgments by the audience” (Iedema and Scheeres, 2003). Evidently, they remediate real live events by realigning ensemble of semiotic resources for aesthetics and different communicative purposes. In this way, this thesis contributes to the theory of multimodality; and corroborating the view of Flewitt (2006: 29), they are

combining semiotic resources to construct meanings in different social settings. Thus, the trajectories of their performances move from constructing self and or individuals as social individual category towards constructing self and or others as society phenomena.

Utilising multimodal semiotic resources gives impetus to the comedians to tilt their performances to the trivial while in actual fact they basically convey messages to the society. That is why they are able to re-create original materials to invoke ‘immediacy’ and ‘hypermediacy’ (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) and build up a relationship with the audience to see the real characters through them. As such, they become the character and ornament performances with their own antics to rouse the audience and their performances become the real scenes and the audience could see the ridiculousness embedded in the real events and laugh at the absurdities of the characters or subjects being impersonated for mockery before the audience. The mixture of multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation embedded in their performances enable the comedians to desensitise scorching issues that are too sensitive to joke with in the society. In such moments, it seems the audiences appear numbed and they could not force the comedians to retract their statements. In a nutshell, this thesis finds that the comedians under study successfully denigrate individuals or groups that constitute the targets of their jokes. Therefore, this study shows our understanding of comedians’ contributions to correcting the ills of our society. In this way, modes are the tools they are reworking and it seems like a genre in a way. The direction of the modes is multidimensional and in terms of success, the comedians take from diverse sources and rework them for different meanings. Some of the things they talk about are ordinary subjects but when their performativity comes in, they change the meaning to be something else and this is where meanings come into what they do. Interestingly, all the spoken texts, and all the non-linguistic modes: gestures, stance, movements, running on stage, postures, mimicking , etc., that work together in this thesis play vital role in stand-up comedy performance; and this definitely open new perspectives on language (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: vii). As a result, this study is contributing to theory and media studies.

9.8 Contribution to theory building

Ledin and Machin (2018), Kress (2010) and Prior and Hengst (2010) among others have decried the dearth in research in social semiotic theory or approach to multimodality that

expands and sharpen the analytical tool as well as the various concepts such as semiotic remediation and resemiotization associated with it. This study makes a contribution to this call through drawing on stand-up comedy in Nigeria and South Africa. It contributes to sharpening and popularising notions of semiotic remediation (repurposing), resemiotization as discourse practice – which have come to the fore due massive developments in media and information technology. Also, it contributes to literary studies (drama and comedy, etc) and what Ledin and Machin (2017) call the ‘materiality’ of multimodal communication and thus help in widening and operationalizing notions of ‘texts’ and contexts. This type of emulsification of communicative theories, and multimodality in particular, to analyse stand-up comedy performance has never been done in the literature, thereby I am contributing to the literature.

9.9 Recommendations for future research

Having found that the comedians reconstruct multiple semiotic resources for communication to express opinions, to raise issues for reflection, and to cross boundaries without reprimand, I recommend that multimodality, resemiotization and semiotic remediation are effective communication theories which are capable of determining the intricate underpinnings of every instance of communication in society. Also, as this thesis shows that the comedians veiled cogent issues in the guise of jokes, taking the suggestions expressed by stand-up comedians seriously could aid the identification of challenges in our society and could also help policy makers to draw incentives on how to combat such challenges. Likewise, exploring semiotic remediation could enhance our critical analyses of news and official texts, because it will open our minds to the particularities of happenings we may not be aware of. Similar studies may be done to determine the impact that stand-up comedians have on the audience and especially those in public offices and others spheres of life that they mostly condemn.

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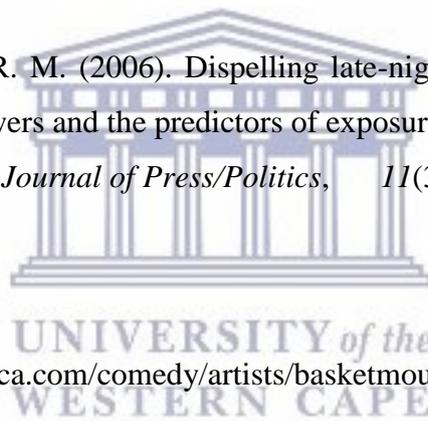
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More websites

<http://www.comedycentralafrica.com/comedy/artists/basketmouth/#bio>

<https://gistmarket.com/video/alibaba-atunyota-alleluya-akporobomerere/>

<http://whoswho.co.za/trevor-noah-5571>

APPENDIX

This translation is necessary for the readers of this thesis to comprehend the messages that are conveyed in Pidgin English in some of the excerpts that are analysed. Thus, I indicate the excerpts and the chapters where such excerpts are used below.

Excerpt 15 (Chapter 6)

Pidgin version

and the other day (mild laughter), somebody talk the other time say e dey look for address. You come ask Yoruba person. I don ask one Yoruba man for address before, the man take my eye see pepper (laughter). As I say: *ah* baba e ma binu, forty-four Adegbite street ni mo nwa. “Forty-four Adegbite street, ni suuru. Taju, wa, s’o mo forty-four Adegbite?” E say: no. E say: haa, won o moo, awon boy yi, won o knowledgeable. So I enter moto. As I drive dey go, the man say: haa, boda, boda, wa, shhhh. E ba mi pe boda yen, boda, boda. Na im I reverse come back, reach there. I say: baba thank God I no lost again. He say: ha, as you enter the car, you wanted to drive, eehn, Kunle my smallest son, he too just come out and I ask him. He sef he no know (laughter and applause).

English translation

...and the other day, somebody said that he was looking for address; and you ask Yoruba person. I’ve asked one Yoruba man for address before, the man let me see pepper. As I say: ah baba, don’t be offended, I am looking for forty-four Adegbite street. Forty-four Adegbite street? Be patient. Come Taju, do you know forty-four Adegbite Street? The boy said no. The man said these children are not knowledgeable enough. So I entered the car. As I was driving and moving away, the man said ‘haa, brother, brother come, shhhh. Help me call that brother. Then I reversed back to where he stood. I said thank God I will not get lost again. The man said, ‘as you entered the car and you wanted to drive away, ehn Kunle my youngest son came out and I asked him. He too does not know).

Excerpt 10 (Chapter 7)

Pidgin Version

First of all, let just start like this: Warri is the beginning of Pidgin English. All the ones una dey speak for this side, na broken English. There is a difference between broken English and Pidgin English. If someone dies outside Warri, you will say the person don late, the person don die, the person don penmeh. That is broken English. In Warri, we speak pidgin. If somebody dies in Warri, we don't say die. We say the person don delete (*laughter*). Alright? So, most of the time when you have pastors from here come to Warri to preach, Adefarasin, Chrisfarasin, we always find an interpreter to make the words get across to the people that are listening. So, most often you will hear something like: "And Jesus went into the wilderness. The guy take off (*laughter*). For forty days and forty nights he fasted. The guy hear wen-ehn (*laughter*). And the devil came and tried him. Devil wan try gbege (*laughter*). But after all the temptation, Jesus did not fail. The guy stand well well (*demonstrates standing posture – laughter*). But you know when it gets to the end, you normally will hear something like "And Jesus turned to the devil and said: get thee behind me Satan". Warri interpretation goes like this: "As soon as Jesus said "Get thee behind me Satan", you hear the Warri say "Jesus turn face devil say: you go wound o" (*laughter*).

English Translation

First of all, let us just start like this: Warri is the beginning of Pidgin English. All the ones you are speaking this side are broken English. There is a difference between broken English and Pidgin English. If someone dies outside Warri, you will say the person is late, the person is dead, the person had died. That is broken English. In Warri, we speak pidgin. If somebody dies in Warri, we don't say die. We say the person is deleted (*laughter*). Alright? So, most of the time when you have pastors from here come to Warri to preach, Adefarasin, Chrisfarasin, we always find an interpreter to make the words get across to the people that are listening. So, most often you will hear something like:

Preacher: And Jesus went into the wilderness.

Pidgin interpreter: The guy take off (English translation: The man took off).

Preacher: For forty days and forty nights he fasted.

Pidgin interpreter: The guy see ween (English translation: the man encountered much problems).

Preacher: And the devil came and tried him.

Pidgin interpreter: Devil wan try gbegee (English translation: the devil wants to play pranks).

Preacher: But after the temptation, Jesus did not fail.

Pidgin interpreter: The guy stand well well (English translation: The man took his stand).

But you know when it gets to the end, you normally will hear something like

Preacher: And Jesus turned to the devil and said: get thee behind me Satan.

Warri interpretation goes like this:

Pidgin interpreter: Jesus turn face devil say: you go wound o (English translation: Jesus turned and told devil: “you will certainly be injured”).

Excerpt 23 (Chapter 7)

Pidgin Version

I think , I think , what should happen these days is that if you see us from Warri, our performing, it is not because we like talking about Yoruba people or talking about the Hausa people or is talking about them an..., it is because of bringing you stories from the Warri part so that you understand us. Like I give you a simple example, you know when armed robbers operate and they see you later, you know say dem go dey dodge because dey no want you to see their face. They say: eh, Taju maa bo, maa bo, man t’a lo sile e lojo yen niyen o. Ma wo’be, ma wo’be. But Warri boy no dey do like that. Warri boys actually, they come introduce themselves, “hey bros, bros (*stretching handshake*) na we come your house that day when you dey shake (*laughter*). Wey we carry that TV but we come there again, you don move? Where you dey now? (*laughter*)

English Translation

I think, I think, what should happen these days is that if you see us from Warri, our performing, it is not because we like talking about Yoruba people or talking about the Hausa people or is talking about them an..., it is because of bringing you stories from the Warri part so that you understand us. Like I give you a simple example, you know when armed robbers operate and they see you later, you know that they will dodge because they don’t want you to see their faces. They will say: eh, Taju come, come, that’s the man we went to burgle his house the other day. Don’t look to his side, don’t look to his side. But Warri boys are not doing like that. Warri boys actually, they will come and introduce themselves: “hey brother, brother, we are the ones who came to your house that day when you were shaking. We are

the ones who carried that TV but we went there again. Have you moved? Where are you living now?

Excerpt 18 (Chapter 5) and Excerpt 17 (Chapter 7)

Pidgin Version

Our Nigeria... our home video sef dey try. Our home video... na so I watch one home video, one burial scene. The person wey die for inside coffin. Dem dey bury am, he dey dance (*dancing movements, mouth-drumming – laughter*). He dey inside coffin dey sweat (loud laughter). As una know the name of the film I for tell una (laughter). E no know say camera dey on top am, he dey sweat. Na so im dey (*standing still to demonstrate a dead still body, puts hand in his pocket and brings out a white handkerchief and wipe his face with the handkerchief, puts it back and joins the audience to laugh*). O boy!

English Translation

Our Nigeria ... our home videos are trying. Our home video... That's how I watched one home video, a burial scene. The person who died and is placed inside the coffin, they were burying him, he was dancing (*dancing movements, mouth-drumming*). He was inside the coffin and sweating. As you already know the name of the movie, if not I will be telling you. He doesn't know that the camera was focused on him, he was sweating. He laid in the coffin (*standing still to demonstrate a dead still body, puts hand in his pocket and brings out a white handkerchief and wipe his face with the handkerchief, puts it back and joins the audience to laugh*). O boy!

Excerpt 8 (Chapter 7)

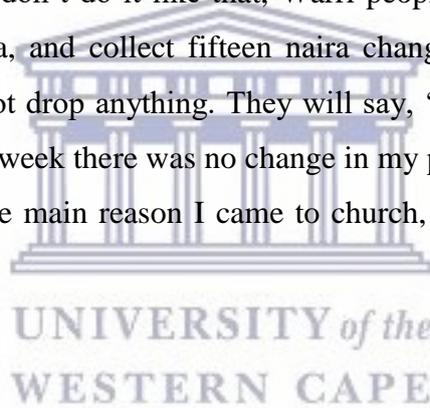
Pidgin Version

You know say when you dey do offering for other churches, usher go pass the bucket. Dem go carry am in line im go go round, collect am (*mild laughter*). E no fit try am for Warri (*laughter*). Usher dey enter the audience (*laughter*), drop your own (*demonstration*

movement), drop your own (*laugh continues*), drop your own, drop your own (*laugh continues*); because if you no do like that, Warri people dey collect change (*laughter*). He go drop twenty naira, collect fifteen naira change. Then some of them go collect change, and dey no drop anything. They will say ‘oh boy, why you dey collect change now?’ He say last week *eh* (*laughter*) change no dey the pocket. I come say this week. Na im make me come church sef (*laughter and applause*). As I just collect change (*hand in pocket*), I dey go, I dey go back (*laughter*).

English Translation

You know that when you are doing offering for other churches, usher will pass the bucket. They will take it to the lines and it will go around through the lines and they will collect it back. They can’t try it in Warri. Usher must enter the congregation, ask people to drop their own offering, because if you don’t do it like that, Warri people will collect change. Warri person will drop twenty naira, and collect fifteen naira change. Then some of them will collect change but they did not drop anything. They will say, ‘dude, why are you collecting change? He will answer, ‘last week there was no change in my pocket. That is why I decided to come this week. That is the main reason I came to church, as I collect the change, I am going, I am going back home.



Excerpt 15 (Chapter 7)

Pidgin Version

Now, something dey happen. A lot of una don hear say e good make all network: MTN and all other networks, get special price for stammerer. It is not easy for them and e dey very hard when stammerers wan borrow your phone to make one minute call. You no dey know say na stammerer until e don dey make the call (*mild laughter all through*). And you know say stammerer no dey like make somebody help them to finish a sentence. When they wan ask you for the phone, dey go just talk am straight. L, l, l,let me use one minute. You go give am. Before im start to dey make the call, naim you go know you don enter trouble. They will say: “is one small con, co, con, contract I so, so, so, so, so, ... oh, is, is, is, ring... is

rin-in-ging. And they don't normally pick their calls, qui, qui, qu, qui..." you will say: quick. He say: "eh... they don't pick it qui, qu, qui, qu, qui, qui, quick". Then, the person go pick the call: "Cha, cha, chairman is me; I'm the one that so, so, so, so, so..." You wey get the phone know how much credit you get. You go say: let me help you talk to the man. They say: "wha, wha, are you the one that so, so, so, so, so, supplied it" (*laughter*).

English Translation

Now, something is happening. A lot of you have heard that it is good for all network: MTN and all other networks, to get special price for stammerer. It is not easy for them and it is usually very hard when stammerers want to borrow your phone to make one minute call. You will not know that he is a stammerer until he started making the call. And you know that stammerer don't like somebody to help them to finish a sentence. When they want to ask you for the phone, they will just ask straight. L, l, l,let me use one minute. You will give it to him. Before he starts to make the call, you will know that you are already in trouble. They will say: "is one small con, co, con, contract I so, so, so, so, so, ...; oh, is, is, is, ring... is rin-in-ging. And they don't normally pick their calls, qui, qui, qu, qui..." you will say: quick. He say: "eh... they don't pick it qui, qu, qui, qu, qui, qui, quick". Then, the person will pick the call: "Cha, cha, chairman, is me; I'm the one that so, so, so, so, so..." You that own the phone know how much airtime you get. You will say: let me help you talk to the man. They will say: "wha, wha, are you the one that so, so, so, so, so, supplied it".

Excerpt 20 (Chapter 6) and Excerpt 7 (Chapter 7)

Pidgin Version

I know say some people talk say dem dey hit me for *eh* social media say I talk say Jonathan government dem thief money. Make una no vex. I no mean to talk am. I think say everybody know (*laughter*). I no know say na secret (*applause laughter*). I no know say I wan talk something wey nobody know o, ehn ehn. But me I think ... you know say everybody with their own opinion. You get your own opinion, me I get my own. My own opinion be say the guy no dey try. No be say e no dey try. The people wey dey around am no dey try. And I thank God say e no win. Na my own opinion. I don talk am. Anybody wey wan die, make he die (*loud laughter*). *Yeah*. I go talk am again and again. You know wetin dey happen? Na so our economy.... You know say as... Buhari ...as our economy don dey shake (*shaking his*

body). See as ...you go see am how they go dey thief up and down. Like say this one....like say that guy win again, by now Nigeria for dey borrow money from Greece (*long applause laughter*). Hello, (*hand on ear mouth as if phoning*) una get five thousand dollars? Abeg make una just borrow us, abeg (*laughter*). I go (*stamping the ground*) talk am again and again.

English Translation

I know that some people are criticising me on social median that I said that Jonathan's government stole money. Please, don't be annoyed. I don't mean to say that. I think that everybody knows. I don't know that it is a secret. I don't know that I want to say something which nobody knows about, ehn ehn. But I think...You know that everybody has their own opinion. You have your own opinion, I have my own opinion. My opinion is that the guy is not trying. Though he is trying, the people around him are not trying; and I thank God that he did not win. That is my own opinion. I have said it. Anybody who wants to die, let him die *yeah*. I will say it again and again. You know what is happening? That is how our economy... You know that Buhari As our economy is shaking, see as ... You will see how they will be stealing from all quarters. If this man... if this guy wins again, by now Nigeria will be borrowing money from Greece. Hello, do you have five thousand dollars? Please just lend us, please. I will say it again and again.

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