

## Nigerian Jokes As Humour Construction: A Semantico-Pragmatic Study

Ogechukwu Miracle Nneji

### Abstract

This paper undertakes a semantico-pragmatic analysis of Nigerian jokes and aims at finding out how much the jokes of a Nigerian man can meet up the demands of the different theories of humour, especially the incongruity theory which has it that humour is the combination of two or more ideas which are supposed to be utterly disparate. Since humour is culture-specific, this analysis was carried out using six Nigerian jokes that cover different facets of the socio-cultural life of the Nigerian man. The paper discovers that the life style of Nigerians is clearly depicted in the jokes they crack.

**Key words: Nigerian jokes, Humour, Semantics, Pragmatics, Semantico-Pragmatic**

### 1.1 Introduction

An online source defines a joke as anything that someone says to cause amusement or laughter, especially an amusing story with a funny punch line. Jokes have a general meaning of verbal humour, including one-liners, riddles and other things that can make people laugh. It is also a funny, made-up story with a punch line told by only one person. Jokes are made with the primary aims of creating humour and entertaining people. A joke is supposed to elicit humour which can be expressed through laughter. What is considered as a joke in one place may not be a joke in another. What may be found amusing in America may not have the same effect on Nigerians because of the differences in culture. A typical English comedy may not interest an average Nigerian. That is why jokes are said to be culture-specific and context dependent. At times, it is important to have background knowledge of something in order to find humour in the joke made out of that thing. Today, the Nigerian entertainment industry also accommodates comedians who entertain people with their jokes *Night of a thousand laughs*, among others, is an album that is specially dedicated to disseminating rib-cracking jokes to Nigerians both at home and in the Diaspora.

Humour and jokes are terms that have something to do with entertaining people and have always been used interchangeably. This study shall adopt the analytic methodology of both semantics and pragmatics. Semantics as one of the levels of micro linguistics is the study of meaning while pragmatics studies meaning not in isolation but in context. It is the science of language use; this is to say that pragmatics deals with the use of language in practical situations. This semantico-pragmatic study on Nigerian jokes as humour construction shall examine selected jokes made in the Nigerian context which reflect current trends in the country. The paper is chapterized with the introduction followed by a brief overview of humour, a semantico-pragmatic analysis of six Nigerian jokes, and a summary of the findings and conclusion.

### 2.0 Humour: An Overview

Studies of humour as a phenomenon, according to Hewitt (2002), date back to Charles Darwin in his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872. Till date, his works on humour remains widely read and relevant. Hewitt (2002) goes further to observe that humor has not been able to succumb to scientific investigation despite subsequent years of debate, discussion and investigation by biologists, psychologists and psychiatrists. It has remained a phenomenon that stands alone with no obvious place in the scientific understanding of the human species. Hewitt (2002) identifies some reasons why it is so. According to him,

there are two reasons for this absence of humour from the, scientific view of humanity. The first is that science is a "serious" activity and seriousness tends to conflict with humour, making the design of experimental protocols difficult. The second reason is the lack of any grand theory that brings humour into the general framework of evolutionary biology - neither of Darwin's selective mechanisms, natural selection and sexual selection, lead to humour as an obvious consequence. The result is that, in essence, scientists have simply lacked experimental or theoretical handles with which to grasp many of the problems humour presents.

Monro (1988) observes that humour is a term which may be used in both a wide and narrow sense. According to him, humour in its wide sense is applied to all literature and to all informal speech or writing in which the object is to amuse, or rouse laughter in the reader or hearer. In a narrow sense, on the other hand, humour is distinguished from wit, satire and farce. It is less intellectual and more imaginative than wit, concerned more with character and situation than with plays upon words or ideas; more sympathetic and less cruel than satire; more subtle than farce. On the other side, it shades into fancy and imagination, since it is concerned, as they are, with exploring the possibilities of unlikely situations or combinations of ideas, but differs from them in being concerned only with the laughable aspects of these imagined situations.

Hewitt (2002) discusses humour in relation to IFF (Identification Friend or Foe - a system used during group combat situations to probe group allegiance and ascertain which individuals should be treated as friend or as foe, especially in the military). According to him, humour appears to be an IFF system for humans in which joke corresponds with the interrogation role of say an aircraft IFF while laughter corresponds to its transducer response.

Three primary theories of humour have emerged and serve as the intellectual foundation for funny. These are the superiority theory, the relief theory and the incongruity theory. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is the probable originator of the superiority theory of humour which states that laughter is clearly at someone, directed down at deformities and imperfections from a position of perceived superiority. The relief theory, on the other hand, is primarily a psychological theory of humour most famously associated with Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) – the Viennese founder of psychoanalysis. The relief could be temporary as in a drinking room story, for example, which is not usually a serious challenge to conventional morality; but it does enable us to air the sexual impulses which society makes us repress. According to *Wikipedia*, the

incongruity theory was conceived in *The Critique of Judgment* by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1790 who claimed that laughter is an emotion that arises from a strained expectation suddenly reduced to nothing. This theory believes that people laugh at things that surprise them or at things that violate an accepted pattern, “with a difference close enough to the norm to be nonthreatening, but different enough from the norm to be remarkable” (Wilkins and Eisenbraun, 2009). Even though a lot of things can make one laugh, it is usually difficult to identify what these laughable things share in common. The above theories make an attempt at defining what exactly it is about a situation that makes it laughable.

Humour is an integral part of the human psyche to the point that philosophers and other intellectuals have long been fascinated with its origin and effects on the human brain. Hazlitt’s (1964:285) statement that “man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be” is one of the props in the theories of humour. This statement has, over the years, received a lot of modifications but has not deviated from its original content – that humour is human-specific. Even though Monro (1954:13) sees the task of developing a theory of humour as a stumbling block ‘on which many great men have stubbed their toes’, three theories of humour have been identified in the literature – superiority theories or Wilson’s (1979:9) “conflict theories”, relief theories or Lippitt’s (1995:169) “release” and incongruity theories or what Attardo (1994:47) calls “contrast”. These theories have provided the subject matter with a good ground for continuous observation and debate.

### 3.0 Semantico-Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Nigerian Jokes

In this section, selected Nigerian jokes, which were downloaded from internet websites, will be presented and analysed using the semantico-pragmatic approach. It has been said earlier that jokes are context-dependent; it is this feature that informs the choice of framework as covering both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of each of the jokes analysed. Besuidenhout (2006) has observed that texts in the philosophy of language frequently cite the tripartite distinction between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics made by Morris (1938). He goes further to give this distinction according to Morris that syntax is concerned with the structural properties of signs (i.e., with word-word relations), semantics with the relations between signs and the things they signify (i.e., with word-world relations), and pragmatics with the uses of signs by speakers and hearers to perform communicative acts (i.e., with word-user relations). A combination of semantics and pragmatics in this paper makes it more sociolinguistic in nature and interesting for both linguists and non-linguists alike.

#### 1. Guy and Mr. Death

Mr. Death came to a guy and said “my friend, today is your day”

**GUY:** But I’m not ready Mr. Death.

**MR DEATH:** Well your name is the next on my list.

**GUY:** Ok, why don’t you take a seat while I get you something to eat before we go our 5 way.

**MR DEATH:** Alright

(Guy gave MR DEATH some food after which MR DEATH ate and fell fast asleep. The 8 Guy took the list, removed his name from the top and put it at the bottom of the list).

Now MR DEATH is Awake...

**MR DEATH:** Guy, because you have been so nice to me, I will start the death list from the BOTTOM. So, enjoy while it lasts.

12 Immediately, Guy fell down and died.

(<http://www.zimbio.com/Nigeria/articles/FsLTqoOfGR3/Joke+Day+Guy+Mr+Death>)

**Analysis**

By this joke, death who is supposed to be an abstract entity is given a human personality that can pay visit to his victim and even have a dialogue with him. This is clearly gleaned from the attribute of Mister (Mr.) to death. Mr. Death came to Mr. Guy's house and told him to get ready to die that he was next in line. Mr. Death even addressed Mr. Guy as his friend "my friend, today is your day... your name is next on my list," But is Death really any man's friend?

The joke does not describe the physical appearance of Mr. Death neither did it tell us how Mr. Guy recognised him as the killer he may have been hearing about him since he was born. Someone cannot come to a stranger's house and say "my friend, today is your day" and the stranger will reply "but I'm not ready Mr. Death". Ordinarily, what the stranger may be expected to say is 'Amen' as a *religious fanatic* who believes that death can take him at any time. This means that background knowledge played a role here; not on the part of the reader but the second locutor who is assumed to have known who Mr. Death was or that he would pay him a visit that very day.

Even on the international scene, Nigerians are known to be very dubious people, with their minds always working and arranging one dubious activity or the other. Mr. Guy thought it was smartness, had he lived to tell the story, he would have beat his chest and said that he was a smart guy. Little did he know that the table would turn against him. Typical of opportunists, he lured Mr. Death to a feast after which he fell asleep. Being a Nigerian to the core, Mr. Guy took advantage of the situation to remove his name from being first on the list to last. But to his utter amazement, when Mr. Death woke up, instead of starting from the first name, he decided to start from the last so that Mr. Guy will have been well paid for his hospitality and benevolence. That was how Mr. Guy lost and "Guy fell down and died". At times, being smart is not enough to make one survive in this world. One needs to apply intelligence.

Furthermore, it is clear that Mr. Guy has an appointment with death which he must attend to that very day but cherishes to live longer on earth. It has been said that the fastest way to heaven is to die but many fear death and yet desire to go to heaven. Hence, such sayings as "the coward dies several times before his actual death."

**2. Hungry and Broke**

There were three men living together in London. An Afro-American, a West Indian and a Nigerian. They were all starving because they didn't

have money to buy food. However upon coming close to a posh London restaurant in this classy neighbourhood, they decided to come up with a plan.

The Afro-American went in first. After being seated, he ordered a three course meal with white wine. When he had finished the meal, the waiter came by with the bill. "LISTEN MY MAN, I ALREADY PAID YOU!" - the Afro-American shouted! The waiter was very confused because he could not remember being paid. But because he did not want to cause any trouble, he let the brother leave.

Five minutes later, the West Indian walked into the same restaurant and ordered a five course meal with red wine. When he had finished eating, the waiter came by to collect the money for the food. "HEY, HEY, LOOK AT ME CROSSES. BUT AH PAID YOU ALREADY!" - the West Indian shouted. This time the manager came and had to calm down the West Indian, because he did not want anything to upset the other customers. He let the guy go.

Ten minutes later, the Nigerian walked in. And you know how we are. He sat down. Lit up a cigarette, and ordered the most expensive meal on the menu, plus two bottles of Guinness. After he had finished, the waiter came to collect the money for the meal, but before the Nigerian could say anything, the waiter spoke to him. "Sir...I have been having all sorts of problems all day and I can't understand it. Two other people like you came in earlier and ate, and they say that they paid me but I don't remember getting any money from them so...." Before he could finish, the Nigerian interrupted, rather emphatically, "OGA I SORRY FOR YOU OOOO. BUT DAT NA YOUR PROBLEM, I JUST WANT YOU TO GIVE ME MY CHANGE!!" (Retrieved from <http://naijajokes.blogspot.com/>)

### **Analysis**

Nigerians do not know how to pretend anywhere. They are always natural. See how the Nigerian guy went in, probably dressed in an expensive cloth he must have borrowed from a friend. Instead of going straight to eat his *food*, which was his immediate need, he "ordered the most expensive meal on the menu" with an already lit cigarette and two bottles of *Gulder* not 'white wine' or 'red wine' like his Afro-American and West Indian friends. The implication is that Nigerians are greedy and proud; and can always device means of protecting their interest at anytime. He took advantage of the fact that his friends got some cheap food and went away with it by asking them to give him what he would have ordinarily eaten had he money on him. This means on the other hand that Nigerians are dogged and able to survive anywhere and in any situation they find themselves.

Borrowing the "frustrated expectation" of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) which holds that humour arises "from the strained expectation into nothing," Munro (1988:351), the high level of frustration of the waiter is clearly seen. Having had difficulties with two

of his previous customers who claimed to have paid him when he could not remember collecting any money from them, he decided to approach the Nigerian with a complaint thinking that that would solve his problem. He tried to be as polite as possible to his black customer. According to him,

Sir...I have been having all sorts of problems all day and I can't understand it. Two other people like you came in earlier and ate, and they say that they paid me but I don't remember getting any money from them so....

To his utter dismay, he did not know he was creating a good ground for his black 'customer' to make yet another trouble with him in the following lines.

Before he could finish, the Nigerian interrupted, rather emphatically, "OGA I SORRY FOR YOU OOOO. BUT DAT NA YOUR PROBLEM, I JUST WANT YOU TO GIVE ME MY CHANGE!!"

Typical of a Nigerian, the Nigerian businessman in the joke did not just claim to have paid the food; but requested for his balance which is commonly called 'change' in Nigeria. It is not his business that the waiter is a confused man; all he did was take advantage of his confusion to enrich himself.

The pragmatic implication of this joke is that Nigerians are known everywhere in the world as people who take advantage of any situation for their own benefit; they are fast thinkers.

### **3. I'm Not Nigerian**

A Nigerian man living in Sweden decided to marry a Swedish lady in order to be legally certified via resident status, but the lady was not aware of this. She felt he really loved her. Anyway, seeing that Nigerian men had a bad rap in that particular part of Sweden, our chap decided to lie to the lady. He told her he was from Uganda.

Upon marriage, the lady came home one day and informed our man that she had just met another Swedish lady who had married a Ugandan and they must all have dinner together.

The Naija man was somewhat perplexed, although not perceptibly, and wondered how he'd get out of that spot. He postponed and postponed until he could do so no more.

Finally, the day came when they were to have dinner. The other Swede came in with her Ugandan husband and they all sat at the table. Our Naija chappie was very quiet. "My own don spoil today" was all he could think.

The two Swedish ladies, wanting their husbands to mingle, being from

the same homeland, asked them to speak to each other. "Hey! It's not every day you meet people from home!" they admonished.

Our Naija man, being a man of great savvy, decided that he would just speak Yoruba, and the guy would probably assume he was from some part of Uganda where they spoke a different language. So looking across the table he said: "Egbon Eko ni mi se? Ni bo lo ti ja wa?" (*"I'm a Lagos man. Where do you come from?"*)

The fellow looked up at 'his' black brother. His eyes lit up as he said: "Ah, bobo gan! Omo Eko ni mi se! Omo Eko gan gan!" (*"Hey buddy! I'm a Lagos child. A REAL Lagos child!"*) (<http://www.nairaland.com/105/nigerian-jokes/1>)

### Analysis

The jokes of a people are usually associated with the lifestyle of such people. The Nigerian joke such as the one above is typical of this. From (3), some of the problems encountered by Nigerians when they travel abroad are clearly evident. The travel to overseas countries is usually necessitated by the lack of basic amenities in the country. Nigerian youths seek greener pastures in overseas countries and in so-doing encounter a lot of difficulties.

*I'm Not Nigerian* shows how Nigerian guys lie in order to settle themselves in any country they enter. Getting married to white women is no more news since that is the only alternative to 'quick settlement' in a strange country. The Nigerian guy in (3) towed the line of other Nigerian travelers to settle for a Swedish woman in order to get the most revered green card. But before he was able to do that, he lied to the woman that he was Ugandan owing to the bad names that have been associated with Nigerians in that part of the world. Had he told the woman his real nationality, she may not have agreed to marry him and that would have frustrated his plans. So the only alternative was to lie to her.

Upon marrying her, the woman discovered another Swedish friend of hers who also married a 'Ugandan' and pressed it on her husband to meet his kinsman who has become his brother-in-law. With this, the Nigerian guy became afraid that his lies would be exposed and tried to dodge but with the persistence of his wife, he decided to face the challenge and let the worse happen. Little did he know that the supposed 'Ugandan brother-in-law' was also a Nigerian like him who lied to his own wife in order to survive. He decided to just speak Yoruba which happens to be his native language

Egbon Eko ni mi se? Ni bo lo ti ja wa? (*"I'm a Lagos man. Where do you come from?"*)

and perhaps claim that he was from a different part of Uganda from the other guy. To his greatest surprise, the other supposed 'Ugandan' replied him as follows.

Ah, bobo gan! Omo Eko ni mi se! Omo Eko gan gan!" (*"Hey buddy! I'm a Lagos child. A REAL Lagos child!"*)

With this interaction, it becomes obvious that none of the two men lied since they could interact using the same language. On the other hand, the two Swedish women have become victims of dramatic irony of the whole situation because as it is, they still do not know the real nationality of the men they married even when the readers have. The incongruity in (3) is that it is ironical for a man to have two equal nationalities (Ugandan and Nigerian) at the same time.

#### 4. Monkey versus Lion

A Nigerian youngster who was visiting the United Kingdom for the first time was taken to the London zoo for sightseeing. On getting to the section where monkeys are kept, he was amazed to see other tourists giving out plenty of money to the monkeys that were hopping around doing acrobatics. The more the acrobatics, the more the tourists enjoyed the show and the more the money (hard currency) the monkeys got.

This young man suddenly had an idea and when he got back to Nigeria, he started learning all kinds of acrobatics. He visited HIS medicine man and asked for a portion that will transform him into a monkey.

During his next visit to London, he went into the zoo and took the portion and was transformed into a monkey. He joined the other monkeys and started his own type of modern, systematic and attractive acrobatics. He soon caught the attention of all the tourists who wasted no time in showering him with plenty of pounds sterling. He was now making more money than the real monkeys.

The king of the monkeys didn't like this and challenged the new monkey to an acrobatic duel. The contest was tough and very keen but the new monkey won. The king monkey had to go on exile in shame but before he left he set a trap for the intruding monkey who now became the new king.

The next day, monkey business started as usual, with money coming in from the tourists. There was this particular tourist who so enjoyed the show that he threw a lot of money into the cage. The new king pocketed his money but to his amazement all the other monkeys threw their earnings into the adjacent cage. The new king could not comprehend this and would not allow all that money to go away like that; so he jumped into the adjacent cage to pick up the money. It was only when he got there that he realized it was a lion's cage.

The lion looked at him, looked at the money and roared and started toward the monkey who was now sweating, shaking and foaming in the mouth. Half way, the lion suddenly stopped, looked at the monkey again and said: "Oh boy, if no bi say we all na Naija, I for show you." (<http://www.nairaland.com/105/nigerian-jokes/1>)



Nigerians can do just anything in order to make money. By ‘anything’, killing is inclusive. This time (in (4), killing is not involved but some other thing almost as serious as killing. The young Nigerian that visited United Kingdom for the first time was very amazed when he saw the amount of money being dished out to monkey for their acrobatic displays and wished he was one of the monkeys. The popular saying that “if wishes were horses, beggars would ride” did not hold sway for this Nigerian youth because he was able to turn his own wishes into horses. But how did he do that? Simple.

Right there in the zoo, he had an idea and quickly nursed a plan. He went back to Nigeria and started learning different types of acrobatic movements and with the help of ‘HIS medicine man’, he was empowered to turn into a monkey with a portion given to him. Note the emphasis on ‘HIS’. This means that just like other people have their medical doctors who they consult on health grounds, this young Nigerian has his personal native doctor who he consults in times of difficulty.

Having been empowered both with skills and charms, he went back to the United Kingdom. His plans worked because with his advanced acrobatics, he was able to attract the attention of almost all the tourists to himself thereby dethroning the King Monkey to be the ‘new king’. He went into the adjacent cage into which the other monkeys were throwing their earnings but was dismayed to see it was a lion’s cage. He was so afraid that his sweat visibly seen even with the furs of a monkey on his body. The lion was very angry with this intruder and made towards him to teach him a lesson that he will not forget in a hurry or not even be alive to tell but on a careful look discovered that the supposed ‘monkey’ was a Nigerian like him. This he expressed in the following words: “Oh boy, if no bi say we all na Naija, I for show you”.

Coming from the semantic angle, nobody bears his nationality on his forehead. This was the more reason why the Swedish ladies in (4) could not discover that their husbands were actually Nigerians not Ugandan. If this is true, how then was the lion able to identify the monkey as a Nigerian. The implication of his assumption is that since he could turn himself into a lion in order to make money, then any other Nigerian could do the same and he was right; the supposed ‘monkey’ is also a Nigerian who has also taken the same risk in order to survive in a strange land.

It is incongruous that the white tourists did not even acknowledge that desperate Nigerians were using their ignorance and resultant generosity to enrich themselves. Yet another dramatic irony. The tourists may have wondered that the new monkey must be a ‘super monkey’ to be displaying such acrobatic movements but did not know the real truth behind all those.

##### **5. The Barber**

An American priest walked into a barber’s shop in Washington, D.C. After his haircut, he asked how much it would be. The barber said, "No charge. I consider it a service to the Lord." The next morning, the barber came to work and there were 12 prayer books and a thank you note from the priest in front of the door.

Later that day, a British police officer on vacation came in and got his hair cut. He then asked how much it was. The barber said, "No charge.

I consider it a service to the community." The next morning, he came to work and there were a dozen donuts and a thank you note from the police officer.

Then, a Nigerian Businessman came in and got a haircut. When he was done, he asked how much it was. The barber said, "If you are really a Nigerian then you don't have to pay since you are from the same country as Akeem Olajuwon the basket-baller." The next morning, the barber came to work and there were 12 Nigerians in front of his door waiting for a haircut!!! (<http://www.nairaland.com/105/nigerian-jokes/1>)

### **Analysis**

The reaction of the 'Nigerian Businessman' in (5) would be found strange by foreigners but to fellow Nigerians, it is a common practice; merchandise must be made of every available opportunity. It is possible that the 'Nigerian Businessman' had already collected money from the other 12 Nigerians and convinced them to follow him to the barber's shop. This action of the Nigerian is a direct opposite of what the barber got from the American priest who was not just dazed at this kind of "service to community" but tried to pay for the haircut in some other way.

The next morning, the barber came to work and there were 12 prayer books and a thank you note from the priest in front of the door.

The same applies to the British police officer who quietly kept "a dozen donuts and a thank you note" in front of the barber's shop before he came to work the following morning.

To the Nigerian Businessman, since the barber cannot take money from him because he came from the same country with the famous basketballer "Akeem Olajuwon", then he should be ready to do same to more Nigerians.

The next morning, the barber came to work and there were 12 Nigerians in front of his door waiting for a haircut!!!

By implication, he may not have time to do any other 'service to the Lord' or 'service to the community' owing to the increasing number of Akeem Olajuwon's kinsmen that keep trooping to his shop for a free haircut. Imagine each of these 12 going away only to return with 12 other Nigerians to the barber's shop for a free haircut. It is terrible.

On the other hand, one can say that Nigerians abroad see one another as brothers and as such live a communal life. This accounts for why it was not difficult for the Nigerian businessman to gather 12 other Nigerians within so short a space of time "the next morning". Nigerians abroad do not hide their love for one another. After all there is a popular saying among the Igbos that *nwanne d[ n'mba* (which can be literally translated as one's benefactor is found in a strange land). So when they find themselves in a foreign country, tribe becomes a secondary factor while nationality remains primary.

### **6. Police Dey Read Bible...?**

On Lagos-Ibadan express road, a Pastor met a team of policemen who, quite naturally, wanted 'something' from him. Since he was not

prepared to play their games, they asked for his papers and having combed through everything without any offence with which to nail the 'stubborn' pastor, they now asked him to open the bonnet of his car.

A careful scrutiny of the engine number against what was on paper revealed that letter 'U' was written in such a way that it could be mistaken for letter 'V'. That was all the officer-in-charge needed to shout "stolen vehicle!"

Sensing trouble, even when he knew he committed no offence, the pastor called the OC to say he was a priest to which the officer replied: "Please, leave that pastor thing...in any case, if you are indeed a pastor, then you must have a Bible in your car, bring it."

The Pastor did as was commanded after which the officer now ordered: "Please read Matthew 5:25-26 to me". The incredulous Pastor opened to the recommended passage and read: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to a judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny." The man of God quietly made an "offering" of "just" N100 to his newly found "preacher".

"End of service go in peace and argue no more", said the OC.

(<http://www.nairaland.com/105/nigerian-jokes/1>)

### **Analysis**

It is common practice in Nigeria for the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to set 'traps' for money along major road in cities and highways. Greed has made them discontented with their earnings that they set traps for money at different locations on Nigerian roads. What they call 'roadblocks' today have come to be a common practice used for money-making avenue. In order to make money from these 'money traps', they harass people no matter who they are but the Pastor who happens to be the victim of the incident in (6) thinks otherwise. This informs why he refused to dance to their tune and the resultant effect of his feigned ignorance of what exactly the police officers wanted was not hidden.

Since he was not prepared to play their games, they asked for his papers and having combed through everything without any offence with which to nail the 'stubborn' pastor, they now asked him to open the bonnet of his car.

Perhaps, what they would term it is that the pastor does not have anything serious to do and is not rushing to anywhere. So they decided to waste his time the more. To achieve this aim, they started with his car bonnet and as usual, discovered a 'U' which could possibly be mistaken for a 'V'. This discovery alone was enough for the officer-in-charge to conclude that that was a "stolen vehicle." This is a common practice among Nigerian police men; even the present writer has had a similar experience where the officer in charge had to use hydraulic to scrap a part of the engine until a number which was not registered as engine number appeared. She was made to drive to the police station and

bail herself out with a lump sum of three thousand naira without receipt. All those happened two years ago along Benin-Agbor expressway.

On duty, nobody seems to know his brother or kinsman not to talk of a pastor who is strange to him. This is clearly seen in the following sentence.

"Please, leave that pastor thing...in any case, if you are indeed a pastor, then you must have a Bible in your car, bring it."

Since everything one needs is in the bible, OC found a portion that suits his purpose and commanded the pastor to read it aloud for him. The content of the verse

Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to a judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny (Matthew 5:25-26).

solves the whole puzzle and shortened what would have cost the pastor more stress of maybe going through the trouble of 'stolen vehicle'.

The man of God quietly made an "offering" of "just" N100 to his newly found "preacher".

The closing remark of the OC indicates that he was never interested in the sermon but the 'offering of just N100... End of service go in peace and argue no more'. Had the pastor not read the handwriting on the wall and used his tongue to count his teeth, he would have been surprised at the kind of trouble he would have passed through. The desperation of the Nigerian police and their quest to collect illegal charges from their 'victims' is equally seen in the lines below.

A man was going around 1.00am alone in his car, he got to a check point. The policeman stopped him and asked for everything which he gave out. The police had nothing to ask again, in order to charge him, guess what the police man said; "I charge you for driving alone at this time of the day, if you come get accident now who go tell your people?" The man replied: I'm not alone, Jesus Christ is with me here, Angel Gabriel, Angel Rapheal, Angel Micheal and five angels are with me here. The policeman said: "all these people inside this your small car? I charge you for overloading!!!

#### 4.0 Summary of the Findings and Conclusion

In this study, selected Nigerian jokes have been analysed using the incongruity theory of humour which states that people tend to laugh at things or other people who they think they are superior to. The three theories of humour reviewed are different approaches to the discussion of humour by earlier scholars and researchers. Six Nigerian jokes have been analysed and from the analysis, one can generalize that jokes depict the socio-cultural life of the people.

*Police Day Read Bible...?* shows how Nigerians can take the most viable advantage of whatever position they occupy. The officer in charge in the joke believes in the popular Igbo saying that *ebe onye sara ahx ka o na-eyiri akwa ya* 'where a man works is where he eats'. *I'm not Nigerian* and *Monkey versus Lion* show that Nigerians can do just anything in order to survive in any part of the world they find themselves.

Denying their nationality is a little offence compared to the risk of turning into a 'monkey' and a 'lion' all in a bid to make money and survive. In other words, Nigerians are prone to survival no matter the risk that is involved.

*Hungry and broke* shows how creative and bold a Nigerian can be even in the face of challenges. He always knows how to wangle his way out of every difficult situation. No wonder the Nigerian in (3) took advantage of the waiter's confusion to give himself a treat to a delicious meal without paying a dime. Guy in (2) failed the seventh rule 'never get caught'; he was smart but not intelligent. That was why his own decision to be 'smart' failed him. Nigerians live a communal life especially on the international scene as seen in *The Barber*. If not, the Nigerian Businessman would not have been able to reach up to 12 Nigerians, who he brought to the barber's shop for a free haircut, within one night. In conclusion, the life style of a people can be summarised even in jokes.

### References

- Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bergson, H. (1911). *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*. Translated by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: Macmillan.
- Besuidenhout, A. (2006). Semantics-pragmatics boundary. In J.L. Mey (Ed). *Concise encyclopedia of pragmatics*. Pp 913-920. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.
- Darwin, C. (1872). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* Reprinted by University of Chicago Press, (1963), Chicago, Ill.
- Hewitt J. A. (2002). *The architecture of thought: A new look at human evolution*. Holmhurst House Press, Bedfordshire, UK.
- Koyama, W. (2009). Semantics and pragmatics. In J.L. Mey (Ed). *Concise encyclopedia of pragmatics*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.
- Monro, D. H. (1988). Theories of humor. In Behrens, L. & Rosen, J.J. (Eds.). *Writing and reading across the curriculum* 3rd ed. Pp 349-55. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Monro, D. H. (1954). The argument of laughter. Available online at <http://www.amazon.com/Argument-Laughter-D-H-Monro/dp/B000NXHUYS>
- Morris, C. (1938). *Foundations of the theory of signs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilkins, J. & Eisenbraun, A.J. (2009). Humor theories and the physiological benefits of laughter. *Holist Nurs Pract*, 23(6), 249-354.

### Online Sources

- Humour – Incongruity Theory. <a href="http://science.jrank.org/pages/9716/Humor-Incongruity-Theory.html">Humor - Incongruity Theory</a>
- Joke. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries*. Retrieved January 25, 2013, from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/joke>
- Niger-Related Humour. <http://www.motherlandnigeria.com/humor.html>
- Humour online. <http://humouronline.blogspot.com/2009/05/nigerian-jokes.html>