Dialectical Stance of "We" and "You" Ideologies in Humorous Discourses by African Comedians

Ibukun Titilayo Osuolale-Ajayi[1]

Abstract

Comedians are social actors who engage in playacting that is influenced by their worldviews; and in situations where these comedians inhabit two physical contexts, they tend to have their worldviews shaped by these two contexts, although with evident shift towards one of the contexts they identify with. Thus, the context the comedians favorably lean towards is the "we" and the one that they show distance stance to is the "you." Generally, African comedians project the ideologies of the realities in the western world with the "perceived" realities in Africa. This study thus seeks to study the dialectal stance of ideological representations in the jokes of African comedians residing in the United States of America, such as Noah Trevor, Michael Blackson, and Godfery. That is, the research is limited to the intercultural investigations of the comic performances of African comedians that mostly practice in western world as they express ideological representations about their African ties (the first context) in their realities and experiences where they are domiciled (the second context). Multiple triangulation, which is generally known in research studies as the use of more than one datum and theory, is adopted for the analysis of the data that are purposively selected and transcribed. Matouschek, Wodak & Januschek's (1995) schema and an eclectic submission on subversive dialectics are adapted for the analysis of the data. The article describes the forms of cultural and political dialectics shown in the ideologies of the two contexts of the comedians as evident in their language use, especially from discourse-historical perspective. It concludes that the comedians play with ideologies that constitute common ground in Africa and in the west where they practice their trades by juxtaposing these ideologies with one another to entertain and educate their audience.

Key words: Dialetics, Stance, Stance taking, Discourse historical, ideology

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Introduction

Ideologies are transacted in all human communications, and they transcend individual or personal ideologies to societal ones. The relationship between personal and societal ideological constructs is symbiotic as different personal ideologies make up conventional ideologies, and societal ideologies often affect personal ideologies; thus, Ideologies are reflected implicitly and covertly in language use either in structural or the functional properties of the lexicons of a language.

Expressing and countering ideologies is one of the tools employed by stand-up comedians to elicit laughter from their audience. Stand-up comedians are social actors, who have been overtime described as persons who behave comically verbally and non-verbally with the aim of entertaining their usually seated audience, employ ideologies in their presentations or routines to establish common ground and also to create new ones. Thus, these ideologies are not only expressed to entertain and inform, they are also used to challenge existing or conventional ideologies in order to influence positive changes or attitudes and to guide against all forms of power imbalance, injustice, as well as tyranny, and bigotry, among others. Usually, the comedian's background influences her ideologies and stance; this suggests that a comedian who has affinity to pluralistic ethno-linguistic background would likely have complex ideologies. This study is interested in investigating the dialectical stance of ideologies of stand-up comedians who reside and perform in the United States of America, and in order to carry out the intent of this paper, multiple triangulation is used as the data for the study is retrieved from different YouTube channels, and also eclectic linguistic theories on the subject matter is deployed to the analysis of purposively sampled data of the comedians between 2019 to 2021.

Theoretical Thrust

Dialectics

"Dialectics which is a term used to describe a method of philosophical argument that involves some sort of contradictory process between opposing sides..." (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy) has received scholarly attention, and as a result there are different types of dialectics-Socrates dialectics, Hegelian dialectics, Aristotelian dialectics, Kantian dialectics, and the Marxian Dialectical Social Theory, and Bhaskarn dialectics. These theories are hinged on the resolutions or final inference drawn in a dialogue; they identify different types of dialectics which according

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to Bhaskar (1993, 2) include: ontological dialectics, which is linked to human being's existence; epistemological dialectics, which is our thinking reality; relational dialectics, which is concerned about knowledge circulation within a body; practical dialectics, which borders on our practical reality; and meta-critical dialectics.

These theories view dialectics as a logical assertion and counter assertion on a topic by different interlocutors, that is, it is a "back- and- forth dialogue or debate between two opposing sides which produces a kind of linear progression or evolution in philosophical views" (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy). Bhaskar's view on dialectics slightly differs from other theories on dialectics as it argues that dialectics is not compulsorily an exploration of opposing views as it may include the drawing of reasonable conclusions from two convergent philosophical views. Bhaskar (1993, 2) expresses this in his assertion that

> more or less intricate process of conceptual or social (and sometimes even natural) conflict, interconnection and change, in which the generation, interpenetration and clash of oppositions, leading to their transcendence in a fuller or more adequate mode of thought or form of life (or being), plays a key role.

This suggests that dialectics study the truth in assertions and human experiences; it also investigates the relationship (similarity and dissimilarity) between the truth and the perceptions of people as it seeks to establish the ideal. Dialectics is thus a logical, socio-cognitive approach deployed to challenge situations or structures in the human society.

Dialectics and Stance

In dialectics, the stance of interlocutors is usually revealed by their linguistic choices and the socio-cultural context underlying such choices; the stances taken by them in a discourse show their alignment, and position on a subject matter. Stance, according to Hyland (2005, 176), is a textual voice that reflects how writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments." In his own submission, Du Bois (2007, 163) states that stance is a "public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means of simultaneously evaluating objects with respect to any salient dimension of the cultural field." According to him, speakers show the stance they have taken about an object (person, subject matter or situation) by

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aligning or disaligning with it. Englebretson's (2007) investigates the stances of speakers and writers in real-life discourse with a view of exploring linguistic indicators of stance in discourses; he discovers that these indicators include: adverbials, modals, evaluative adjectives and nouns, complement receiving predicates, and complement clauses, among others. Stand-up comedians and every social actor are always taking stances on societal ideologies with the intent of influencing the government and her citizenry to commit to the developmental goals of the country.

Ideology as a Panacea

Ideology is according to Fairclough (2003, 9) "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining, and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation." In his own submission, van Djik (2001, 1) posits that ideology is "a special form of social cognition shared by social groups. Ideologies thus form the basis of social representation and practices of group members, including their discourse, which at time serves as the means of ideological production, reproduction and challenge."

In exploring the concept of ideology, Wodak et al. (1990) propose discourse-historical approach to the critical study of language in use. This theory takes into cognizance the context of discourse such as: the social variables of the discourse participants, the physical context (time, and setting of discourse), and psychological context of the discourse participants. Asserting that the socio-psychological, cognitive and/linguistic variables influence discourse production and consumption, Wodak et al. (1990) stresses that the socio-cognitive conditioning underlying discourse must be studied. Some of these socio-cognitive conditioning according to her include: frames (universal knowledge about the world or global knowledge of some historical situations), and schemata (46-49). According to her, the historical and social contexts of discourse need to be considered in order to properly address the issues of power, dominance, and distance.

In summary, Wodak et al.'s theory is based on the fact that in every discourse or turn-taking, ideology and power are expressed with an underlying diachronic and synchronic event.

Matouschek, Wodak & Januschek (1995) came up with an analytical schema for the discourse historical method from their analysis of "discourse about immigrants in the Australian mass media." The analytical schema has three levels; it makes a comparison between we-you discourse, argumentation strategies, and forms of linguistic implementation. Content level is the first level of the three levels and it explains "discourse of difference, that is, the constitution of

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"we" and how self is positively portrayed" through lexical choices such as grammatically cohesive elements. The content level provides the foundation for the second level of defamation and devaluation of the other's viewpoint. The third level expresses the linguistic manifestations of the first two levels.

Data Analysis

The topics in the dialectics present in the selected data are diverse and they are evidence of intercultural pragmatic leanings in the discourse or joking routines of the selected comedians. The manifestations of dialectical ideological representation of the "we" and "you" in the performances of the comedians as influenced by historical discourse are thus discussed in the paper.

"We" and "You" Ideologies

As stated earlier, the performances of the African comedians examined for this study include: Noah Trevor, Godfrey and Michael Blackson; their shared or common denominator is similar social and situational variables as they are African male comedians residing in the USA. While Godfrey is a Nigerian comedian birthed in the United States of America, Noah Trevor is a South African comedian who relocated to the United States of America (USA) in his later years; similar to Noah Trevor, Michael Blackson is an African-American comedian born to a Ghanaian father and a Liberian mother in Liberia. Blackson relocated to the United States of America in his teenage years. This means that Noah Trevor and Blacskon's critical age period (which is generally known in language developmental studies as the period between five and teenage years) was in Africa, and this must have influenced their socio-cognitive realisation as an adult in the USA. There is a certainty that Godfrey's worldview has also been influenced by his Nigerian parents who belong to the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. This is evidenced in the opening of one of his acts where he states that: "*Listen, I'm Nigerian, okay? 100% Nigerian. Alright? I was fucking born here, but I'm still African.*" This shows his affinity to the Nigerian culture, despite being an American by birth.

Like Godfrey, Noah Trevor and Michael Blackson in their performances, often identify themselves as Africans, by doing this they constitute themselves as an in-group member of Africa. Hence, the "we" projection of themselves, which is mostly used, comparatively, in linguistic and socio-cultural contexts in their narrations and role plays, with the other context- "you" (the western

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world). Trevor's show as a member of the "we" can be inferred in the following extract from one of his jokes:

> *I have the privilege that I come from a country where the word "Nigger" was never used to oppress anybody. We had another word because we are the best in racism, but not that word. Come on now! The word we had was the word "Kaffri." So, we had another word, same thing as crazy to me as well, sometime; same racism different word, and here it means nothing right? kaffri, Kaffri? Nothing!*

Datum one: (joke, 2020)

In datum one, the set-up of the joke is introduced with the self-mention which is manifested through the use of the first-person pronoun "I" and the semi-definite reference of the nominal phrase "my country." The affordances provided for making right inferences about these reference terms or indexicals may include the presupposed fact that the listeners are aware of the comedian's ethnic affinity, and if this affordance does not work for the all the audience, the word "Kaffri," which is a south African slur used during Apartheid period to refer to Black Africans, should suffice for meaning recovery or generation.

The use of "we" (first-person plural) in conversations indicates a group including the speaker or writer; in the context of its usage in datum one, it performs the same function of being a marker of a group and also implies the "you" (the other group, that is, the US where discrimination against Blacks is also prevalent), thereby manifesting a form of in-group and out-group classifications with socio-linguistic consequences, which neither places the in-group and the out-group in a good light. The aim of the comedian, here, is to criticise the two contexts. This indicates that cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatic resources are engaged in the performances of the comedians by making recourse to discourse-historical. Some of the issues that form dialectics in the sampled data and the socio-linguistic manifestations of ideological stance informed by discourse-historical approach are explored in the following:

Colonilisation

Colonisation is considered in this study via the concept of puppet and puppeteer or what Matouschek, Wodak & Januschek (1995) call agent-victim relationship. It is evident in the selected

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data of Noah Trevor that he maintains a "disalignment" stance with colonisation and he implicitly disagrees with the ideology that whites are superior to Blacks. This can be seen in the following extract:

> *When you think about colonisation, it is the strangest thing you can think about because conquering is one thing you go to another country, you take what's theirs. You want more. You take the land, you know you take the resources, you kill the people. That I understand. But colonisation, I don't condone.... colonisation is strange because you don't just go there and take over. You then force the people to become you. That is such a strange concept. When you think about where the British did it. They did it in Africa, they did it in Asia and think about it in India whose culture cannot be more diametrically opposed, and out of nowhere, the British just decided to rollup. Let's think about what the India must have felt on that day. I mean minding your own business, walking through a field; next thing you know the British showed up on horseback (imitates a riding horse)*
>
> *Queen's rep (QR): Hear ye, hear ye, by order of her majesty the queen, we have arrived. (looks around to see who is being addressed) You over there, what is the name of this land?*
>
> *Indian man (IM): This land over here, this is called India.*
>
> *QR: Well, my good man I am here to tell you that India is now under the British empire*
>
> *IM: (looks confused and in disbelief) and I'm glad that I can tell you that India is exactly where it was yesterday.*
>
> *QR: No, no! I feel you are not understanding what I am saying. I'm letting you know that we are here to colonise you by the order of the queen.*
>
> *IM: Where is the queen?*
>
> *QR: The queen, the queen of England the ruler of Great Britain; she who was ordained by God*
>
> *IM: Which God?*
>
> *QR: God, the one true God.*
>
> *IM: We have many gods my friend. What is the name of your God?*
>
> *QR: There is only one God and his name is God and you too shall worship him.*
>
> *IM: You want me to worship a god but you don't want to tell me his name. What are you talking about? There are many gods, ok? There is Sheba, there is Lashime.... there are many gods. What is the name of your god?*

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QR: His name is God!

IM: You don't know the name of your god?

QR: It's just God!

IM: Is it like mummy or daddy? You want me to worship your god, but you don't want to tell me his name? How am I going to pray to him? What do I do? Every morning I go to wake up and I go to pray "oh dear god, dear god, I was hoping that god you could help me, no, no, oh, oh sorry not you, other god, no, no, wrong god, ...oh, oh not you today, I'm sorry I should have asked for your first name.

QR: How dare you speak to me like that? Do you know who I am?

IM: No because you will never introduce yourself

QR: I have come here representing Great Britain

IM: And, I have never heard of Great Britain. Who gave you that name?

QR: Well, well, we did

IM: You called yourself great. Isn't that a little presumptuous? Shouldn't you wait for other people to tell you how great you are. Huh? Shouldn't you just go around the world and just do good things, good things, and let people say "Britain look at how great you are."

QR: I, I, beg to differ! I believe we can do it because we knew instinctively we are Great Britain.

IM: Well, in that case welcome to Great India.

QR: No! It doesn't work like that, it doesn't work like that. How dare you speak to me like this?

IM: Look, you're the one who dare to speak to me, ok. I was here minding my own business in my land! You came over here riding on your skinny cow, telling me that things are going to change. I don't know who you are all I know is you're really crazy, you're not feeling too alright ... In fact, it looked like you have died last week, ok. Something is very wrong with your skin. Maybe you should come down, ... we talk about it

IM: What are you talking about? I look quite normal

QR: You do not look normal, my friend. I have never seen anyone with that complexion in my life, ok?...

QR: Damn you we are going to run this country whether you like it or not.

IM: We are not going to do anything you tell us. You are a mad man!

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QR: We are going to take it

IM: You're not taking

QR: We are going to (makes gunshot sound)

IM: She is all yours take take…

Datum two: (Noah, 2021)

Datum two embodies the ideology of colonialism which is the super-ordinate term for sub-ideologies of domination, coercion, subjugation and repression, and imposition and they are clearly expressed in the role-play in the data where the Indian man is depicted as the victim/puppet and the British Queen's representative (as well as the Queen and the British government by extension) as the agent or puppeteer. The comedian extends the semantic scope of the "we" in this comedy act to include other physical contexts that shared similar colonisation experiences with some African states. Thus, his affinity is extended to them, while also taking the stance of condemnation, via the use of the negative form of the cognitive verb "do" in the expression "*I do not condone...*" and the adjectives "strangest" and "strange," which project colonialism as an unusual happening.

The sub-ideology of coercion is revealed via the mimicry of gunshot, the silence afterwards, and their perlocutionary effects on the Indian man who had to concede to the announcement and the intent of the Queen's representative under duress.

The dialectics of the conversation between the two characters shows the complexity of intercultural communication with the Indian man insisting that the Queen's representative need to be specific about the God he is to pray to and his opinion that Great Britain is presumptive or arrogant for referring to themselves as great, and his confusion about QR's skin colour. Thus, the use of India's belief in multiple gods, humility, mimicry of trumpet and horse sounds, as well as the mimicry of head movement (an act peculiar to the Indians) in conversation strengthens the transaction of cultural logic in the discourse.

Also, the opposing views of the characters in datum two do have natural and logical conclusion, as the Indian is forced to oblige the request of the Agent in the context of the act. This shows ideology from discourse historical which aims at combating new forms of power imbalance

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and exploitations. Another data that shows the dialectical stance of "we" and "you" ideology or colonialism dialectics is in the data below:

> *If you have expanded your view, you would realise that the rise of nationalism have taken all over the world- in Austria, in Australia, in England, that was what Brexit was all about. Right? They made it seem that it was about the economy, but it wasn't. The truth was it was fundamentally people who wanted their country back. It never went anywhere, but they still wanted it back. I saw people on the news talking to the BBC: that's why I'm voting for Brexit, that's why I'm voting for Brexit right, because, because, this bloody country, this bloody country is going to the Dutch right this bloody country, and I want Britain back, and that's why we are voting for Brexit because want Britain back. From who? From who? Britain is like 95 percent white. Who do you want it back from? They would say the weirdest thing, the craziest things: "this bloody immigrants they come over here, they are up to no good. Right? I hate these bloody immigrants. They need to go back to where they came from. But why do you hate them so much. I will tell you why I hate them, why, because they're not even trying to be British. That's why! They're not even trying to be British. Right? They come here; they bring their own bloody culture. They bring their own food, speak their own bloody languages; try to take over the whole bloody place. That sounds British to me.*
>
> *If there is one country, if there is one nation in the world, that has no right to complain about immigration, it's Great Britain.*

Datum three: (Joke 2020)

The subject matter of colonisation is different in datum three as subversive dialectics is obvious in the expression: "*that's why I'm voting for Brexit, that's why I'm voting for Brexit right, because, because, this bloody country, this bloody country is going to the Dutch right this bloody country, and I want Britain back, and that's why we are voting for Brexit because want Britain back.*"

The depiction of the British man suggests a puppeteer- "the British" who is now becoming a subaltern in their own country. This fact is expressed via sarcasm, "*The truth was it was fundamentally people who wanted their country back. It never went anywhere, but they still wanted*

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*it back"*to deride the British for not wanting a "taste of their own medicine." This is an intriguing indicator of "victim-agent" reversal which is heightened and stressed by the comedian via the usages of the repetition of the rhetorical question—"*From who?"* The rhetorical questions in the datum are used to devalue the ideology of white supremacy and as a dialectics, they are used to devalue the viewpoint or the stance of the British about the presence of immigrants in their country. The use of the ironical statements: "*that sounds British to me. If there is one country, if there is one nation in the world that has no right to complain about immigration, it's Great Britain"* is a humour-generating device which implicitly defames the underlying political ideology of Brexit by uncovering the perception of the British about immigration and the historical reality of colonialism. It is thus obvious to see the stance taken by Noah Trevor is disalignment with what Du Bois refers to as the "object" and in the sociolinguistic context of datum three, it is all shades of colonialism, and by extension, neo-colonialism.

The topic of colonisation is greatly explored in Noah Trevor's performances; he discusses racism in the "we" and "you" context by exploring historical discourse ideology via role playing and extra linguistic cues deployed in making it as close to real-life as possible.

Racism and Ethnicism

Racism is an evident dialectics in datum one where Noah Trevor claims that the black Americans in America and Blacks in South Africa are referenced as "Nigger" and Kafrri respectively. This implies that the two words which are both ethnic slurs are expressions used in the "we" and "you" contexts to denigrate the blacks; and it is thus a pointer to the issue of linguistic relativity, a Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which states that a people's language creates its worldview. That is, the experiences in a context often influence lexicalisalision. For instance, the dominant climate conditions in most African states are rainy season, dry season, harmattan season; this suggests that African languages have reduced references or lexicons (underlexicalisation) for all possible weather condition in the western world. Thus, the linguistic relativity of the two derogatory expressions is a testament to the fact that whites, irrespective of their presence in America or Africa, have as part of their belief system the ideology of white supremacy.

Trevor's stance towards the usage of the words in the two contexts can be seen as a part of the joke where he states that "*I have the priviledge that I come from a country where the word 'Nigger' was never used to oppress anybody. We had another word because we are the best in*

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racism, but not that word. Common now! The word we had was the word 'Kaffri.' So we had another word, same thing as crazy to me as well sometimes, same racism different word " In the extract, Trevor condemns the act of racism in both America and South Africa, where, according to him, extreme racism is practised by the whites.

The foregoing on historical discourse ideologies are evocations and allusions used humorously with bifurcated functions of eliciting humour and condemning racism. The cognitive epithet "crazy" is a linguistic indicator of the comedian's alignment to the object or the dialectics of racism.

Ehtnicism is widely known as emphasis and consciousness about ethnic divides. Godfrey laments about ethnicism in the following joke:

> *Listen! I'm Nigerian, okay? 100% Nigerian. Alright? I was fucking born here, but I'm still African. But people question me. You know what I mean? Even Nigerians after the show question my - my Nigerianness when I fucking explained it. And they think they're sleek. They be like: (forms the Nigerian accent) "Godfrey, Godfrey, we enjoyed your show." That's how Nigerians talk. We talk with our face: "we enjoyed your show" (audience laughs).*
> *"You said you're a Nigerian; what part?"*
> *Because, you don't say just because I talk like this, there's a lot of Africans born here. We talk normal like: (forms an outlandish accent) "Yo! I'm from the Congo, alright man, I'm from Nigeria."*
> *They want us to be like (forms a mocked Nigerian accent) "Hello everybody, I am happy to be here." And they want us to laugh like this "hahahaha..." Get the fuck outta here man.*

Datum four: (joke, 2020)

In the extract, Godfrey performs an assertive act by stating that he is 100% Nigerian, despite the fact that he was born and bred in American and has American accent. In this joke, Godfrey attempts to pursue the "we" ideology with his Nigerian origin via the engagement of subversive dialectics by stating that there are other Africans in America who are not less of an African because of their accent. In order to create humour, he derides the way Nigerians stress

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each syllable, while speaking; by expressing superiority over the Nigerian style of speaking, he has also ironically and covertly made himself the butt of the joke- a technique used to elicit laughter in stand-up comedy act. Godfrey can also be seen in another joking context expressing himself as an in-group member of the "we" ideology in another performance of his:

> *Lemme tell you something, I'm a 100% African, you're damn right (audience hoots). And I don't like when people question me either. They question me. You don't question Italians. I have friends that are ten...ten generations off in New York City. You asked an Italian; he said "hey, I'm It'ian (clipped form), my mother's It'ian, my father's It'ian, my brother's It'ian, everybody's fucking It'ian." I'ma like, what part of Italy? "The It'ian part! Who the fuck are you?" I'm an African, well a 100%, and I grew up in America, so, I'm cool like that. You know what I mean? I'm tired of the Africans that are messing up my shit. The ones that go (imitating an African accent) "Hello, I am hia (here) to..." fuck that, I don't like that shit, nah!*

Datum five: (Eric, 2021)

Godfrey identifies himself as an African in datum five and further expresses his disalignment with being tagged otherwise by making allusions to Italians who do not appreciate their ethnic background question. Thus, amidst the humour created by him, he has taken a disalignement stance towards being profiled by his accent.

Lawlessnes and Impunity

It has been established from the above points of departure in the dialectics of the African comedians that the content of their acts often feature the "we" ideology which has to do with identifying themselves as Africans and the "you" ideology which is the western world where they mostly practice their trades. Another prevalent subject matter in the dialectics found in the selected data for this study is lawlessness and impunity. Despite the fact that the we-you discourse signals social polarisation (van Dijk, 2000) between the in-group and out-group with the implicit drive of establishing solidarity, through the "we" and discrediting the other, that is, "you," the stand-up comedians do not always aim at portraying the in-group identity (we ideology) superior to the out-

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group's (you ideology); this makes the performances of the comedian as down-to-earth as they can be.

For instance, Noah Trevor in dialectics about police officers in South Africa and in the USA, he, from the set-up of the joke, gives credit to the former for being more civil and interactional than the police officers in the latter context, who engage in acts liable to prevent people in the US from freely expressing themselves for fear of being harmed or killed. This is illustrated in the following:

> *You know one of the biggest things we don't appreciate in south Africa: I've learnt to appreciate it since I moved to the US is what a civil relationship we have with our police huh we can fight with our police when they stop us with not one thought of losing your life that's a luxury in America. I didn't even think about that I just moved to the US just all working on the daily show and one day I was driving and I got pulled over by policemen right, and I get pulled over by this policeman and being pulled over by the police in America is a stressful experience because they make it a game show, where you've got to try to figure out what's going on. In south Africa, it's simple straight to the point- you get pulled over, the metro police comes in he tells you:*
>
> *SA police officer: My friend, you were speeding. Letter, letter, letter, license, plus no seat belt. License. Then you know immediately you're in the game*
>
> *Trevor: oh come on man*
>
> *SA policeman: oh yeah, don't come on nothing yet! Seatbelt, letter licence ... driving here (mimics someone reading), shoemaker, yeah, yeah*
>
> *Now you're in the game. It's time to talk. It's time to work things out. In America, they don't play that game. Policemen walked up to my window; I was sitting in the car. Got up there.*
>
> *American policeman: Good afternoon, sir.*
>
> *Trevor: Good afternoon, sir.*
>
> *American Police (AM): sir, do you know why i pulled you over?*
>
> *Trevor: shouldn't you know why? But why are you asking me and no, I don't know.*
>
> *AM: Sir, what did you say?*
>
> *Trevor: I said I don't know why you pulled me over*
>
> *AM: I pulled you over sir because you were speeding.*

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Trevor: oh okay! I didn't know.

AM: Do you know how fast you were going, sir?

Trevor: Did you not check your notes before you came? I feel like this is part of your job and i am doing your job and my job at the same time.

AM: Sir, are you giving me an attitude?

IM: No! I'm not giving you an attitude. I'm just saying you can't ask me why you stopped me, then ask me how fast I was going. The next thing you are gonna ask me is to write my own tickets, sir.

AM: sir, are you giving me attitude? You're gonna get out of this car right now! So you're giving me attitude?

And I was just talking to the guy, because I was like "you can't say!" Here is the craziest thing the cop said to me; he looked at me and said:

AM: Sir, I'll tell you something you were going a hundred mile an hour

It's a weird experience with police over there... because in America you can get shot. And when you read stories and you see stories of black Americans getting shot at a disproportional rate, but white Americans also get shot by the police all the time......

We take it for granted the relationship we have here. In America, you read stories of people getting shot because they pulled out their wallets. In South Africa, you will get shot because you didn't pull out your wallet.

Datum six: (Trevor, Noah Trevor, 2019)

The highhandedness of the American police officers suggests an ideology of dominance which also encapsulates subjugation and repression. The American police can be characterised as being hostile despite his usage of the deference marker 'sir." Thus, the tone of his voice and the deference marker are in an antithetical relationship, and this evokes the historical discourse ideology of "black lives matter" (which commenced in 2013; went viral in 2020) and "all lives matter" which is a reaction to the lawlessness of the American police officers who have been stereotyped for being happy trigger. The power relation in the comedians' encounter with the South African (SA) police officer seems to, at the inception of the discourse, be balanced, with the South African police officer referring to Trevor as "my friend." This nominal group reduces the distance

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between the two interactants in the discourse and it is an evidence of the SA police officers' friendliness. It may seem like Trevor is portraying the SA police officer as being better than their American counter part, but he was quick to reveal that the former's superior interpersonal relationship has an ignoble intention of receiving some form of tip or bribe from the road users.

The connecting metaphor between the portrayal of the SA police officers and the American police officers is the "wallet," which has different socio-cognitive response from the police officers in their different situational context. While the act of reaching for the wallet by road users in SA is synonymous to being in what the comedian called "the game," the performance of such gesture in the US, often triggers the police to shoot at the person reaching for the wallet without first ascertaining what s/he intends to remove. Thus, in this joke, the police officers in the US and in South Africa are both the agents and puppeteers and the people residing in their countries are the victims or puppet. It can be inferred that in projecting the "we" and "you" ideology the comedian's stance is covertly in disalignment with the SA Police officer, while some of his linguistic choices like "craziest" (which implies that the acts prior to the usage of the superlative are also unpleasant to him) and "weird" show his intolerance and disalignment with the manifestations of abuse of power in the two contexts in the joke and he does this by humorously devaluing the actions of the policemen. Invariably, the joke also projects the leadership ideology of not just governmental agencies, but also on the government of the two countries.

Devaluing "we"

It has been observed in the data that there are instances where the comedians reinforces the historical stereotype of Africa as being unexposed, Unknowledgeable, and grossly underdeveloped. An example of this can be seen in datum seven where Michael Blackson asserts that he has a better life in America because of the structure provided by the American government which aids better standard of living:

> America is all up-to-date; everything in America is off the hook – you know. If you go to the hospital, you have a baby, they give you a birth certificate you know where a baby is born. In Africa, we don't know a damn thing. Nothing! We don't have birthdates till we are about 10 years old, damn it! Nothing! Nobody knows how old

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they are—Mutombo is 35…Freddie Adu is not 14 he is 42, mothersucker, and I am 19, kiss my ass…everything is up-to-date!

Datum seven: (መረብምላሽ, 2017)

In datum seven, Blackson derides the government in most African states for having bad record-keeping of data. The overgenralisation and exaggeration of the fact that Africalacks technical-know-how is her reality some decades ago, but at the moment, most African states now have hospitals where efforts are made to store data of patients, even though analogue techniques or methods are still heavily used. Is Africa as advanced in record keeping as the western countries? Definitely no! However, the literal device of exaggeration is used in the data to convey a vivid picture or an impression of underdevelopment in Africa. It can be said that the comedian projects the ideologies of the inferiority of the African states and the supremacy of the western societies to elicit laughter and possibly inspire change in African states.

Also leaning towards this ideological stance, Noah Trevor implies that Africans are not knowledgeable and can be clueless modern facilities in the following joke:

> *You must remember, I come from, from an African country and all of Africa, we have traffic lights but we don't use them. Right! It is less of a command and more of a suggestion. It is not stop! It's stop? It's always like an African travels the world and saw that other people had traffic light and just brought them back, but didn't know what they were for. Like guy was just like, guys, guys, guys, we need to get traffic lights. And the people were like- what for? It's for the intersection...*

Datum Eight: (joke, 2020)

The dialectics places the "we" ideology as subservient to the "you" ideology in terms of leadership style. Though the comedians in jokes seven and eight are vocal about their African background, they maintain a diaslignment stance with the African government.

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Accent and Stereotypical References for "we"

The sampled data of the three stand-up comedians studied in this study has revealed that Godfrey's usual accent in his routine is American, and Blackson's accent is a mixture of African and American accents. These comedians have resided in the United States of America for a longer period than Trevor; they also employ preponderant usage of swear words such as, "mother fucker/sucker," "son of a bitch," etc. which are one of the lexical features of black American youths. Noah Trevor's regular linguistic coding is also in English, and he mostly uses American accent while enacting the role of an American. His language choice is "almost" devoid of swear words, an act which tilts towards the African culture of respect and sound morale. Irrespective of the accent of the other "you"/ out-group used in the discourse of the comedians, a common denominator in their jokes is the ideology of "Africanness" which they place as topics in dialectics.

Some of the stereotypical references found in the data which signal the perception of black skinned individuals in America are: "Night rider," "Dark Vader"; these words are all rooted in historical-discourse ideology of dominance and subjugation of blacks after the abolishment of slave trade in America, solely for the purpose of keeping a leash on the Blacks working for the Whites. These words are evocations of the agent-victim relationship: with Africans sold to slavery being the victim and the agent being the whites who have misrepresented the truth of going out at nights to their African slaves.

Other historical evocative lexemes that reflect this ideology are: "Nigger," "Kaffri." Although the usage of these stereotypical expressions have been prohibited by laws in America and South Africa, their euphemistic counterparts: N-word and K-word still have the same connotations as their derogatory lexical realisations. These expressions which are diachronic approach to the study of language use are reminders of the consequences of the subjugation of the African countries by the "other," that is, the western world.

Conclusion

The foregoing has revealed that the comedians take stances in the two situational contexts they operate during their performances: interactions between the comedian/the audience andinteractions amongst characters in their role-plays; the latter situational context supports the stance of the content of the first situational context; for instance, in datum two, the comedian's disapproval (his dialectal stance taking) to the object (colonisation) is strengthened by his lexical

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choices. It is no doubt that the comedians unrestrainedly take stance about Africa (their continent of origin) and America, where they are domiciled, without the intention of maintaining a particular stance in favour of any of the contexts, but rather, expressing their beliefs and also drawing on some historical ideologies to express their goals of entertaining and educating; thereby, performing their roles as social influencers who checkmate issues bordering on dominance and injustices in the world via their language choices and discourse-historical ideologies underlying them.

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