

Article

Stylistic Analysis of Comic Language Strategies and Techniques in Selected Comedy Skits

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Abstract

This study investigates comic techniques and lexical stylistic features utilised in selected comedy skits of Broda Shaggi and Mr. Macaroni. In this study, language was decolonized to create comic and stylistic strategies which in turn create humorous effects and convey particular messages to the audience in comedy skits. The study adopts aspects of Kant's (1790) model of incongruity theory of humour and Halliday's (1979) lexical cohesion aspect of Systemic Functional Grammar as analytical tools. The selected dialogues from the comedy skits are transcribed into text and analysed. The data from Broda Shaggi and Mr. Macaroni were randomly collected from YouTube their channels. The study employs a mixed research design. From the analysis of the dialogues from the sampled comedy skits, the comic techniques observed were; distortion, retorts, rhetorical questions, satire, malapropism, and sarcasm. Moreover, the lexical stylistic techniques observed in the study were divided into two major categories- paradigmatic relations or features (repetition, and antonym) and the syntagmatic feature - collocations. It also reveals that comedy skit makers employ satiric elements the most to pass a strong message on societal reform and they also use the lexical repetitive style to achieve this better.

Keywords: *Comedy skits, systemic functional grammar, lexical cohesion, comic techniques, incongruity theory of humour*

Introduction

Communication is one of the vital functions of language in any speech community. It is the key aspect of human existence as it is used to express oneself and convey information. According to Lyons (1970), languages are the principal communication systems used by particular groups of human beings within the specific society (linguistic community) of which they are members. Through language, humans can communicate their ideas, emotions, thoughts, feelings, and desires. The different ways by which different individuals attempt to communicate their ideas and thoughts is known as style. Style encapsulates the uniqueness and authenticity of a language user. Historically, style has been regarded as a choice of linguistic means; as a deviation from the norms of language use; as a recurrent feature of linguistic forms; and as a comparison (Choudhay, et al. 2018). Style is a pattern of linguistic usage which distinguishes a piece of writing from another; an author/writer or a speaker from another. The study of style is the focus of stylistics.

Haynes (1989) believes that the study of style is the study of the distinctions, looking at what was said against what might have been said. Stylistics looks at the choices of words, the sentence pattern, the figurative usage of words and even the use of graphology embedded in a work. Charles Bally, in his *Traité de Stylistique*, (cited by Taylor 1980, pp. 21-23) stresses the role of expressiveness of language and the function of language in interaction as they have the task of communicating thought. Stylistics explores the element of a language organized from the point of



view of its affective content; that is, the expression of emotion by language as well as the effect of language on the emotions. The emphasis on 'emotive' and 'expressive' elements of language draws attention to the notion of 'choice', which is central to Bally's approach. Choice and deviation are vital instruments of stylistics as they deal with the variations and the options that are available to the speaker or the user of the language. Halliday (1978) considers variation in language as the expression of some fundamental attributes of the social system. Because of this, language users are compelled by different circumstances to use language differently. Traugott and Pratt (1980, pp. 29-30) clarify the connection between language and choice as the characteristic choices exhibited in a text. Stylistics covers the scope of both written and spoken forms of language choices made by different individuals. This research analyses the various language choices and deviations made in the different comedy skits by comedians to elicit humour or amusement from the audience while also conveying certain messages.

Comedy as a genre of literature aims at eliciting humour and laughter and creating light moods. It is an old genre which preceded tragedy during the Greek classical era. It humours its audience through the presentation or representation of human follies. According to Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, comedy represents human beings "worse than they are". Comic characters are not necessarily evil, they are just ridiculous. Comedy has evolved and has taken different forms depending on the socio-cultural disposition of its host community.

Comedy has thrived so well in Nigeria into the third biggest entertainment industry after Nollywood and music (Osae-Brown, 2015). A Few years back, the upsurge has been in the area of stand-up comedy and TV comedy shows. Stand-up comedy has revolutionised the comedy craft in Nigeria and made it a worthwhile profession. Adesoye (2018) reports that it has become a source of livelihood for many Nigerians who in recent times have become superstars, celebrities and millionaires in the stand-up comedy craft. However, with a wider audience in the social media space, there has been a radical cross in the medium. Social media has given comedy skits more viral access to more audiences. A comedy skit is a single dramatised short and funny theatrical performance on the internet. Comedy skits are usually very short, between one to fifteen minutes with just two or more characters. The Nigerian skit makers use this one platform to address issues of corruption, economic recession, unemployment, politics and other sociocultural issues. For this research, the analysis will be on Broda Shaggi and Mr Macaroni's skits from their YouTube channels.

Samuel Perry and Debo Adedayo are Nigerian skit makers or comedians with Broda Shaggi and Mr Macaroni as their stage names respectively. Broda Shaggi's content revolves around a poor tout as the lead character usually in a ghetto setting, who in the quest for survival engages in all forms of jobs, both legal and illegal. His inability to achieve positive results at the end of each escapade is the source of humour in the skits. Mr Macaroni's skits on the other hand are mostly built on political satire, moral decadence and a blend of sexuality. The chief character of the skits is an elderly man usually on a brown 'agbada'. He takes the role of a sugar daddy, a corrupt politician, or a father depending on the script. Broda Shaggi and

Mr Macaroni strive towards creating humour in their different roles and actions through the various choices of language use and techniques.

Owing to the rise in the production of comedy skits and a surge of interest relating to research on humour, comics and comedy skits, it was observed that studies on the strategies and techniques of the comic language employed in comedy skits are largely missing. For instance, Studies like Adesoye (2018) account for humour and how it is achieved through phonological processes focusing on Folarin Falana's comedy skits, while Filani and Oluwatomi (2022) explore a discourse analysis on how comedy skits downplay the image of the female gender through objectification and negative stereotyping in a typical Nigerian society. Aside from the instances above, there are many other works on comedy skits but research on the analysis of comic language strategies and techniques in the selected comedy skits under study is largely missing. This is the gap the work intends to fill. Therefore, this study attempts to examine and analyse the various styles of language used in comedy skits while identifying the strategies and techniques deployed by participants to elicit laughter.

Aim and Objectives

This research aims to analyse the comic language strategies and techniques employed in selected comedy skits of Broda Shaggi and Mr. Macaroni.

The objectives of the study are to:

- i) Discuss the comic language strategies and techniques employed to create the humorous effects in the comedy skits.
- ii) Analyse the stylistic elements that are used as strategies and techniques in comedy skits to convey particular messages to the audience.

Studies in Comedy Skits

Adesoye (2018) explored the phonological distortion as a humourous strategy. He selected five comedy skits from Folarin Falana's comedy skits as her case study. The study adopts McGraw and Warren's (2010) Benign Violation Theory as the theoretical framework which helps in its analysis of the various phonological violations such as liaison, deletion, insertion, monophthongisation, vowel strengthening and other phonological distortions deliberately employed by the comedian to create humour. Other aspects of mother tongue interference in the pronunciation of English words and intonation which are used by the comedian to address, not just the national issues but also the whole world's view and the influence in the people's attitudes, were analysed by this study. The study differs from the current study in various ways, such as the data, the theoretical framework and the case study. Adesoye in his study explores humour and how it is achieved through phonological processes only while the current study explores how language is manipulated to elicit humour in skits.

Also, Filani and Oluwatomi (2022) conducted a discourse analysis on comedy skits in which the woman's body and social image are used as the driving points of humour. The study selects Mr. Macaroni's skits to portray how comedy sketches elicit humour using gender stereotyping. The study is situated within the

framework of critical pragmatics which helped in examining the motif with which humour is generated in Mr Macaroni's skits regarding women in a bid to discover the ideologies embedded in them and the cultural presuppositions that surround the motif. The current research is similar to the above study in terms of the data used, Mr Macaroni's skits, and the humour aspect of the study but differs in the theoretical framework. While Filani and Oluwatomi examined a discourse analysis of the representation of women in the skits, the current study identified and analysed the stylistic elements of comedy or laughter implored in the skits.

Sunday and Bamgbose (2021) examined humour in situation comedies (sitcoms). They tried to account for the manifestation of humour, the humour strategies deployed, and the functions that the humorous utterances serve in the situation comedies. The paper used Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory as the framework while subjecting the data to pragmatic analysis. The data are selected from the sitcoms of Jenifa's Diary and Professor Johnbull. The paper identified allusion, retort, parody, tease banter, and put-down as the humour strategies employed in the sitcoms. The study found amusing humorous acts and castigating humorous acts as the two manifestations of humour in the sitcoms.

The above study is related to the current study in terms of analysis of humour strategies which is similar to the analysis of strategies of comic language which the current study seeks to do. However, they both differ in the theoretical framework and the data used.

Furthermore, Oju and Ajayi (2021) examined the cognitive stylistic model of analysis of selected African skits. The research adopts Text World Theory as its analytical framework using two skits from Nigeria and Ghana; Taaoma's comedy skits and Ebaby Kobby's comedy skits respectively. The study identifies the text worlds triggered by the skit and also locates the linguistic triggers. The Text World Theory is concerned with how language as well as the context in which it is produced or received leads the participants in the discourse to build a mental representation of the situation being described. The research discovered that the participants in the discourse, their experience, background, knowledge, the relationships that exist between them and every other thing perceivable to them contribute to the construction of a discourse world. The study differs from the current one in terms of data, case study and objectives. While Oju and Ajayi investigate the cognitive stylistic of two skits from two different African countries, the current study examined the stylistic analysis of selected comedy skits in Nigeria. They also differ in the theoretical frameworks.

Again, Adenusi and Onifade (2020) in their study established how comedy skits serve as a medium for expressing views on parenting styles in the African context. The study is built upon the tenets of media dependency by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin De Fleur (1976) and medium theories or channel theories which are propounded by McLuhan (1964). The medium theory is adopted because it proposes an integral relationship among the audience, media and the larger social system. The channel theory is used to explore the stereotypes of African parents through selected comic skits to show how the medium in which the audience accesses these messages affects their worldview on different parenting styles that parents adopt in building relationships with their children. The study uses three

skits each from Taaoma's skits and Maraji's skits. Through these skits, the study adopts a thematic analysis of the message that is conveyed in each action. The study identified authoritarian parenting as the dominant style of parenting in the selected comic skits about what is found in the African context.

The above work is slightly similar to the current study in that it examines comic skits and their function in social settings which is related to stylistics in the current study. But they both differ in that the above work is focused on comic skits that are on parent-children relationships in the African context where children's views are not respected while the current study examines the stylistic analysis of comic language in some selected skits.

The reviewed works above are similar to the current work based on their use of comic or comedy skits as the data for analysis and on the exploration of humour/elements and strategies in the skits. However, the dissimilarities lie much in the theoretical framework and the conceptual approaches. The current study is, however, interested in stylistic analysis of the comic elements and how they are used in comedy skits.

Concerning the foregoing, it becomes obvious that studies on stylistic analysis of comic language strategies and techniques in selected comedy genre under study is largely missing. This constitutes the gap that this study intends to fill.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study combines M.A.K Halliday's (1979) lexical cohesion aspect of Systemic Functional Grammar and Immanuel Kant's (1790) Incongruity Theory of Humour in analysing the comedy skits selected for this study.

Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a theory of language that centres on the notion of language function. It is built on the previous works of some influential linguists such as Bronislaw Malinowski. Halliday (1979) asserts that the theory is a functional theory of language as a social semiotics. It is an interface between choices of words, how they are structured, and the meaning made by those words. The theory is concerned with the function of the sentence, or in other words, the writer's purpose in writing the sentence. In SFG, clause rather than sentence is the unit of analysis. The theory defines language functions along ideational interpersonal and textual lines and relates them to context. The theory unifies text (spoken or written), context, and realization. Halliday explains these systems of meaning as; the macro-function of language, the context situation and higher order social system (Halliday, 1978).

Systemic functional linguistics describes meaning in language from three perspectives that relate to fundamental functional properties of human language. These three perspectives are sometimes considered as 'strands of meaning' (Fontaine 2012, p. 10) or metafunctions, namely, the interpersonal metafunction, the ideational metafunction and the textual metafunction. This study has a closer inclination to the lexical cohesion of the textual metafunction.

The textual metafunction organises the grammatical structures of the text. It looks at the mode of presentation. This metafunction is preoccupied with thematic systems and information systems. It also has lexical cohesion as one of its branches.

Incongruity Theory of Humour

Incongruity Theory of Humour is one of the first linguistic theories of humour, dating back to the 18th century. It was first formulated by James Beattie (1776) and later advanced by Immanuel Kant (1790). Morreall (1987) considers the incongruity theory to be the most popular current philosophical theory of humour and he further states that the formal object of amusement is the incongruous. Many researchers share his view and see incongruity as the essential element in eliciting humour. Incongruity is a violation of a pattern in someone's picture of how things should be. What any individual finds incongruous will depend on what his or her experience has been and what his or her expectations are. The core of this theory can easily be explained by Schopenhauer's definition of laughter: "The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity" (Attardo 1994, p.48). The idea of incongruity is based on the notion that there is a certain pattern to the relationships between components of ideas. When the system of arrangement does not match the expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous. Many theorists agree that not incongruity, but the congruous outcome of the incongruity contains the funny element. Attardo (1994) argues that this theory is a two-staged model of comprehension and appreciation, including incongruity and resolution. Willmann (1940, p.72) also mentions the term 'incongruity' when he states that humour results from 'the union of two ideas which involve some sort of contradiction or incongruity'. He further distinguishes three different realisations of this union. Either the two meanings might be united by common elements, or one might function as an inference drawn from the second meaning, or both might occur in objective reality (Schwarz, 2010).

Attardo (2001) makes a list of features that are necessary for incongruity to lead to humour and they are presented below:

- a. The incongruity must be non-threatening.
- b. The incongruity must not be too complex or too simple.
- c. Available scripts/knowledge: the recipient must have sufficient knowledge to be able to process the scripts and identify the incongruity.
- d. The incongruity must be unexpected and surprising.
- e. The participants should be in a playful mode: the situation must be framed or keyed as humour. It should reflect suspension or disbelief.

The above two theories were used for this study because, the incongruity theory helps to identify and analyze the various humour strategies and techniques employed in the skits, while the textual metafunction as one of the three metafunctions in systemic functional grammar is used to analyze the meaning of the techniques.

Methodology

The data for this study were downloaded from the YouTube channels of Broda Shaggi's Skit, on the selected topics: "Will You Miss Your Final Exam For 200 Million Dollars" and "Who is a Philanthropist"; and two of Mr. Macaroni's skits, "World of Imagination" and "Politicians Don't Care". These skits were randomly selected before downloading and the videos were played severally and transcribed for analysis. The data was presented in excerpts. The qualitative method of analysis was adopted where the data was descriptively discussed and analysed bringing out the stylistic elements and comic techniques in the selected skits under study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section constitutes a tabular presentation of the comedy skits and their comic techniques from the point of view of Kant's (1790) Incongruity Theory of Humour.

Table 1 The Comic Strategies and Techniques in BrodaShaggi's Skit, Who is a Philanthropist

Excerpts	Discussion	Comic Technique
1.	Interviewer: So, Broda Shaggi, who is a philanthropist? Shaggi: (Confused) Eh? Interviewer: Philanthropist. Shaggi: (Thinking) <i>Filantropi...ah filantropi filantropi filantropi...</i> Interviewer: <i>Broda Shaggi you don't know?</i>	Distortion
2.	Shaggi: <i>Ah no know wetin? Ki lo se? Calm down, you too like to dey rush rush. Me as ah dey like this when ah wan answer question ah no dey rush. O ye! It's not a rush hour (starts to sing Rush by Arya Starr)...</i>	Retorts
3	Shaggi: Coz oyibo said what? <i>The filament of a filantropist is a feeble philanderer</i>	Malapropism

Table 2: Comic Techniques in BrodaShaggi's Skit, "Will You Miss Your Final Exam for 200 Million Dollars"

Excerpts	Discussion	Comic Technique
4.	Interviewer: Will you miss your final exam for 200 million dollars? Shaggi: Will me miss... exam? Interviewer: Your final exam. Shaggi: <i>Ehen ehen...I no know say na final exam. Will me miss my final exam? For how much?</i> Interviewer: 200 million dollars. Shaggi: Orion <i>weyrey!</i> Shey you dey whine me ni? Will me miss my final exam for 200 million dollars? Shey as my life dey like this, my life never final? Can you imagine foolish talk? <i>Before you go wear skirt like masquerade wey dey go interview.</i>	Retort

	Shaggi: It is not only final exam that I will miss, I will miss <i>my period</i> .	
5.	Shaggi: Make I ask you one question. Interviewer: Yes Shaggi: <i>As you dey like this you goes school?</i> Interviewer: Yes. Shaggi: <i>You write final exam?</i> Interviewer: Of course, I'm a graduate.	Rhetorical question
6	Shaggi: <i>Person wey no write final exam na im be president of this country and he dey cash out everyday... As he dey like that he dey go London go charge</i> Person wey no write final exams na him be president of this country phone and you dey here dey waka under sun. Give me ₦3,500! It is not only exam that I will miss, I will miss my period.	Satire
7	Shaggi: Coz Oyibo said what? <i>The Miss of a Mrs is a Mississippi.</i>	Malapropism

Table 3. Comic Language Techniques in Mr Macaroni's Skit: "World of Imagination"

Excerpts	Discussion	Comic Technique
8	Mr Macaroni: That thing that I promised you, I want to send it to you now. I just sent you two million naira. Faye: Daddy... Mr Macaroni: You know you said you are working on a project. Faye: Mmh Mr Macaroni: It's for that project. Faye: Thank you Sir, thank you so much. Mr Macaroni: You're welcome. Faye: You know this money now...my wedding is like next month. I will just use part of it to just sponsor the wedding. You know you are like a father to me. Mr Macaroni: <i>Are you...are you normal, Faye?</i> Is that the conversation that we have been having?	Retort
9	Mr Macaroni: Okay. <i>Why don't you also imagine that there is poison in that rice?</i> Faye: Daddy why? Mr Macaroni: Imagine that you will die after eating. Macaroni: No, it is a <i>world of imagination</i> .	Rhetorical question

Table 4. Comic Language Techniques in Mr Macaroni's Skit: "Politicians Don't Care"

Excerpts	Discussion	Technique
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10	Mr Macaroni: (Crying) Words is not enough. My mouth is heavy, my soul is heavy to be addressing the Nigerian people. I can't...i don't have the courage. It's painful. (Sobs) Fellow Nigerians, this killing... killing ourselves, why? We need to stop this and unite as one. <i>As your leaders, we also can't eat over here when things like this happen.</i> Don't think that we love what's happening; that people are dying. <i>We can't sleep and as your government, we have not done enough to protect you.</i> I condemn this act, <i>we will continue to condemn it as we always do. In fact this time, I seriously condemn it.</i> My creator, what more can we do. (Sobs).	Satire
11	1st Journalist: Nawao..."we condemn this, we condemn that". <i>When are they actually going to come out and actually take action?</i>	Rhetorical question
12	2nd Journalist: Everyday condemnation. <i>At least this one is even here crying. Some of them they will tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the next election. Let's just take this one.</i>	Sarcasm

Data Analysis of Comic Techniques

The incongruity theory asserts that the perception of something is incongruous when it violates our mental patterns and expectations (Kant, 1790). Aristotle in his poetics *Rhetoric* says that one way for a speaker to get a laugh is to create an expectation in the audience and then violate it. The comedy skits make use of different comic devices as techniques for eliciting humour. Such comic devices as distortion, retorts, malapropism, rhetorical questions and sarcasm were some of the comic choices identified in the study.

A. Distortion

Distortion, here, is the incorrect use or pronunciation of words to achieve a particular effect such as humour, as obtainable in the comedy skits. Distortion, according to Dynel (2009), makes references to some linguistic units or longer texts, significantly changing the original forms and meanings.

In **Excerpt 1 Table 1**, in Broda Shaggi's skit, *Who is a Philanthropist*, there is a phonological distortion in the pronunciation of "philanthropist". From the conversation or interview, it was obvious that Broda Shaggi does not know the word, hence the distorted pronunciation. In that discussion in **Excerpt 1**, the correct pronunciation, /fi'lænθrəpɪst/ was substituted for /fila:ntrə:pi:/.

B. Retorts

Retorts are another humorous technique and strategy employed in the data. A retort can be defined as a quick and witty response to a preceding turn with which it forms an adjacency pair (Norrick, 1993). Retorts are also evident in the comedy skits:

In **Table 1, Excerpt 2** in Broda Shaggi's skit, *Who is a Philanthropist*, there is a retort in Shaggi's reply to the interviewer, "Ah no know wetin? Kilo se? Calm down, you too like to dey rush rush". Shaggi's confidence that he knows the answer to the question and the interviewer's step on his toes by asking him if he does not know the answer resulted in the retort.

In **Table 2, Excerpt 4**, in Broda Shaggi's "Will You Miss Your Final Exam For 200 Million Dollars", the highlighted statements carried the retort from Broda Shaggi at the interviewer. The humour, here, can only be on the part of the viewer as it is an insulting statement for the interviewer. It is a kind of transfer of aggression due to the poor value of education in Nigeria where graduates are left jobless and impoverished. Broda Shaggi wonders why the interviewer seems to equate "final exam" to "200 million dollars" which is a whole lot of money.

In **Table 3, Excerpt 8**, in Mr Macaroni's *World of Imagination*, the italicised statement:

Mr Macaroni: Are you...are you normal, Faye? Is that the conversation that we have been having?

shows retorts in use. Retort usually manifests at the second turn in an exchange as a somewhat ridiculous reply to the first turn thereby generating a humorous feeling in the listener(s). Retorts are usually not produced to amuse the producer of the first turn (Bamgbose and Ajayi, 2019). As in the excerpt, Faye doesn't find the retorts from Mr Macaroni funny but the viewers would. The incongruity here is that the attitude from Faye is not what Mr Macaroni expected as common among ladies. He is met with a witty statement from Faye who tries to play smart on Macaroni's intelligence. Also thinking that she has outsmarted Macaroni, she gets an unexpected reply from Mr Macaroni as well.

C. Rhetorical Question

Rhetorical questions are questions that do not necessarily require an answer. It is just a tool to create humorous effects. In **Table 2, Excerpt 4**, in Broda Shaggi's *Will You Miss Your Final Exam For 200 Million Dollars*, Shaggi's question is not to know the interviewer's educational status, it is to further buttress the decayed value of education in the country. The interviewer represents the graduate population without jobs. The incongruity of the humour created here is at the point where praises which is expected from Shaggi is rather met with scorn. Instead of praising the interviewer he uses her answer to the question as a thing of scorn.

Also in **Table 3, Excerpt 8**, Mr Macaroni's *World of Imagination*, Mr. Macaroni in retort asks Faye a rhetorical question: "Mr Macaroni: Are you...are you normal, Faye? Is that the conversation that we have been having?" as a response to the incongruous revelation of his relationship with Faye. These questions are used here to make the situation humorous more on the part of the audience.

D. Satire

Satire could be said to mean making fun of people by imitating them in ways that expose their stupidity or flaws. In **Table 4, Excerpt 10**, Mr. Macaroni's *Politicians Don't Care*, is a satirical display of politicians in the country. The display and

gestures mimicking the politicians and their usual way of addressing insecurity in the land constitute the humour aspect of the skit. The highlighted sentences are constructed in that manner to bring to light politicians' flaws and irresponsibility to the people they govern. The incongruity aspect of the excerpt comes into play when it turns out that Mr Macaroni, the politician, only talks without practical action. The unexpected is also how he tearfully leaves the stage to go and feast and party.

E. Malapropism

Malapropism is the mistaken use or usually unintentional humorous misuse of a word or phrase, especially the use of a word that sounds alike like the intended word but of a different meaning and is wrong in the context. In **Excerpt 3 in Table 1** and **Excerpt 7 in Table 2**, the words "Philadelphia" /ˌfɪl.ə'del.fɪ.ə/ and "Filantropist (Philanthropist)" /fɪl:ntropɪst/ (/fɪ'lanθrəpɪst/) sound alike but are not even related. It makes no meaning to say that a philanthropist is a Philadelphian. Another instance is in Broda Shaggi's utterance, "...the Miss of a Mrs is a Mississippi". The humour is meaningless in the use of these words in such a context.

F. Sarcasm

Sarcasm in comedy skits refers to a type of humour that relies on the use of irony, understatement, and/or exaggeration to create a humorous effect. Sarcasm is used to mock or criticise something in a humorous way, and it can be used to make a serious point in a lighthearted way. In comedy skits, sarcasm is often used to poke fun at the absurdity of everyday life or to comment on social or political issues. Sarcasm is seen in **Table 4, Excerpt 12 in Mr Macaroni's Skit: "Politicians Don't Care"**- "2nd Journalist: Everyday condemnation. *At least this one is even here crying. Some of them they will tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the next election. Let's just take this one*". This statement means that people are constantly criticizing politicians. It also suggests that politicians use social media posts to campaign, even if they do not actually care about the issues they are discussing. This part of the statement by the Second Journalist drips with sarcasm: "*Some of them they will tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the next election*". The journalist is sarcastically mocking politicians and the way they use social media to manipulate public opinion while they "tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the next election" as captured in the statement.

Stylistic Elements in Comedy Skits

This is concerned with the styles employed in the process of creating humour in the skits. This section is also concerned with the way lexical items relate to the data to bring about the comic or humorous effects of the comic skits. According to Halliday (1979), stylistic features that bring about lexical cohesiveness in a text are repetitions, synonymy, antonymy and collocations.

Table 5 below presents lexical stylistic features from the point of view of Halliday's lexical cohesion in relation to the way they fall into paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships in the data. On the paradigmatic axis, lexical items such as lexical relations (antonymy, synonymy or near synonymy, repetition), were identified while collocations were identified on the syntagmatic levels.

Table 5: Presentation of Paradigmatic Lexical Stylistic Features of Broda Shaggi and Mr Macaroni's Skits in Tables 1- 4 above

Lexical Stylistic Features	Examples
Repetition	<p>Excerpt:1 Interviewer: So, Broda Shaggi, who is a philanthropist? Shaggi: (Confused) Eh? Interviewer: Philanthropist. Shaggi: (Thinking) Filantropi...ah <i>filantropi filantropi filantropi...</i> Interviewer: BrodaShaggi you don't know? Excerpt:3 Shaggi: Coz oyibo said what? The filament of a <i>filantropist</i> is a feable philanderer</p>
	<p>Excerpt 4 Interviewer: Will you miss your final exam for 200 million dollars? Shaggi: <i>Will me miss... exam?</i> Interviewer: Your <i>final exam</i> Shaggi: Ehen ehen...I no know say na <i>final exam</i>. <i>Will me miss my final exam?</i> For how much? Interviewer: <i>200 million dollars</i> Shaggi: Orion weyrey! Shey you dey whine me ni? <i>Will me miss my final exam for 200 million dollars?</i> Shey as my life dey like this, <i>my life never final?</i> Is <i>my life never final?</i> Can you imagine foolish talk? Before you go wear skirt like masquerade wey dey go interview... Excerpt 5: Shaggi: You write <i>final exam?</i> Interviewer: Of course, I'm a graduate. Excerpt 6: Shaggi: Person wey no write <i>final exams</i> na him be president of this country and he dey cash out everyday... As he dey like that he dey go London go charge phone and you dey here dey waka under sun. Give me ₦3,500! It is not only <i>final exam</i> that <i>I will miss, I will miss my period.</i></p>
	<p>Excerpt 9 Mr Macaroni: Okay. Why don't you also <i>imagine</i> that there is poison in that rice? Faye: Daddy why? Mr Macaroni: <i>Imagine</i> that you will die after eating. Macaroni: No, it is a <i>world of imagination.</i></p>
	<p>Excerpt 10: Mr Macaroni: (Crying) Words is not enough. My mouth is heavy, my soul is <i>heavy</i> to be addressing the Nigerian people. I can't...i don't have the courage. It's painful. (Sobs)</p>

	<p>Fellow Nigerians, this killing...<i>killing ourselves, why?...I condemn this act, we will continue to condemn it as we always do. In fact this time, I seriously condemn it. My creator, what more can we do. (Sobs).</i></p> <p>Excerpt 11: 1st Journalist: Nawao... “we <i>condemn</i> this, we <i>condemn</i> that". When are they actually going to come out and actually take action?</p> <p>Excerpt 12: 2nd Journalist: Everyday <i>condemnation</i>. At least this one is even here crying. Some of them they will tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the next election. Let’s just take this one.</p>
Perceived Antonymy	<p>Excerpt 6 Shaggi: <i>Person wey no write final exams na him be president of this country and he dey cash out everyday... As he dey like that he dey go London go charge phone and you wey be graduate dey here dey waka under sun.</i></p>
	<p>Excerpt 12 2nd Journalist: Some of them they will <i>tweet</i> it and <i>delete</i> it and use it to campaign for the next election. Let’s just take this one.</p>

Table 6: Presentation of Syntagmatic Lexical Stylistic Features in the Excerpts Above

Lexical Stylistic Features	Examples
Collocation	<p>Excerpt 2: Shaggi: ...it’s not a <i>rush hour</i>.</p> <p>Excerpt 3: Shaggi: The filament is a <i>feeble philanderer</i>.</p>
	<p>Excerpt 4 Interviewer: Will you miss your <i>final exams</i> for 200 million dollars? Shaggi: Make I ask you <i>one question</i> Shaggi: Can you imagine <i>foolish talk</i>? Shaggi: It is not only final exam that I will miss, I will miss <i>my period</i>.</p>
	<p>Excerpt 9: Faye: You know this money now-<i>my wedding</i> is like <i>next month</i>. Mr. Macaroni: Imagine that you die <i>after eating</i>. Macaroni: No, it is a <i>world of imagination</i>.</p>
	<p>Excerpt 10: Mr Macaroni: (Crying) Words is not enough. My mouth is heavy, my soul is heavy to be addressing the <i>Nigerian people</i>. I</p>

	<p>can't...i don't have the courage. It's painful. (Sobs) <i>Fellow Nigerians</i>, this killing... killing ourselves, why? In fact this time, I seriously condemn it. My creator, what more can we do. (Sobs).</p> <p>Excerpt 11: 1st Journalist: Nawao... “we condemn this, we condemn that”. When are they actually going to come out and actually <i>take action?</i></p> <p>Excerpt 12: 2nd Journalist: <i>Everyday condemnation</i>. At least this one is even here crying. Some of them they will tweet it and delete it and use it to campaign for the <i>next election</i>. Let's just take this one.</p>
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Analysis of the Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Lexical Stylistic Features in Tables 5 and 6 Above

This section analyses the stylistic elements that are used as strategies and techniques in comedy skits to convey particular messages to the audience.

Paradigmatic Features: Repetitions/Antonyms in the Excerpts in Table 5

Paradigmatic relation describes the relationship between lexical items that can be substituted for lexical items with the same word class (e.g., replacing a noun with another noun or one adjective with another). A paradigm in this sense refers to the vertical axis of word selection. There were two lexical stylistic features found in the text: repetition, antonymy and found in the texts.

Repetition

This is the most direct form of lexical cohesion of a lexical item. Repetition is another significant paradigmatic feature in the data. It is the reoccurrence of the same or substitute of a particular word many times in a context. This is in line with Halliday (2014, p.644), who states that “in order for a lexical item to be recognised as repeated it needs not to be in the same morphological shape. For example, dine, dining, diner, dinner are all the same item, and an occurrence of any one constitutes a repetition of any of the others”. In the data in **Table 5** above, most of the lexical items were repeated in close form to the original statement, and this reoccurrence is indexed by its reference back to the original. Repetition in the text was also used to create a comic effect in the data.

For instance, In **Excerpts 1** and **3** in **Table 5** above the lexical item “philanthropist” and its distorted form “filantropi” were repeated to create humourous effects on the audience. The original word the interviewer pronounces is not humourous, but Broda Shaggi’s mispronunciation of the word as, “filantropi” and its repetitive occurrence make it humourous.

In **Excerpt 4**, the word “final exams” was repeated several times to emphasize its importance in the text. Broda Shaggi and the interviewer threw a subtle insult on the poor system of education through repetition. Once Broda Shaggi realised that it was for “200 million dollars”, he repeated the phrase, “will me miss my final exam for 200 million dollars?” and further goes along to add that his life would be perfect

already with the money, so he does not need the final exams. This creates humorous and satiric effects on the viewers. Shaggi also addresses the corrupt leadership system of the country when he mentions that “person wey no write final exams na im be president”. This is humorous in the sense that he compares an illiterate, who is a president to a graduate who walks under the sun searching for daily bread.

In **Excerpt 9** in **Table 5** above, the word “imagine” creates a humorous effect through repetition. Mr. Macaroni and Faye play on the word “imagine”. This is humorous as it brings out the irony of the situation. “Imagine” is repeated several times in the text which gives the conversation a comic rhythm.

In **Excerpt 10** in **Table 5** above, the lexical items; “heavy”, “condemn” and “killing” were repeated by Mr Macaroni who represents the government. He repeats these words to expose how laughable the government’s inactions and redundancy towards security are despite the incessant promises.

Antonymy

Antonym, which is an association between two lexical units which have the opposite core meanings in some contexts is an important feature of lexical relations. All the antonyms found in the data are lexical opposites and their oppositeness is perceived from the context they occur.

In **Excerpt 6** in **Table 5** above, there is a sharp contrast between such lexical items as, “person wey no go school” (an illiterate) and “you wey be graduate” (a graduate). Broda Shaggi juxtaposes the two opposite statements to ridicule the political structure and educational system of the country. This contrast creates a comic effect, as he says that the illiterate goes to London to charge his phone (comfort), whereas the graduate works under the sun (pain/grief). In **Excerpt 12** in **Table 5** above, there is a contrast between “tweet” and “delete” which still portrays the nature of the politicians.

Syntagmatic Feature: Collocations in the Excerpts in Table 6

Syntagmatic Relations

Syntagmatic relation defines the relationship between words that co-occur in the same sentence and how the position and the word order affect the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, the syntagmatic relation refers to a word’s ability to combine with other words, and the syntagmatic dimension (syntagm) always refers to the horizontal axis or linear aspect of a sentence. Collocation was the syntagmatic relation identified in the data in **Table 6** above.

Collocation

Collocation is the most significant syntagmatic feature that immediately calls for the reader’s attention. Collocations help to structure actors and activities in the reports in such a way that they tend to co-occur. This co-occurrence tendency is known as collocation. (Halliday 2014, p. 649).

In **Excerpts 2, 3, and 4** in **Table 6** above, collocations such as “rush hour”, “feeble philanderer”, and “my period” (and many similar examples of words that

stylistically co-occur in the data) are used to create a comic effect. All these words are used out of context and are humorous. In **Excerpt 4**, the collocations, “final exams” is the major subject of discourse. Broda Shaggi believes the whole question is foolish since he believes everyone could see the response already.

In **Excerpts 10, 11, and 12** in **Table 6** above, such words as, “Nigerian people”, “fellow Nigerians”, “seriously condemn” are collocations that show the inactive stance of the government on the incessant crimes being perpetrated by terrorists, while, “take action”, “everyday condemnation” and “next election” are co-occurrence of words that call for real action in their contexts.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the comic techniques and the lexical stylistic features in selected comedy skits. It employed Immanuel Kant’s (1790) model of incongruity theory of humour and Halliday’s (1979) Systemic Functional Grammar to account for the objectives and aim of the study. Which was to examine and discuss the comic language strategies and techniques employed to create the humorous effects in the comedy skits and to analyse the stylistic elements that are used as strategies and techniques in the selected comedy skits to convey particular messages to the audience.

From the analysis of the data, it was observed that the comic techniques found in the study are distortion, retorts, rhetorical questions, satire, malapropism and sarcasm; while, the lexical stylistic techniques are divided into two major categories, paradigmatic relations or features; repetition, synonym, and antonym and the syntagmatic feature which consists of just collocations. These features play out the style of substitution and co-occurrence of lexical items in the language of comic discourse.

It can therefore be deduced from this study that comic techniques and stylistic strategies which have been identified and examined in the selected comedy skits help the viewers of comedy to understand and appreciate the language used in comic content. It concludes from the findings of the study that comedy skit makers employ satiric elements the most to pass a strong message on society reform and they also use the lexical repetitive style to achieve this better.

The present research did not exhaust all the comic techniques in its analysis. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers focus on techniques this research did not explore, such as exaggeration, mimicry, and puns, among others. Lexical stylistics is not only the aspect of systemic functional grammar in stylistic analysis; other aspects such as; meta-functions, morphological, and syntactic levels could also be explored to analyse these comedy skits.

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