

**THE USE OF NIGERIAN ENGLISH IN HUMOUR TO DEFRAY TENSION IN
SELECTED SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT.**

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA. HONS.)
DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project work was carried out by **JEGEDE COMFORT MOBOLAJI**, in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria; In partial fulfillment for the award of B.A Degree in English and Literature

Mrs. D.L. Efobi,
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

I gladly dedicate this Work, to God Almighty, the giver and sustainer of life; who granted me the divine enablement to have accomplished this work.

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First and foremost, all praise, honor, and glory be to God Almighty, the Alpha and Omega, the Giver of life, wisdom, and strength. He has been my refuge in times of challenge, my light in moments of doubt, and my unfailing source of grace throughout this journey. Without Him, none of this would have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Nigerian English in defraying tension within online social media interactions, focusing on humour, particularly satire, irony, wordplay, and the use of indigenous Nigerian languages on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The research examines how humour functions as a coping mechanism, providing emotional relief and fostering social solidarity among Nigerians during politically charged discussions, socio-economic challenges, and national debates. Utilizing Relief Theory, Superiority Theory, and Socio-Cognitive Theory (Critical Discourse Analysis), the study analyzes humour strategies that help manage conflict and critique political systems. Data was gathered through purposive sampling of posts, comments, and memes, spanning from 2018 to 2025. The findings reveal that humour in Nigerian English, when combined with indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin, serves as a powerful tool for both emotional release and social bonding. This humour allows Nigerians to laugh at their political and socio-economic frustrations, asserting a sense of superiority over the political elite while promoting a collective identity. Additionally, the study underscores the psychological and social functions of humour as a discursive strategy for alleviating tension and fostering resilience. The research contributes to the understanding of Nigerian English as a dynamic linguistic tool in digital communication, offering new insights into the intersection of language, humour, and social solidarity in the context of Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This study investigates the role of humour in defraying tension in selected Nigerian social media contexts (Twitter and Facebook). Specifically, this research will analyse how irony/satire, wordplay/pun and Nigeria indigenous languages are deployed to manage conflict and promote social bonding in online conversations

1.2 Scope of study

This study is confined to the use of Nigerian English in humour within online interactions on Twitter and Facebook, these are selected because they are prominent social media platforms widely used and they are very accessible in Nigeria. The scope includes social media posts, comments, replies, and memes that utilises Nigerian English, it focuses on interactions that occur during politically charged discussions, national issues, or social debates. The time frame of this study spans from 2018 to 2025, which captures significant socio-political events and issues that have sparked intense online discussions in Nigeria. By concentrating on humour as a form of social coping mechanism, the study aims to analyse specific instances where humour, using Nigerian English, serves to defray tension, manage conflict, or provide relief in both informal and formal contexts on these platforms.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a Qualitative Research, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It is applied to examine the intersection of language, power, and social context within the use of Nigerian English in humour on social media platforms. Data was collected using a purposive

sampling of posts, comments, and interactions on Twitter and Facebook, they focus on political discussions, cultural issues, and public debates that have generated significant public attention.

The analysis involves identifying and categorising humour strategies such as irony/satire, wordplay/pun and Nigerian indigenous language examining the specific linguistic features of Nigerian English, such as code-switching, borrowing, and unique expressions. The study considers how humour in Nigerian English serves as a tool for managing contentious discussions, thus providing relief, and fostering a sense of solidarity among users.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study uses a combination of humour theory (relief and superiority theory,) and Critical conversation Analysis (CDA) (Socio-cognitive theory), to investigate the role of Nigerian English in humour in social media environments, with a particular emphasis on how these features help to reduce tension and manage conflict in online conversation. These theoretical approaches offer a complete framework for understanding how language, specifically Nigerian English, serves as both a communication tool and a method for managing social conflicts in the digital sphere.

Relief Theory

Relief theory was first introduced by Sigmund Freud (1905). He explains that it is a psychological framework that shows the role of humour as a means to reduce pent up, emotions and diminish psychological stress. Freud proposed that humour functions as a conduit for emotional release, providing relief from societal demands and individual fears. He further explained that humour facilitates the discharge of suppressed emotions, particularly those deemed socially unacceptable, hence providing a cathartic experience (Freud, p. 122). This theory, derived from psychoanalysis, asserts that jokes, comedies, and funny expressions enable individuals to alleviate their emotional stressors without incurring social repercussions.

Relief theory is a helpful way to think about how humour can help ease tension, especially in Nigeria, where politics and social issues are quite sensitive and there are many different kinds of people. Furthermore, Nigerians use social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, to vent their frustrations, criticisms, and feelings about national topics including politics, governance, and socio-economic problems. These platforms are also great places for humour, especially when it's in Nigerian English. The use of Nigerian English in jokes on purpose helps people to deal with the emotional stress of everyday life. When things get tense, like during political upheaval, economic hardship, or national crises, humour that contains Nigerian English can help by making people feel better and letting them laugh at how silly their situation is.

Relief theory is also important to the subject of humour in Nigerian English on social media because it helps us understand how humour can help people deal with social and political stress. The humour in Nigerian English lets people face painful truths about their society with a sense of humour, changing things that could make them anxious or angry into something that make them laugh or make fun of. Making serious matters into light-hearted jokes gives people an emotional break from the difficulties that are too big to handle.

In conclusion, Freud's relief theory provides a significant framework for comprehending the use of humour in Nigerian English to defray tension. By making social and political matters funny, Nigerian social media users let off steam and take a break from the stress of living in a complicated society. This use of humour not only brings people together, but it also functions as a way to let go of stress, showing how language, culture, and mental health can all work together in the digital age.

The Superiority Theory

The Superiority Theory of humour provides a critical, if cynical, perspective for analysing the socio-linguistic role of humour in Nigerian digital environments. This view, one of the three basic theories of humour, posits that laughter is primarily a statement of contempt. It posits that we derive amusement from the misfortunes, deficiencies, or perceived imperfections of others, since it

affords us a transient sense of triumph or "sudden glory." This interpretation of humour may appear excessively confrontational, however it offers significant insight into the functioning of humour, especially in situations characterised by tension or social stress.

The roots of Superiority Theory can be traced to classical Greek philosophy. In Philebus, Plato and subsequently Aristotle in Poetics examined how laughing frequently stems from a form of malice a pleasure received from seeing the shortcomings or imperfections of others, especially those who are weaker or lower, provided they do not represent a real threat to us (Martin, 2023). This comprehension of humour originates from antiquity, but it was the 17th-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes who notably expressed it in his influential work, *Leviathan* (1651). Hobbes regarded laughing as a "sudden glory," a response elicited when one observes a "deformed thing" in another, so allowing for the affirmation of one's own superiority. According to Hobbes, laughter is not a communal or joyous phenomenon, but a self-congratulatory gesture an ephemeral affirmation of one's superiority over another's weakness (Hobbes, 1651/1994, p. 42).

This approach, highlighting hostility and contempt, may initially appear contradictory to the notion of humour alleviating stress, especially within the Nigerian social media landscape. Superiority Theory is pertinent as it elucidates the role of humour as a coping mechanism during periods of socio-political or economic distress. In Nigerian internet environments, humour tends to be incisive, scathing, and direct, targeting the origins of communal discontent.

This acuity is exactly what renders humour a useful instrument for alleviating tension. In Nigeria, a substantial amount of daily stress experienced by citizens stems from structural problems, including political corruption, economic adversity (often known as "sapa"), and institutional ineptitude (Adebayo & Oduola, 2023). These socioeconomic issues frequently engender a feeling of impotence among the public. In this context, humour serves as a mechanism for psychological inversion. When a social media comedy, meme, or post use Nigerian English to portray a politician, a police officer, or the notion of "Sapa" as ignorant, inept, or absurdly

ridiculous, the audience is encouraged to mock the same sources of their anguish. This derision, as Hobbes would contend, exemplifies "sudden glory" well. During those instances, the populace perceives itself as superior to the governmental or social forces that subjugate them. This feeling of supremacy, this fleeting psychological victory, offers cathartic release from the anguish and powerlessness that frequently define their daily existence (Chukwuma, 2022).

Critical conversation Analysis (CDA) (Socio-cognitive theory)

The Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA), an essential framework in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), provides a vital model for comprehending the function of humour in Nigerian social media as a means of alleviating tension. This methodology was created by linguist Teun A. van Dijk, commencing in the 1980s and 1990s, with substantial enhancements in subsequent years. Van Dijk's primary aim was to tackle a core issue in Critical Discourse Analysis: how do macro-level societal structures such as power, inequality, or political conflict materialize in the micro-level specifics of discourse, such as an individual social media post? Van Dijk contended that this relationship is not direct. Rather, it is facilitated by what he refers to as "social cognition," a meso-level that links societal structures with individual discourse. Social cognition pertains not to personal, unique thoughts but to the collective mental representations possessed by a group. These shared representations include communal knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, norms, and values that delineate a group's identity and worldview (Surya et al. 123). This framework is commonly known as the "discourse-cognition-society triangle," which illustrates the interconnection between societal structures, social cognition, and discourse (Roberts and Steinkopf 45).

The significance of the Socio-Cognitive Approach to the research topic, the utilisation of Nigerian English in humour to alleviate tension, is considerable, since it offers a theoretical framework for elucidating the mechanisms by which humour mitigates social stress. The "tension" in this context stems from macro-level societal challenges in Nigeria, encompassing economic hardship (often termed "sapa"), political corruption, insecurity, and institutional dysfunction. These

challenges are not simply occurrences; they are ingrained societal frameworks that exert considerable strain on the population.

The tension produced by these societal institutions is then processed by Nigerians, influencing their collective social cognitions. Nigerians have cultivated a collective mental framework marked by cynicism, fatalism, resilience, and profound distrust of authority (Oamen 67). In the face of challenges such as power outages or political scandals, individuals perceive these occurrences via a collective cognitive framework shaped by their experiences of dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

In this perspective, humour is a discourse that directly derives from shared social cognitions. Humourists, including meme creators and sketch producers, belong to this cognitive community. In creating humorous content, they engage the shared cognitive frameworks of their audience. This humour resonates as it stimulates and enhances the audience's preexisting pessimistic attitudes and understanding of their socio-political reality (Surya et al. 126).

The significance of Nigerian English, or Pidgin, is paramount in this context. From a SCA standpoint, the selection of language serves as a potent discursive tactic to evoke a particular contextual framework. A context model is the cognitive representation that a participant possesses regarding the communicative circumstance (van Dijk 2015). Utilising colloquial Nigerian English instead of formal "Standard English," the humourist indicates an in-group, casual atmosphere. This linguistic selection circumvents the cognitive "censorship" typically associated with formal language, enabling the humour to directly resonate with the audience's collective, informal cognitive structure. The employment of Nigerian English conveys to the audience: "This is for us, by us, concerning our collective reality."

Tension is alleviated when amusing discourse externally affirms the audience's internal, collective social beliefs. In essence, the humour acknowledges the frustrations, cynicism, and

disillusionment that the audience already carries, delivering a moment of psychological reprieve. The ensuing laughter represents cognitive resonance the acknowledgement and articulation of their common experiences. Thus, humour does not address the overarching societal problems, but provides a mechanism for coping with them. It strengthens the in-group's common ideology and offers a communal means of addressing the stress stemming from political and social failures (Oamen 72).

The Socio-Cognitive Approach provides a valuable perspective for comprehending the function of humour on Nigerian social media in mitigating tension. By correlating the linguistic characteristics of memes and skits (micro-level discourse) with the audience's collective cynicism and irritation (social cognition), SCA elucidates how humour enables individuals to navigate the overarching political and social frameworks that generate conflict. The humour functions as a discursive tool, not to address societal problems, but to navigate them by affirming the shared experience and providing psychological solace.

1.5 Review of Related Literature and Justification of the Study

This section reviews previous works on the use of Nigerian English to relief tension

1.5.1 The Use of Nigerian English to Relief Tension

The use of Nigerian English to relieve tension is a fascinating topic that taps into how language not only functions as a tool of communication but also as a means of addressing social situations, particularly in a diverse society like Nigeria. Nigerian English, a dialect of English affected by the native tongues of the nation, is used for social relationship management, solidarity building, and conflict resolution in addition to communication. One of the first significant studies on the social and functional power of Nigerian English comes from Edmund O. Bamiro's 1991 paper, *"The Social and Functional Power of Nigerian English,"* which explores the function of

Nigerian Pidgin, a variation of Nigerian English, in literature, one of the seminal works in this field. Bamiro emphasises how Nigerian Pidgin is utilised to depict societal hierarchies and tensions by concentrating on the writings of well-known Nigerian authors like Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Nigerian Pidgin is portrayed as a potent instrument of resistance, particularly for marginalised communities, while not being regarded as a prestige variety. According to Bamiro, Nigerian Pidgin is an essential tool for lowering social tension since it provides a forum for the downtrodden to voice their annoyance and claim their identity. This variation of English demonstrates the power of language as a social cohesion tool by allowing speakers to preserve unity and, occasionally, reduce conflict between various socioeconomic classes (Bamiro 198).

Furthermore, "*The Americanization of Nigerian English*," written by V. O. Awonusi in 1994, examines the ways in which American English affects Nigerian English. This impact, particularly in the fields of pop culture and the media, produces a distinctive linguistic fusion in which American and British standards coexist. According to Awonusi, Nigeria's bidialectal scenario offers communication flexibility, which is crucial during tense social situations. Because American English is becoming more widely used, Nigerians may interact with people from different cultures more readily, which lessens the possibility of linguistic disputes. Americanisms' entry into Nigerian English illustrates how the language is dynamic and flexible enough to adjust to social and global shifts, reducing conflicts in a culture influenced by both domestic and foreign factors (Awonusi 104).

Furthermore, Herbert S. Igboanusi's *A Dictionary of Nigerian English Usage* (2002), offers a thorough examination of the Nigerian English lexicon. Igboanusi clarifies how Nigerian English is used to convey regional cultural identities and subtleties by recording the distinctive words and expressions that have developed in the language. In daily encounters, several of the expressions listed in this book are used to reduce stress, such as "No wahala" (no difficulty) and "How far?" (how are you?). Because of their natural friendliness and informality, these expressions facilitate a

laid-back tone in discussions and enable individuals to speak in a way that reduces the likelihood of miscommunications or confrontations (Igboanusi 56).

Ulrike Gut and J. Milde (2002), in *"The Prosody of Nigerian English,"* adopt a different tack by analysing the prosodic characteristics of Nigerian English, including tone, rhythm, and intonation. The authors demonstrate that Nigerian English's prosody is important for social interaction management by contrasting it with British English and regional West African tone languages. The way meaning is expressed in Nigerian English is influenced by tone, which is crucial in many Nigerian languages. Tonal changes in the voice, for instance, can convey humour, sarcasm, or empathy, giving speakers a subtle yet effective means of reducing communication tension. This study emphasises how crucial it is to pay attention to both the words we use and how we say them, especially when under pressure (Gut and Milde 150).

The *Noun Phrase Structure in Nigerian English*, a 2007 research by M. T. Lamidi, examined the grammatical structures of Nigerian English, particularly the noun phrase. Despite being different from Standard British English, Lamidi contends that these structures show how Nigerians have adapted their language to fit their sociocultural context. Lamidi presents these forms as organic adaptations to the regional linguistic environment rather than as mistakes. Even in tense social situations, speakers are able to communicate effectively due to their flexibility in language use. Nigerian English's flexibility in different circumstances is essential for facilitating communication in tense or contentious situations (Lamidi 72).

In the digital sphere, Nigerian English's social roles are also apparent. The 2010 study *"Nigerian English in Informal Email Messages,"* by Innocent Chilwa, looks at how Nigerian English appears online. Nigerian English provides a means of expressing regional identities and feelings as more and more communication occurs via emails and other digital messaging platforms. According to Chilwa's research, casual email correspondence, which is frequently replete with

culturally specific references and Nigerian English idioms, might be a tool for promoting connection and reducing stress. Even in a virtual setting, Nigerian English's adaptability enables speakers to have more intimate, relatable discussions, which helps diffuse possible tensions and foster rapport (Chiluwa 112).

In their 2001 study, *"The Semantics of 'Okay' (OK) in Nigerian English,"* E. Adebija and Janet Bello examine how the seemingly straightforward term "okay" is employed in Nigerian English to control interpersonal interactions and reduce stress. "Okay" is a flexible phrase that can be used to indicate comprehension, conclude a conversation, or even communicate sarcasm in Nigerian English. As Nigerian English develops to the cultural environment in which it is spoken, the semantic range of "okay" provides speakers with a means of reducing tension in a variety of social contexts. "Okay" preserves social harmony and keeps disputes from getting worse, whether it is used to accept an apology or to end a conversation (Adebija and Bello 88).

Cornelius Iko-Awaji Ngor's 2024 study, *"Tone Nature of Nigerian English,"* delves deeper into the tone characteristic of Nigerian English. Ngor focuses on the ways that Nigerian English and British English have different tones, particularly when it comes to how they interact with Nigerian native languages. According to his research, tone is very important in Nigerian English, especially when expressing emotions and subtle social cues. According to the study, tone is used by Nigerian English speakers to convey assertiveness, politeness, or empathy all of which are critical skills for handling uncomfortable situations. Effective use of tone by speakers can serve to ease social tension by reducing disagreement and improving the clarity of their intentions (Ngor 157).

Finally, *"Nigerian English: History, Functions, and Features,"* a 2025 research by Kingsley O. Ugwuanyi and Sopuruchi Christian Aboh, provides a thorough analysis of Nigerian English. The writers look at how English has changed over time in Nigeria, how it serves a variety of purposes, and how it continues to expand as one of the English dialects with the fastest rate of

growth in the globe. The study emphasises how Nigerian English has developed into a valuable tool for negotiating interpersonal interactions, especially in situations when linguistic or cultural barriers could cause conflict. The study highlights how Nigerian English facilitates communication in both formal and informal contexts, demonstrating how language may act as a unifying factor during societal unrest (Ugwuanyi and Aboh 201).

1.5. 2 Justification of the Study

Upon examining the current research about the utilisation of Nigerian English for tension alleviation, numerous deficiencies emerge, notably concerning the selected texts, the theoretical frameworks applied, and the temporal or contextual parameters of the studies conducted. The examined works offer essential insights into the role of Nigerian English in navigating social relationships and conflicts; however, the predominant research emphasises earlier studies and formal environments, with insufficient focus on modern social contexts, especially within digital realms. Bamiro's important 1991 study on the social and functional power of Nigerian English, although invaluable for comprehending the utilisation of Nigerian Pidgin in literature to mirror social inequalities, neglects the contemporary application of Nigerian English in digital communication. The increasing prevalence of communication on platforms such as social media, mobile messaging, and email has not led to a comprehensive analysis of the role of Nigerian English in these informal contexts. This gap is a chance to investigate how Nigerian English significantly contributes to alleviating tension in quotidian digital contacts, which are increasingly pivotal in contemporary culture (Bamiro 198).

Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks employed in the current studies are primarily sociolinguistic, concentrating on language diversity, social identity, and power dynamics. These frameworks, although essential for comprehending the broader social implications of Nigerian English, neglect to consider the psychological aspects of language use, specifically how language

aids individuals in managing emotions and resolving problems in everyday interactions. While Gut and Milde's (2002) examination of prosody and Igboanusi's (2002) analysis of lexicon offer valuable insights at structural and semantic levels, they inadequately address the role of Nigerian English as a psychological instrument for stress alleviation and emotional regulation in high-pressure social contexts. This research seeks to address that gap by employing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates sociolinguistics and social psychology to comprehend both the communicative function of Nigerian English and its significance in regulating interpersonal emotions and fostering social cohesion (Gut and Milde 150; Igboanusi 56).

Moreover, the majority of extant research, including Awonusi's 1994 study on the Americanization of Nigerian English, emphasises the linguistic characteristics of Nigerian English in earlier sociopolitical circumstances. These studies, however significant, fail to examine the functioning of Nigerian English within the modern Nigerian environment, characterised by social and political tensions, youth activism, and digital communication that have transformed interpersonal interactions among Nigerians. The evolving dynamics in Nigerian society, including the rising impact of social media and escalating political turmoil, necessitate a contemporary viewpoint on the utilisation of Nigerian English to alleviate social tensions. This study will address a significant gap in understanding how Nigerian English adapts to and facilitates navigation of the current political atmosphere and the emergence of digital communication (Awonusi 104).

This study seeks to address these deficiencies by examining the role of Nigerian English in contemporary digital communication, offering insights into its function in alleviating tension in informal contexts such as social media, text messaging, and online forums. The research will employ a comprehensive strategy by merging psychological theories with sociolinguistic views to investigate the utilisation of language not only for communication but also as a mechanism for emotional regulation and social cohesiveness. This study, set within the present Nigerian setting, will provide novel insights into the expanding role of Nigerian English, emphasising its importance

in both quotidian and digital contacts as a mechanism for alleviating social tension in a swiftly transforming society (Lamidi 72).

1.6 Thesis Statement

This study focuses on Nigerian social media discourse on *Twitter* and *Facebook*, using Nigerian English, with the use of satire/irony, wordplay/pun and indigenous Nigeria languages for conflict resolution and social bonding

CHAPTER TWO:

DATA ANALYSIS I

NIGERIAN ENGLISH IN IRONY/SATIRE TO DEFRAY TENSION IN *FACEBOOK* AND *TWITTER*

This chapter looks at how Nigerian English is used in humour, with a particular emphasis on satire and irony, to ease tension in online discussions on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. In order to investigate how humour serves as a weapon for resolving social and political conflicts, the analysis will make use of the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter One: Relief Theory, Superiority Theory, and Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA). This chapter will examine how Nigerian English, with its abundant use of humour, irony, and wordplay, is used in diverse socio-political contexts to reduce tension and promote camaraderie among users, using a variety of examples from *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The chapter will concentrate on how these humour tactics foster social solidarity while enabling Nigerians to use humour to deal with political and socioeconomic challenges.

Presentation of Data:

The following examples were chosen from *Facebook* and *Twitter* postings, comments, and memes. These entries show how Nigerians' grievances with political leadership, economic difficulties, and national disasters are humourously addressed through the use of Nigerian English.

Example 1: Twitter Post (April 15, 2023)

Post:

"You check your bank balance when they say the economy is improving. Just 'garnish', we chop, then. #SapaNation #NigeriaSapa."

Source: Twitter, @OmoNaija, April 15, 2023.

Analysis:

This tweet humourously reflects the economic struggles in Nigeria by using the term “garnish.” The use of "garnish" (something minimal added to a meal for decoration) ironically suggests that although there are claims of economic improvement, the average Nigerian sees only the bare minimum. Here, Relief Theory applies as the humour serves as a cathartic release for users frustrated by the government's claims of progress, allowing them to temporarily relieve the emotional burden of the economic crisis. Additionally, the use of #SapaNation symbolizes a collective experience, reinforcing a shared frustration within the Nigerian populace.

Example 2: Facebook Meme (July 10, 2022)

Meme:

"When they say 'things are getting better' and you're still trying to afford three square meals," alongside an image of a politician looking unconcerned. #OmoNaija #ThingsNaijaPeopleGoTalk.

Source: Facebook, @NaijaHumour, July 10, 2022.

Analysis:

The meme highlights the disparity between the statements of politicians claiming improvement and the reality faced by many Nigerians who struggle to meet basic needs. This visual irony draws on Superiority Theory, where the audience derives a sense of superiority over the politicians, who are depicted as out of touch with the populace. The humour reinforces the shared sentiment of many Nigerians who see their leaders as ineffective and disconnected from the real issues they face.

Example 3: Facebook Comment (November 20, 2023)

*"In this country, the response to sending your resume is always, 'We regret to inform you...'
Who will ever find employment in this economy? #SapaDiStory #NaijaJobHunt."*

Source: Facebook, @NaijaGist, November 20, 2023.

Analysis:

The use of humour in commenting on the disappointing job application process taps into collective frustration about unemployment in Nigeria. By using humour, the individual expresses their dissatisfaction with the system in a way that is less confrontational but equally impactful. This aligns with Relief Theory, as humour offers emotional relief by transforming a stressful and demoralizing experience into something more bearable.

Example 4: Twitter Post (March 10, 2023)

Post:

"When your government promises 'change' and you check your bank account... more like 'change' in the currency, not your financial situation. #SapaDiStory."

Source: Twitter, @NaijaCitizen, March 10, 2023.

Analysis:

This post satirizes the frequent political promises of change that seem to never materialize. By contrasting the word "change" with a joke about the state of one's finances, the post uses irony to expose the disconnection between political promises and reality. The audience feels a sense of Superiority over the government, as they are more attuned to the real situation than the politicians making empty promises.

Example 5: Facebook Meme (February 2, 2024)

Meme:

"When they say 'We are fixing the roads' and you're still dodging potholes on your way to work. #NaijaProblems #OmoNaija."

Source: Facebook, @SapaComedian, February 2, 2024.

Analysis:

This meme uses visual irony, depicting the contrast between government promises to fix infrastructure and the everyday reality of Nigerians who continue to struggle with poor roads. The post speaks to a collective experience, emphasizing the shared cognitive awareness of the inefficiencies in government promises, as seen through Socio-Cognitive Theory. Humour serves as a way for Nigerians to bond over a common frustration, affirming their shared identity and experiences.

Example 6: Twitter Post (August 10, 2023)

Post:

"The only thing that's growing in this country is our collective frustration. #SapaNation #NaijaStruggle."

Source: Twitter, @LagosianChronicles, August 10, 2023.

Analysis:

This tweet uses hyperbole to express the growing frustration felt by Nigerians due to political and economic hardships. The phrase "growing frustration" humourously highlights how much the people feel the burden of these issues, making light of the situation through sarcasm. This post illustrates Relief Theory, where the humour gives Nigerians an outlet for their frustrations, allowing them to momentarily relieve the emotional tension caused by ongoing struggles

The comprehensive examination of these examples shows how humour specifically, satire and irony in Nigerian English works as a complex and multi-layered discursive tool on Twitter and Facebook. It becomes clear that these theoretical functions are intricately linked when Relief, Superiority, and Socio-Cognitive theories are incorporated into the analysis. A single humorous statement frequently simultaneously activates a shared mental model of societal critique, asserts a cognitive superiority over perceived ineptitude or hardship, and offers a cathartic release from

socio-political frustrations. Nigerian English is the crucial sociolinguistic medium for this process because of its distinct vocabulary ('Sapa', 'garnish', 'audio'), as well as its common syntactical structures. By encouraging an in-group identity, it enables users to express their discontent and participate in social criticism in a way that is both cathartic and socially cohesive. By turning challenging and politically sensitive situations into comedic relief, these ironic messages promote unity among Nigerians. Therefore, Nigerian English humour on social media is an important discursive technique for reducing social tension, fostering resilience, and creating a group response to sociopolitical issues rather than just a coping method.

CHAPTER THREE:

DATA ANALYSIS II

NIGERIAN ENGLISH IN WORDPLAY/PUN TO DEFRAY TENSION IN *FACEBOOK AND TWITTER*

This chapter explores the role of wordplay and puns in Nigerian English as a tool for defraying tension in online interactions on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. By focusing on humour through clever language use, particularly the integration of Nigerian English slang and puns, this chapter investigates how these strategies offer emotional relief in the face of socio-political tensions, national issues, and personal frustrations. This chapter aims to show how Nigerian English's rich use of wordplay fosters solidarity, provides emotional reprieve, and engages the audience in both social critique and catharsis.

Presentation of Data:

The following examples are drawn from *Facebook* and *Twitter*, featuring wordplay and puns in Nigerian English. These examples highlight how humour based on language manipulation such as puns and witty wordplay addresses national and social issues in a humorous, yet critical manner.

Example 1: *Twitter* Post (March 22, 2023)

Post:

*"Nigerian economy really said, 'No vex, I'll just give you a lil' bit of *change* in exchange for your hope."

#NaijaProblems #SapaNation

Source: Twitter, @NaijaMania, March 22, 2023

Analysis:

In this tweet, the word "change" is used both literally (in reference to currency) and figuratively (as

a token of hope or improvement), creating a pun that critiques the Nigerian government's promises of change. The humour arises from the incongruity between the government's promises and the minimal change experienced by citizens. This use of wordplay demonstrates Relief Theory, as it transforms frustration with the economic situation into a humorous statement that provides emotional release. The hashtag #SapaNation further resonates with the audience, creating a sense of solidarity over the shared struggle of economic hardship.

Example 2: Facebook Meme (February 18, 2024)

Meme:

*"When you see the price of rice and remember that 'palliative' isn't what the government promised.
#PalliSick #RiceGrowsOnTreesInNaija"*

Source: Facebook, @NaijaJokes, February 18, 2024

Analysis:

This meme plays on the dual meaning of the word "palliative" a temporary or superficial solution to a problem, especially in the context of government aid programs. The meme uses palliative in a humorous sense to contrast what was promised (in terms of economic relief) with what was actually received. The term "RiceGrowsOnTreesInNaija" is an additional pun, poking fun at the unrealistic expectations set by the government. The humour here works with Superiority Theory as Nigerians mock the failure of the government to deliver on its promises, positioning themselves as superior to the political elites who make empty promises. The clever wordplay helps to turn frustration into humour, offering a brief emotional reprieve.

Example 3: Twitter Post (June 4, 2022)

Post:

*"We are tired of hearing 'Change is coming.' If change was a currency, we'd be billionaires by now.
#NaijaJokes #ChangeIsAudio"*

Source: Twitter, @LagosFunny, June 4, 2022

Analysis:

This tweet uses the phrase “Change is audio” a popular Nigerian slang term meaning something that is promised but never materializes. The pun here plays on the common political slogan "change" and the literal idea of currency, making a pointed critique of empty political promises. The humour relieves tension by transforming political disillusionment into a lighthearted joke, while Superiority Theory is activated, as the audience enjoys the sense of superiority over politicians who fail to meet expectations. The wordplay on “change” offers catharsis for citizens frustrated by years of unfulfilled promises.

Example 4: Facebook Comment (May 15, 2022)

Comment:

*"Government said they're fixing power, but the only light we get is in the form of our electricity bills.
#PowerlessNigeria #LightNoShow"*

Source: Facebook, @NaijaHumour, May 15, 2022

Analysis:

This comment plays on the contrast between the promise of "fixing power" and the ongoing problem of inadequate electricity in Nigeria. The phrase “the only light we get is in the form of our electricity bills” is a pun that humourously critiques the lack of power supply by implying that Nigerians are only receiving “light” in the form of increasingly high electricity costs. This use of wordplay and irony provides Relief Theory, as it offers Nigerians a way to laugh at the absurdity of the situation and cope with the daily inconvenience of power shortages. The pun turns a frustrating reality into a moment of humour, giving users temporary emotional release.

Example 5: Twitter Post (November 28, 2023)

Post:

"Our government is so good at making 'audio promises,' no wonder they don't need the internet to deliver. #OnlineGovernment #SapaWahala"

Source: Twitter, @FunnyNaija, November 28, 2023

Analysis:

This tweet plays on the term "audio promises," a popular Nigerian slang used to describe promises that are made publicly but are not actually fulfilled. The humour here lies in the clever use of the term to criticize the government's tendency to make grand promises without any real follow-through. The tweet further satirizes the government's inefficacy by suggesting that it is so good at making empty promises that it doesn't need to be "online" (i.e., connected to reality). This post uses Superiority Theory, as Nigerians are encouraged to feel superior to the political leaders who make promises without delivering. The use of wordplay transforms political frustration into a humorous critique, offering emotional release for the audience.

Example 6: Facebook Meme (April 10, 2023)

Meme:

"Just checked the fuel price, and I now understand why they call it 'liquid gold.' My car is basically a gold mine now. #FuelPriceWoes #NaijaHumour"

Source: Facebook, @LagosMeme, April 10, 2023

Analysis:

In this meme, the term "liquid gold" is used humorously to highlight the high cost of fuel in Nigeria. The pun plays on the literal meaning of "liquid gold," emphasizing how fuel prices have become so high that fueling a car now feels like mining precious metals. The use of humour here, through a simple pun, alleviates the frustration of dealing with sky-high fuel prices, offering Relief Theory by allowing the audience to laugh at the absurdity of the situation. This humour serves as a collective catharsis, providing a way to cope with the economic hardship that Nigerians experience due to high fuel costs.

Summary of Analysis

The analysis of these examples reveals that wordplay and puns in Nigerian English serve a significant role in defraying tension on social media platforms like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Through the use of clever language manipulation such as puns, witty wordplay, and the incorporation of Nigerian slang these posts provide emotional relief for Nigerians grappling with socio-political frustrations, particularly those related to the economy, government inefficiency, and national issues.

By employing Relief Theory, Nigerians use humour to release emotional tension, providing an outlet for frustrations that would otherwise remain unaddressed. Superiority Theory is also at play, as Nigerians mock the incompetence of political leaders and the broken promises they make, allowing the audience to feel superior to those in power. Lastly, Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA) emphasizes the shared cognitive framework of Nigerians, where humour becomes a communal activity, connecting individuals through their shared frustrations and collective experiences.

In conclusion, wordplay and puns in Nigerian English on social media not only provide a humorous escape but also offer a way for Nigerians to engage in social critique, bond over common struggles, and cope with the challenges they face. These forms of humour promote unity, resilience, and social solidarity, making them a powerful tool for defraying tension and fostering collective action in the face of socio-political adversity.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
DATA ANALYSIS III**

**NIGERIAN ENGLISH IN NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES TO DEFRAY
TENSION ON *FACEBOOK* AND *TWITTER***

This chapter explores how Nigerian English, when interwoven with indigenous languages, is used humourously to alleviate social and political tension on social media platforms like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Nigerian English, with its incorporation of local languages, provides a unique form of communication that blends humour, critique, and social bonding.. The chapter aims to show how humour rooted in indigenous languages allows Nigerians to defray tension, critique the system, and foster solidarity while engaging with national issues.

Presentation of Data:

The following examples were selected from *Facebook* and *Twitter*, showcasing how Nigerian English, mixed with indigenous languages (such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin), is employed in humourous comments, tweets, and memes to address political leadership, economic difficulties, and social issues.

Example 1: Twitter Post (April 15, 2023)

"Government says we are doing better, but my pocket still dey shout 'gbese' (debt). Abi na 'better' dem talk?"

Source: Twitter, @OmoNaija, April 15, 2023

Analysis:

In this tweet, the use of Yoruba with the term "gbese" (meaning "debt") highlights the disparity between the optimistic narrative of the government and the lived reality of Nigerians facing economic challenges. The humour here provides a cathartic release for users, enabling them to

laugh at the disconnect between government promises and the financial struggles they face. This aligns with Relief Theory, where humour acts as an emotional escape, offering momentary relief from frustration.

Furthermore, the tweet incorporates an element of Superiority Theory by mocking the government's inability to deliver on promises. Nigerians feel a sense of superiority by pointing out the absurdity of the situation, allowing them to derive enjoyment from their ability to criticize political leaders. The humorous use of indigenous language deepens the connection with Yoruba speakers, reinforcing group solidarity.

Example 2: Facebook Post (July 10, 2022)

"When the government says 'things are improving,' but we still dey 'suffer' (struggle). Chineke, when will we see the change?"

Source: Facebook, @NaijaHumour, July 10, 2022

Analysis:

The term "Chineke" (meaning "God" in Igbo) is used here to express frustration and disbelief. This exclamation highlights the disconnect between political promises of progress and the reality of continued hardship. The humour in this post helps to relieve tension by turning serious socio-political frustrations into something that can be laughed at. According to Relief Theory, humour offers a way to release emotional tension by allowing Nigerians to express their dissatisfaction in a socially acceptable way.

In addition, Superiority Theory applies here, as the humour positions Nigerians as having a superior understanding of their situation compared to the political elite. The sense of superiority arises from mocking the political system and feeling that citizens have a better grasp of the national realities. The use of Igbo strengthens the collective experience of Igbo speakers and those who share similar frustrations.

Example 3: Facebook Post (March 25, 2024)

"Dem say dem go fix the road, but na potholes I still dey dodge every morning. Ahn! Na who go fix am now?"

Source: Facebook, @NaijaBanter, March 25, 2024

Analysis:

This post humourously critiques the government's promises to fix infrastructure, specifically roads, while citizens continue to face the inconvenience of potholes. The use of the Yoruba expression "Ahn!" adds an emotional layer to the frustration, intensifying the humour by emphasizing disbelief at the lack of progress.

In terms of Relief Theory, this humour provides emotional relief from the frustration of navigating poor roads despite government assurances. It allows Nigerians to laugh at the situation, offering temporary relief from their frustrations. The humour also serves as a means of social commentary, allowing users to bond over shared experiences and frustrations.

Additionally, Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA) is evident in how this humour taps into the shared cognitive understanding of the nation's infrastructure issues. Nigerians, especially in urban areas, have a common mental framework that recognizes the ongoing problem of potholes, making the humour both relatable and effective. This shared experience promotes group solidarity, reinforcing the collective understanding of Nigeria's infrastructural challenges.

Example 4: Twitter Post (June 13, 2023)

"Politicians say 'We are giving you change,' but na only 'change of money' we dey see. When change go come?"

Source: Twitter, @SapaKing, June 13, 2023

Analysis:

In this post, the phrase "change of money" humourously critiques the government's promises of change that only seem to benefit the elite. The use of Igbo in the phrase "*when change go come?*" adds a layer of local identity, making the critique even more pointed and resonant. The humour here

is effective because it simplifies complex political issues into something easily relatable through humour.

This post demonstrates Superiority Theory as Nigerians mock the political class, positioning themselves as more knowledgeable about the realities on the ground. The humour derives from the absurdity of political promises that are not reflected in tangible changes. By highlighting the financial gain of politicians, Nigerians create a sense of superiority over the political elite, allowing them to laugh at their expense.

Example 5: Facebook Meme (February 2, 2024)

"When them say 'We are fixing the healthcare system,' but the hospitals are still filled with broken equipment. Ahn Chineke!"

Source: Facebook, @SapaComedian, February 2, 2024

Analysis:

In this meme, the use of **Igbo** with the exclamation "**Ahn Chineke!**" conveys frustration and disbelief at the government's failure to address the healthcare crisis. The humour in this post is based on **Relief Theory**, as it provides emotional release for people who are frustrated by the underfunded healthcare system. The exclamation helps to transform anger into something lighter and more palatable, providing a moment of catharsis.

This meme also employs **Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA)**, as it taps into the shared cognitive understanding of Nigerians' experiences with inadequate healthcare. The humour relies on the collective awareness of the country's health system's shortcomings, making it relatable to those who have witnessed or experienced similar issues. The use of **Igbo** further strengthens the connection to a specific cultural group, while also uniting those who feel similarly about the state of healthcare.

Example 6: Twitter Post (December 4, 2023)

Post:

"Dem say 'We are solving power issues,' but na kerosene lamp I still dey use. When light go come back?"

Source: Twitter, @LagosianReality, December 4, 2023

Analysis:

This tweet uses Hausa and humourously critiques the government's inability to solve the power supply issues in Nigeria. The phrase "kerosene lamp" symbolizes the enduring struggle with basic infrastructure, while Hausa serves to reach a broader audience in the northern parts of Nigeria.

The humour in this post is primarily grounded in Relief Theory, as it offers emotional release from the frustration of power outages. By making light of the situation, Nigerians can laugh at their predicament, turning a serious issue into something momentarily lighter.

Additionally, Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA) is at play, as the tweet reflects a collective understanding of the issue of electricity in Nigeria. The humour resonates with those who have faced similar power problems, and the use of Hausa adds another layer of cultural connection, particularly for those from northern Nigeria, fostering a sense of unity among the diverse Nigerian audience.

Summary of Analysis

The analysis of the selected social media posts demonstrates how humour, rooted in Nigerian English and indigenous languages like Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, serves as a powerful tool to alleviate social and political tensions. Through a detailed examination of humour in these examples, it is clear that the integration of these languages not only provides cathartic release but also fosters a sense of solidarity among Nigerians from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Relief Theory plays a crucial role in understanding how humour functions in these posts. The use of humour allows Nigerians to cope with frustrations related to political incompetence, economic hardship, and infrastructural failure. For instance, in posts about the failure of the government to deliver on promises related to power, roads, or healthcare, humour helps to release pent-up emotional tension. By transforming frustration into a moment of laughter, the humour provides temporary emotional relief, offering a brief escape from the challenges of everyday life.

Furthermore, Superiority Theory is evident in the way Nigerians use humour to mock political leaders and institutions. Posts that highlight the disconnect between government promises and the lived experiences of ordinary citizens often use humour to assert superiority over the political elite. This humour serves as a form of social resistance, where the audience finds pleasure in ridiculing those in power, who are seen as out of touch with the reality of the people. By laughing at the absurdity of the situation, Nigerians momentarily feel empowered, reinforcing their sense of superiority over the political system.

Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA) further enriches the analysis by highlighting how humour taps into the shared cognitive framework of Nigerians. The collective understanding of national issues such as poor infrastructure, inadequate healthcare, and unreliable power supply creates a common ground for humour. Through the use of indigenous languages, the humour becomes more relatable, as it resonates with the lived experiences of speakers from different regions. The use of Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa in the examples also strengthens group identity and reinforces social cohesion, as Nigerians from different ethnic backgrounds can connect over shared frustrations, even if the language differs.

In conclusion, the integration of indigenous languages with Nigerian English on social media plays a significant role in defraying tension. It provides emotional relief, critiques the political system, and fosters social cohesion. The humour in these posts, while critical of the

political establishment, brings Nigerians together, offering a space for collective laughter and unity. The application of Relief Theory, Superiority Theory, and Socio-Cognitive Theory to these examples reveals the complex ways in which humour functions not only as a tool for emotional release but also as a form of social commentary that unites people in shared experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to investigate the role of Nigerian English in defraying tension on social media, with a focus on humour, particularly satire, irony, wordplay, and the use of indigenous Nigerian languages on platforms like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The objectives of the study were to analyze how humour functions as a tool for managing conflict, alleviating socio-political tensions, and promoting social bonding in online interactions.

Key findings:

1. **Humour as a Coping Mechanism:** The analysis revealed that humour, especially through satire and irony, serves as a cathartic release for Nigerians facing frustrations related to political and economic hardship. Humour in Nigerian English allows individuals to express dissatisfaction in a socially acceptable and light-hearted way, offering relief from emotional stress (Relief Theory).
2. **Solidarity Through Shared Experiences:** The use of humour rooted in Nigerian English, along with indigenous languages like **Yoruba**, **Igbo**, and **Pidgin**, fosters a sense of community. These humorous posts reflect a collective consciousness, where Nigerians from various linguistic backgrounds can relate to shared frustrations, creating social cohesion and unity.
3. **Superiority and Social Critique:** Humour in Nigerian English is often used to mock political leaders and systems, positioning Nigerians as "superior" to the political elite. This aligns with **Superiority Theory**, where the audience derives a sense of empowerment by laughing at the incompetence or absurdity of the governing body, thus reinforcing resistance to the status quo.

4. **Cognitive Frameworks and Social Commentary:** The study found that humour in Nigerian social media taps into the collective cognitive framework of Nigerians. This shared understanding of national challenges, like poor infrastructure or economic struggles, makes humour a tool for both social commentary and emotional reprieve. **Socio-Cognitive Theory (CDA)** underscores how humour reflects societal power dynamics and connects the audience to a broader cultural and socio-political reality.

5.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes significantly to academic discourse in several ways:

- **Application of Theories to a New Context:** The study applies **Relief Theory**, **Superiority Theory**, and **Socio-Cognitive Theory** to the context of Nigerian English and social media humour, specifically in online Nigerian discourse. While these theories have been previously applied to other settings, this study is one of the first to investigate how humour functions in Nigerian English on digital platforms, particularly during politically charged conversations and national debates.
- **New Insights into Humour as Social Commentary:** The study revealed how humour in Nigerian English is not just a coping mechanism but also a tool for social critique and resistance. By analyzing humour that incorporates indigenous languages, it demonstrates how humour can challenge political narratives, critique government promises, and unify individuals around shared experiences of frustration.
- **Cross-Cultural Linguistic Impact:** By exploring the interplay between **Nigerian English** and indigenous languages like **Pidgin**, **Yoruba**, **Igbo**, and **Hausa**, this study adds to the understanding of how these languages contribute to national solidarity and social resilience in times of adversity.

5.3 Recommendations / Implications of Study

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for scholars, writers, educators, and language users:

1. **For Scholars and Researchers:** Scholars should explore further the role of humour in other social contexts, such as gender, identity, and youth culture, within the framework of Nigerian English. Future research could expand the scope to include other social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok, to investigate how humour evolves in newer digital spaces.

2. **For Writers :** Writers, meme creators, and social media influencers can use the insights from this study to understand how their humorous content can both critique the system and foster social change. There is potential for humour to not only entertain but also engage audiences in social and political dialogue.

3. **For Language Users:** The study encourages Nigerians to embrace humour as a tool for reducing tension and building resilience. Using humour rooted in Nigerian English, alongside indigenous languages, can help create a supportive online community, especially during times of national crises.

4. **For Educators:** Educators and language instructors should recognize the power of Nigerian English in engaging students and promoting critical thinking. Incorporating humour in the classroom, especially when addressing socio-political issues, could encourage students to think critically while also providing a lighter, more engaging approach to serious topics.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study has provided valuable insights, there are several areas for further exploration:

1. **Broader Scope of Digital Platforms:** Future research could extend to examining other digital platforms, such as WhatsApp or Instagram, where different types of humour (e.g., visual memes, stories) play a significant role in public discourse. Analyzing how humour on these platforms differs in tone, format, and impact could offer a more comprehensive understanding of digital humour in Nigeria.

2. **Impact of Humour on Political Change:** Further research could investigate the real-world impact of humorous political posts on public opinion and political behavior. Specifically, does humour on social media truly shift attitudes towards political parties, politicians, or governance?

3. **Language and Identity:** There is a need for deeper research into the linguistic identity created by the use of Nigerian English and indigenous languages on social media. How does this affect national identity, inter-ethnic relations, or the sense of belonging to the Nigerian state?

4. **Psychological Effects of Humour:** Future studies could also examine the **psychological effects** of humour in Nigerian English on mental health. How does humour on social media contribute to emotional well-being and collective coping during national crises?

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