(Re)constructing Nigerianisms through Sarcasm and Irony in Selected Nigerian Slangs and Mannerisms

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Abstract

Nigerian English, already nativized and domesticated in the socio-political culture of the country, has its distinct lexical features. The study, therefore, investigates the use of irony and sarcasm in selected Nigerian slang and mannerisms using Incongruity Theory to bring to the fore, the distinct Nigerian linguistic features, inherent in them. Neologisms, slang and Nigerianisms were purposively selected through observations in a university environment, churches and public spaces, the internet and the Nigerian music industry; only slang and neologisms that cover the major geo-political zones from socio-political, religious and educational areas are used for the analysis. The study concludes that sarcasm and irony are tools used to construct a distinct Nigerian discursive identity; with irony being used more than sarcasm. Sarcasm and irony are used to achieve intertextuality; non-Nigerians, who are not familiar with the contextual use of these Nigerianisms, might therefore be excluded from the ongoing discourse. Youths, however, also make use of these Nigerianisms to send a subtle message, correct social vices and indirectly document the socio-political events in the country. The research submits that most Nigerian lexical innovations and derivations are humorously construed through irony and sarcasm.

Keywords: Incongruity, Irony, Neologisms, Nigerianism, Sarcasm, Nigerian Slangs, Mannerisms

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1Introduction

Nigerianisms are mostly hinged on intertextuality in their semantic implications. This is because most of these slang, coinages and neologisms have special native meanings in their contextual use. Scholars have rightly suggested that Nigerianisms are extracted from socio-political and cultural events, as well as from popular culture. Existing words can also be semantically extended to have a different contextual implication. One of the methods of this semantic extension is through irony and sarcasm. This study, therefore, posits that most slang, neologisms and lexical innovations are covertly entrenched in irony and sarcasm; it opines that most Nigerian lexical derivations are humorously construed from ironic and sarcastic elements of incongruities. The research sets out to uncover the methods used in deriving this irony/sarcasm, it also seeks to classify the type of irony/sarcasm used by Nigerians in their lexical innovations/evolutions and to know the most dominantly used out of irony and sarcasm in these neologisms.

Varieties of English in the world have distinct and varying features at different linguistic levels. One of the levels, where these features are prominently displayed is the lexical. Nigerian English is distinct in its innovations. Scholars have distinguished between lexical innovation and deviation in Nigerian English. According to Oniemayin (2012), innovation in Nigerian English is manifested more at the lexical level while deviation is predominant in the area of grammar. This is because the peculiar characteristics are based on the interaction between English and the indigenous Nigerian languages (Obasi, 2022). It is a fact that the nativized Nigerian English exists; scholars are therefore determining the distinctive features of this variety of English which is deeply rooted in the Nigerian culture.

Culture is an essential part of any society. Language is a tool as well as part of the culture of any group of people. This is why foreign/second languages are domesticated to effectively reflect the cultural realities of the society of use. This 'local colour' (Obasi, 2022) reflects the influence of the local languages, the socio-cultural as well as the physical environment.

Nigerianism is used in this research to refer to Nigerian slang and mannerisms, peculiar sayings and coinages that have special contextual meaning in Nigeria. These include terms that are culled from political and social events, as well as from the new media and Nigerian popular culture. This study opines that most of these mannerisms are either ironic, sarcastic or both; it is on these two concepts (irony and sarcasm) that most *Nigerianisms* are based.

The concept of sarcasm and irony are closely related. Sarcasm is a form of irony that is used in mocking/attacking someone. Irony is sometimes used interchangeably with sarcasm but the word has a more specific sense; it is an irony that is meant to mock or convey contempt. Irony refers to situations where there is a gap between reality and expectations, especially when such a gap is created for dramatic/humorous effect. In Greek, *eiron* means 'a dissembler' - someone who hides their true intentions, that is what we do when we employ irony, often by saying the opposite of what we mean. The word can also refer to a situation that turns out to be amusingly different from what we expected.

Authors have mentioned victims, aggressiveness and clarity when distinguishing irony and sarcasm. Sarcasm always has a victim, it is more aggressive and clearer than ironies. Irony is usually considered to be funny; in ironic communication, there is always an obvious incongruity and humour is said to arise when an apparent incongruity is resolved.

Human needs during communication change from time to time, making it necessary for lexical innovations and lexical evolution. According to Aboh and Okpo (2022), lexical

innovations play an important role in the process of lexical evolution. Every language user is faced with several choices in lexis and grammar during communication. These choices are informed by the context and content of the subject/topic. English language is one of the major means of communication in Nigeria, the language, however, may seem insufficient to convey new socio-linguistic realities and experiences of the users, necessitating 'New Englishes'. According to Udofot (1999) "the speakers of the new Englishes have created and are still creating new expressions to fulfill their communicative needs, not all are neologisms or new creations" (p.97).

The current research is hinged on the analysis of irony and sarcasm in Nigerian slang, lexical innovations and semantic extensions. The research, therefore, seeks to answer the questions of whether irony and sarcasm are used in achieving a distinct Nigerian linguistic identity, the tools used to achieve this irony/sarcasm and which of irony/sarcasm is used most in Nigerian slangs/ innovations.

2 Literature Review
2.1 *Nigerian English and Nigerianisms*

Nigerian English has attracted a lot of scholarly investigations. While the issue of nativisation of English is no longer debatable, the features of this variety of English have been the focus of many researchers. There are several criteria used to measure the level of standardization of Nigerian English. Banjo's (1996)model presents four varieties according to formal education and linguistic features. Variety I, being the lowest reflects vulgar errors of grammar and broken structures often used by people with little/no formal education. Variety II is an improvement on I, it is used by secondary school students and school certificate holders. Variety III is spoken by highly educated people like graduates while Variety IV is like the native English variety, spoken only by a few Nigerians who were born in Native English-speaking countries.

Using sociolinguistic parameters, Ogbulogo (2005) identified three levels/-lects: basilects, mesolects and acrolects. A mesolect is the lowest variety, similar to Banjo's variety I. A basilect is the most widely used and most popular in Nigeria by junior civil servants, secondary school students and not well-educated youths. An acrolect is used by very few highly educated Nigerians. Despite the different and varying parameters used by those scholars in classifying Nigerian English, most such as Banjo (1979) and Eka (2005) have agreed that national acceptability, international intelligibility and the communicativeness of these varieties are the most important factors.

The major means of communication in Nigeria is the English language, which is the officially recognized language in the country. The nativized English used in informal contexts, however, varies according to the medium and the user. Scholars such as Taiwo and Dontele (2020) and Lanigan (2022) have submitted that there are coinages, neologisms and abbreviations in the online language used by Nigerians. For some, (Oniemayin, 2012; Obasi, 2022) these nativized expressions are lexical/sociolinguistic innovations. Others like Osisanwo (2009), Aboh and Okpo (2022) opined that slangs and slang expressions have become dominant in the linguistic repertoire of Nigerians, especially youths, no matter their level of education.

Coinages and abbreviations are grammatical processes and expressions deeply rooted in the social experiences of the users, which over time could be incorporated into the vocabulary of the community. Coinages develop and spread through all social domains in society. They are however more productive in the social spaces of arts and entertainment, technology, politics, food, advertising, health and fitness (Pousada, 2011). Coinages and neologisms are new words that are formed to capture new experiences; when language users cannot find the correct standard expression to satisfy the communicative purpose intended (Abdullahi & Olaniyi, 2011). They can be deliberate or accidental new formatives. Neologisms are new words formed either from parts or whole of existing words.

The internet is an ingenious source for new words. Scholars (Gozzi 1990; Crystal 2002) have observed that new technologies are the most prolific source of new words in recent times. The internet has spawned large and specialized jargons over the years. Taiwo and Dontele(2020) submitted that social realities are linguistically/discursively produced and could be understood as cultural meanings rooted in the beliefs and values of the community in which they are produced. Coinages are popular in online digital communication because of the quest by users to express their social and cultural selves (Carter, 2004).

Another means of neologism in Nigeria is slang, which mostly originates from the internet. Internet slangs originates from street language popularized by musicians and people in the fringe cultures, who are typically opposed to the prevalent culture (Coleman, 2012). The internet gives expression to these counter-cultures and helps youth who are its drivers to define their own values, which over time has spread enough to become the group identity. The formulation of slang expressions can be idiosyncratic because of the creativity involved in it, which permits the use of unconventional spellings, fusing local expressions in local languages through usage, formulation of words through sound imitation, and so on. The goal of the users of internet slang is to explore novelty in language use to construct their perception of social issues.

2.2 *Trends in Nigerianisms*

Language contact and nativisation of English have necessitated linguistic innovations. These innovations are categorized into the processes of coinages, loan shifts/semantic extensions and analogical creations. Language users in a bid to effectively communicate are faced with new socio-cultural and linguistic realities that cannot be sufficiently explained with the existing vocabularies. This prompts language users to resort to lexical evolution and innovation. The standard British English is not adequate in serving the communication needs of new developments in Nigerian linguistic culture (which reflects local food, festivals, status and social relations), making lexical innovation inevitable.

Nigeria is a multilingual society with not less than 700 indigenous languages, albeit with three major regional languages (Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo). Most lexical transfers are therefore from these three languages, "from music, clothing, indigenous foods, traditional religious beliefs, local institutions and from flora and fauna" (Obasi, 2022, p. 66). According to Ajani (2005), most of these items are left intact in their original forms, for want of better terminology. This is because the English language has been adapted to a new ethno-linguistic environment, thereby affecting the speech habits of Nigerians. English is consequently used to project local customs and traditions.

Adegbija (1989) identified five typologies in Nigerian English that are lexical innovation processes: transfer, analogy, acronyms, semantic shift or extension and coinages or neologisms. To him, transfer takes place when a meaning not found in English is translated directly into English from the indigenous languages. He further identified four types of transfer including transfer of meaning('bushman', 'outing ceremony', 'not on seat'), transfer of culture ('bride price', 'introduction', 'new yamfestival'), transfer of context ('sorry', 'toast') and transfer of Pidgin features ('kola', 'dash', 'mammywater'). Linguists have observed innovations which are clearly influenced by socio-cultural elements in the Nigerian environment. Interestingly, what is incontrovertible is that the use of English in Nigeria is characterised by the idiosyncratic norms reminiscent of the Nigerian linguistic ecology (Adedimeji, 2007).

The Columbia Encyclopaedia (2020) defines slang as 'well developed in the speaking vocabularies of cultured, sophisticated, linguistically rich languages'. Ironically, slang was once considered as the lowest form of communication; a language of criminals and touts. It is now considered by many to be an insightful variation of the standard language. Slangs can also be used as an in-group identity; used to exclude 'strangers' from being part of a particular group. Inyima and Nwosu (2022) studied the sociolinguistic innovations in Nigerian English usage in the Covid-19 era. Aboh and Okpo (2022) studied the morpho-semantics of slang expressions by students in a Nigerian University and observed that meanings of slang words are manipulated through generalization, particularization and pejoration. The research submits that slang expressions can be borrowed from languages within a country and not necessarily from outside. This implies that the native languages have a lot of influence on these slangs. For Osisanwo (2009), students in Nigerian universities use slangs to be unique and to belong/identify with a particular class in the society.

According to Osisanwo (2009), slangs are informal, non-standard words/phrases (also called lexical innovation), which tend to originate in subcultures within a society. They are short-lived, compared to general colloquial speeches. They are typically formed by creative, often witty juxtaposition of words/images. One of the important features of a slang is that it is widely accepted and adopted by members of a group/subculture. They also embody attributes and values of group members; thereby contributing to a sense of group identity.

Previous studies on Nigerian slangs have focused on its sociolinguistic aspects (Odogwu, 2018), using slangs to construct in-group identity among undergraduates (Osisanwo, 2009; Onebunne&Akukobi, 2021), the morpho-semantic constructions in Nigerian slangs (Maledo&Edobor, 2023). The ongoing discourse suggests that slangs, coinages and neologisms are established linguistic features in Nigerian communication; the current study, therefore, seeks to further investigate how these slangs and coinages are pragmatically deployed through the use of sarcasm and irony to arrive at intertextually exclusive Nigerian discourse.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 *The Incongruity Theory*

There are three major classical theories of humour, the superiority theory (Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes), the Relief Theory (Spencer and Freud), and the Incongruity Theory (Cicero, Kant, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard) (Filani, 2015). The three theories are usually seen as rivals, competing for the most plausible answers to questions like 'why do we laugh?' or 'what does the comical consist of?' (Attardo, 2009).

The Superiority Theory says that the comical is perceived as inferior and our laughter is an expression of the sudden realization of our superiority. The Relief Theory emphasizes the liberating effect of humour; laughter is seen as a discharge of surplus energy which alleviates psychic tension. The Incongruity Theory maintains that the object of amusement consists in some kind of incongruity and that laughter is an expression of our enjoyment of the incongruous. The Incongruity Theory is the most popular of the three at present; this is because the two rival theories are seen 'inadequate in capturing the essence of humour, because they focus on the incidental benefit to the amused person rather than on what it is about amusing things that make them amusing (Morreall, 1987, p. 6).

Incongruity theory, in many cases, is presented as a theory of laughter. It is capable of explaining laughter as a reaction to a variety of situations, humorous or otherwise (Straus, 2014). The relationship between laughter and the perception of humour is less straightforward than many historical theories seem to account for. Incongruity theory refers to a group of philosophical accounts of humour that posit that the perception of incongruity is the source of humour/amusement. Though the theory is not without its flaws, incongruity theory remains one of the most prominent accounts of amusement in the contemporary discussion of humour (Straus, 2014). The theory explains why people react with laughter in a very wide range of situations (including some which are not funny). It also explains what makes a situation funny; this versatile explanation is an attractive feature of Incongruity Theory.

Incongruity Theory is a context-dependent theory of humour. What constitutes the 'normal order' to different people depends on a lot of personal and societal factors. An experience that seems humorously incongruous to one person might therefore not be funny to another. Though the incongruity theory explains that the presence of incongruity gives a situation the potential to be amusing, funniness is a property that is perceived subjectively. A different subject may however not find that same situation incongruous. This accounts for different senses of humour across cultural backgrounds, education, religious beliefs and so on (Straus, 2014).

Many incongruous events or situations are neither amusing nor pleasurable, some are unsettling or uncomfortable while others can be downright distressing or traumatic. Missing a step while walking down a staircase can be incongruous and not at all funny (at least not for the person falling). There are many such cases of non-humorous incongruities and this suggests that incongruity may well be a necessary condition but it cannot possibly be sufficient. So the need to device or account for other conditions aside from the presence of incongruity arises. To this Morreall (2011) says the psychological, temporal and emotional distance from the 'subject' is capable of muting these other reactions. This means we might find the negative incongruity funny when we are not attached to the 'subject' emotionally and psychologically and when they are far from us (like watching such situations in movies).

For Morreall (2011), it is not enough to describe an incongruity simply as something 'unexpected', rather the incongruous event must clash with the systems of thought we use to generate expectations about the outcomes of our and others' actions. He mentioned some forms of incongruity that could arise from this as (a) semantic incongruity, where one meaning is intended but another is perceived, (b) humour of switched perspective, which arises when a viewpoint different from the audience's ordinary viewpoint is suggested, and (c) the use of puns to bring about simple linguistic incongruities between the way a certain word is used in a

certain context and a different connotation of the same word/phrase. The focus of the current study is irony and sarcasm in Nigerian slangs. Incongruity theory's main thrust is irony, which makes the theory suitable for accounting for the ironic and sarcastic elements in the data chosen.

4 Methods and Materials

4.1 *Methods*

Neologisms, slangs and Nigerianisms were purposively selected through observations in the University environment, churches and public spaces, the internet and the Nigerian music industry; only slangs and neologisms that cover the major geo-political zones from socio-political, religious and educational areas are used for the analysis.

4.2 *Participants*

Though the lists of Nigerianisms are inexhaustible, 30 Nigerian slangs and neologisms were selected for the purpose of this study. The selected terms contain most of the widely used and well-known slangs whose usages are not limited to geopolitical zones of the country. These neologisms cover several areas of the Nigerian people; socio-political, economic, religious and educational levels.

4.3 *Research Instruments*

This study adopted a qualitative analytical approach. The selected slangs and neologisms are discussed alongside their meanings in standard British English, using the Morreal's (2011) incongruity theory. 30 slangs, lexical innovations and instances of semantic extensions used in Nigeria were purposively sampled through observations and field investigations in the university environment, marketplaces, churches, the streets and gatherings where Nigerian youths are. Other sources include the internet, Nigerian music, the print media and other Nigerian literature. The data was purposively selected to enable the researcher to get terms and neologisms relevant to the focus of the study.

4.4 *Research Procedures*

The data is subjected to the three levels of analysis suggested in Morreal's (2011) incongruity theory framework; the use of puns, semantic incongruity and humour of switched perspective. The data is semantically categorised into semantic extensions, slangs and neologisms. Semantic extensions were explicated and analysed under the three levels of analysis before slangs/neologisms. The incongruities are categorized according to their sources and explicated in line with the Standard British English meanings and their contextualized Nigerian meanings for words under the 'Semantic Extension' category. Slangs and neologisms peculiar to Nigeria are explicated in line with the intended ironical/sarcastic implications.

5 Results

The results of semantic extension and slangs/neologisms are presented in Tables One and Two.

Table 1.*Semantic Extension*

S/N	Word	Standard Meaning	Nigerian Meaning
1	Slay (Papa/Mama)	To kill an animal or person in a violent way	Verb- To dress gorgeously, especially in trendy attire/fashion Noun- someone who dresses gorgeously
2	Village people	People who live in the village	People in one's hometown, who supposedly have supernatural powers

S/N	Word	Standard Translation in English	Nigerian Contextual meaning
			often associated with witchcraft/sorcery
3	Breakfast	Food eaten in the morning	Breakup, often between two lovebirds
4	Beef	Meat got from cow	Not being in good terms with someone, sometimes due to unresolved issues and/or jealousy
5	Baller	Shortened form of 'footballer': someone who plays football	Someone who loves to spend money and enjoy his/herself
6	Barca	Shortened form of Barcelona: football club	A woman's buttock; literally depicted from (back side where the buttock is)
7	Chelsea	A football club	Often used as the opposite of Barca (6 above) to refer to the breasts of women
8	Drip	To let drops of liquid fall	A show/display of fashion/wealth
9	Ghost	An apparition of a dead person which is believed to appear to the living	To leave/desert someone, especially in the middle of a conversation/activity the parties are involved in.
10	Flex	To bend or become bent	To enjoy/ a show of affluence and prosperity and riches

Table 2. *List of Slangs/Neologisms*

S/N	Word	Standard Translation in English	Nigerian Contextual meaning
1	Mad o	It is mad	An exclamation of something incredibly surprising
2	This one weak me	This weakens me	The state of being extremely shocked by the turn of events. It
3	Kuku kill me	Just kill me	A form of exclamatory remark to express disbelief/shock
4	Pepper don rest/set	The pepper is set	There is plenty/surplus money available
5	You wan collect? You go collect wotowoto	Do you want to collect?	A form of threat/warning, implying someone would be 'dealt with'
6	E choke	It chokes	A form of exclamation to show something huge and
7	Wereydey disguise	The madman is disguising	Someone who is pretentious/intentionally concealing the truth
8	I better pass my neighbour	I am better than my neighbour	A type of generator, small in size
9	Off your mic	Put off your microphone	A derogatory remark to tell someone to stop talking
10	No time to check time	There is no time to check time	Time is not enough
11	I go change am for you	I will change it for you	Changing from being good/tolerant to the opposite
12	Oshebaddest	Thank you baddest	A form of exclamation, describing someone who does 'unexpected' things
13	Baddo	Someone who is bad	Someone who does 'bad' things
14	Na me be dis?	Is this me?	An expression of shock/disbelief about what has happened to the speaker
15	Na wetin go make people beat me I wandey do now	I want to be doing what will make people beat me	A joke, expressing doing something people will not like
16	Dey play	Be playing	An expression implying someone is deceiving

			him/herself
17	E shock you?	Did it shock you?	Asking the obviously shocked person if s/he was shocked
18	O poooor	It is plenty	A form of exclamation often expressing something more than the expectations of the speaker
19	Shey you dey whine me?	Are you whining me?	Asking if someone is serious. Questioning the authenticity of an event
20	OgbonSodiq	Sodiq's intelligence	Someone who thinks they are wise but are not, in the real sense

6 Discussion

The data is analysed using Morreal's (2011) incongruity theory. The selected lexical derivations are semantically categorized into semantic extensions, neologisms and slangs. The incongruities are categorized according to their sources and explicated in line with the Standard British English meanings and their contextualized Nigerian meanings for words under the 'Semantic Extension' category. Slangs and neologisms peculiar to Nigeria, are explicated in line with the intended ironical/sarcastic implications.

Semantic Extensions

These are words that originally existed in standard British English but whose meanings have been either extended or changed to suit new lexical needs in Nigeria. They are explicated under puns, albeit using their pragmatic implications; semantic incongruities and incongruities through switched perspectives.

The Use of Puns

The play on words in the selected words is considered here, classifying them with their semantic implications.

Sarcasm through the objectification of women

Some semantic extensions derive their sarcasm from the objectification of women. 'Barca' and 'chelsea' are instances of these. The body parts of women; the breasts and buttocks are called the names of two football clubs. This could be for two reasons; it could be out of sheer disrespect for the body of the woman as in 'I love the barca of that girl', or a euphemistic way of calling the parts of the body, which is typical to the African/Nigerian culture. Depending on the context of use, the sarcasm is derived from the objectification of women and parts of their bodies. This depicts the African culture in Nigeria, where the original names of private parts are given pseudo names and the tendency to objectify women.

Semantic Incongruities

Semantic incongruities are derived from terms derived from food. Breakfast, for instance, which is supposed to be one of the most important meals, is used to refer to a break up between two lovers. Someone would therefore say 'he has been served breakfast' to refer to 'the girlfriend has broken up with him'. This remark is not only ironic but also sarcastic. This is because someone who serves another breakfast would be said to care and truly love them. Ironically, the contextual breakfast is not pleasant/palatable. In the same vein, beef is supposed to contribute to the nutritional values of the person that has and eat them, in Nigeria, however,

beef is used as a term to refer to disagreement/not being on good terms with someone, especially due to jealousy. In this case, beef is no longer beneficial to the person who has it but detrimental, especially to their health.

Incongruities through Switched Perspectives

For other words that originally existed in Standard English but have been pragmatically deployed to have other meanings, the incongruities are sometimes entrenched in the Nigerian traditional beliefs, such as 'Village people'. Village people would originally imply people who live in the village and should be one's kinsmen, especially if that person is from the concerned village. However, the contextual implication of the word is used for people in one's hometown who are diabolical and often work against the progress of others. Most people who use this term are no longer domiciled in the village but would have moved to a more developed region of the country or outside the country. They, however, seem to believe the people in the village do not want them to be successful as they are jealous of them. It is therefore not unusual for people living in cities to say 'My village people are at work' when things are not going as expected for them. The incongruity lies in the traditional belief of Nigerians that people in the village are diabolical/wicked and not the kinsmen they are supposed to be.

Some semantic extensions have their incongruities in their standard forms. Slay, for instance, which means to kill in a violent way is used, either as a noun/verb, as the case may be. Someone who slays is probably derived from 'dress to kill'. The contextual meaning is indirectly derived from the original meaning, especially the exaggerated one. Someone who slays can therefore be symbolically seen as someone who dresses gorgeously and not the original 'kill'Ghost is another word that is entrenched in traditional beliefs. It is however used to mean leaving someone hanging, especially in the middle of a conversation/an event. The original meaning is also reflected in this semantic extension as people do not often see ghost. The act of not being there when needed is therefore used here for 'ghost'. It is often used as a verb in Nigerian use, instead of the noun that it originally is. It is not unusual to find the past tense of ghost as ghosted. An example is 'The man ghosted his family during the war'. 'Don't ghost me, please'.

Drip and flex also have their Nigerian contextual meanings from the standard. The semantic incongruities lie in the extended meanings often associated with these words. Drip was originally meant to let drops of liquid fall. The Nigerian use however implies a show/display of wealth, especially in the dressing. So, while the standard use of drip is used for liquids, it is wealth/fashion that drips in the Nigerian context. Though it might be impossible for fashion/wealth to actually drip in standard use, it does drip in Nigeria. Flex means to bend or become bent. In Nigeria, it is used to imply the display of wealth, prosperity and riches. There is a semantic incongruity from being bent to a display of wealth/enjoyment. Baller, the shortened form of footballer is used to refer to someone who loves living a lavishly social life. Ironically, footballers rarely have enough time to live a lavish social life as they have to train and keep fit for their games. The Nigerian use of ballers reflect in the media, as well as Nigerian songs. Rugers' song *Asiwaju*(2022), for instance has 'I'm a fucking baller' to imply he is someone that has and spend money. Wande Coal's 'All my guys are ballers' is another instance of this contextual use.

Instances of semantic extensions mirror the social practices and beliefs of Nigerians. The Nigerian culture of euphemizing the private parts, and objectifying the woman body are portrayed in the data. The belief in fetish and diabolical things are also displayed. The data reflect Nigerians are very conscious of their public economic image. This is shown in the dominant use of linguistic resources to reflect their socio-economic status. There is an exaggerated display of affluence and wealth in the linguistic choices, as reflected in the data.

Slangs/Neologisms

Ironic Exclamations

There are many instances of exclamations in Nigerian slangs/neologisms. Some of them are 'this one weak me', 'kuku kill me', 'e choke', 'na me be dis?' and 'o pooooor'. All of these slangs are ways of exclaiming in Nigerian context. The semantic incongruity, however, lies in the intended meaning, which is the opposite of the literal meanings of these expressions. 'This one weak me' is used to express a big shock that supposedly makes the speaker 'weak', the weakness might not be physical but mostly an exaggeration of the speakers' shock/disbelief. 'Kuku kill me' is another instance of the exaggerated expression of emotions on the part of the user. Though the speaker literally asks that someone kills them, the contextual meaning implies the opposite; as the speaker only means to express utmost shock/disbelief at the turn of events. 'Na me be dis?' also asks a rhetorical question when the speaker is shocked /really surprised at what is happening to them, while 'o pooooor' and 'e choke' are other ways of expressing surprise and excitement.

The ironic exclamations reflect the heightened emotions of Nigerians, which is rightly displayed in their linguistic choices. Most Nigerians make use of exaggerations in their remarks, sometimes for humour, and at other times, for sarcasm. The data, therefore, reflects Nigerians are emotional, humorous and sarcastic in their use of slangs and neologisms.

Threatening Slangs

Some slangs are ways of threatening the person being addressed. 'You wan collect?' 'You go collect wotowoto' and 'I go change am for you' are instances of these. The standard meaning of 'You wan collect?' is 'Do you want to collect?' which seems like a nice gesture from the addressee. Ironically, the expression is used in Nigeria as a warning/threat as the offer is not a kind gesture; it is mostly associated with threats that could go physical. 'You go collect' is the declarative version of the question, which sounds more threatening. In the same vein, 'I go change am for you' means 'I will change it for you' which would sound like a kind gesture but is contextually used as a threat in Nigeria.The threat/semantic incongruity seems to be embedded in the pidgin version of these slangs as their standard meaning do not sound threatening. Irony is therefore one of the tools used to construe a distinct meaning in Nigeria. It is assumed that the persons being addressed knows/understands this subtle threat/warning.

Direct Sarcasm

The instances of direct sarcasm in the data are: 'Wereydey disguise', "I better pass my neighbour' 'Off your mic' 'Deyplay' 'OgbonSodiq'. Some have their origin from the socio-political happenings in Nigeria; 'Wereydey disguise' has its origin in the popular Nigerian

END-SARS protest in 2020, it was used by protesting youths in their protests to refer to people who are not sure of their stance and do not want to openly associate with them. It has been used to directly refer to people in that same instance, since then. It is an open sarcasm, a direct way of telling someone they do not know where to belong, and so they are disguising.

'Off your mic' has its origin in a probe organized by the house of Representatives in Nigeria, where GodswillAkpabio, the minister of Niger Delta affairs was asked to off his microphone when he said most of the contracts in the Niger Delta are given to national assembly members. The expression was in a bid to shut him up and prevent him from revealing more secret that would have probably been more implicating to the members of the panel themselves. The expression itself was derived from an ironic situation where members of a disciplinary panel are the ones trying to conceal the truths and facts, since they might be implicated. The expression has however been sarcastically used to imply concealing the truth/fact in the media as well as among youths in Nigeria.

'OgbonSodiq' has its origin from a popular Nigerian musician, Asake. In his song, he refers to a particular person called Sodiq, who thinks he is wise; that he is probably wiser than others, but is actually not. The expression is then used to address people who try to prove they are smart but are not. The ironical translation of 'the wisdom of Sodiq' (which should mean a recognized wise person) into someone who is not wise at all has direct sarcasm for people who try to prove wisdom where there is none.

'Dey play', an expression that has its origin in a young man in the new media, who mentions some events that are not possible and then tells the people 'Dey play, just dey play'. The semantic implication of the expression is the lack of trust in the Nigerian government, where the citizens see the fake promises of leaders as a mode of 'playing' because they are not taken seriously. Though the expression is used in humorous ways most times, a subtle message has been passed to the government. The data reflects the tendency of the citizens, especially youths, to softly encode their messages in seemingly unserious/humorous trends. Direct sarcasm is used to correct social vices, albeit through the use of expressions culled from ironic socio-political events in the country.

Ironical Questions

Interrogatives are sometimes ironically used to imply a distinct Nigerian meaning. 'E shock you?' and ' Shey you dey whine me ni?' are examples of these. These questions are both ironic and rhetorical because the person asking already has the answer but is only telling the addressee that he/she knows. 'Shey you dey whine me ni?' is usually used to rhetorically question someone's intentions, to ask if the speaker is being deceived. In most cases, the speaker uses the question to challenge the person being addressed; for the person being addressed to know he/she cannot be fooled. 'E shock you?' is also used in instances where someone is obviously shocked but the speaker pretends not to know so as to bring out a sarcastic effect from the irony. Ironical questions, often rhetorical, are sarcastically and humorously deployed in Nigeria to either show non-conformity with a particular idea/event or to correct a social vice in society. Though Abdullahi and Olaniyi (2011) opined that most coinages are deployed where the user cannot find the suitable words for their communicative

needs, the data suggested that coinages are more humorously and deliberately 'fabricated' to construct a distinct linguistic meaning by Nigerians.

Other Semantic Incongruities

The following expressions have semantic incongruities, where the meanings implied is different from the standard Nigerian English meaning. 'Oshebaddest', 'baddo', 'No time to check time' 'Na wetin go make people beat me I wandey do now'. Though the comparative and superlative forms of 'bad' in standard English is 'worse' and 'worst' respectively, Nigerians tend to use 'badder' and 'baddest' to replace these terms. It is therefore not unusual to see other forms such as 'baddo' which is the nominalized form of 'bad'. Being 'bad' in Nigeria is sometimes ironically used to imply being extremely good in what the person does, being very social and outgoing, etc. Nigerian musicians such as Olamide, Falz and Davido, have been addressed as 'bad', 'baddest' and 'baddo'. The terms, therefore, have a different meaning from the standard dictionary meanings. This implies Nigerians carve out a distinct linguistic niche for themselves, which is a deviation from the semantic rules in standard English.

'No time to check time' and 'Na wetin go make people beat me I wandey do now' are mostly used for humour. They are slangs that are ironically deployed to create humour and make people laugh. 'No time to check time' means the person is in such a hurry that they do not have enough time to check what the time is. Most people that say 'it is what will make people beat me I want to be doing now' do not mean it and are only trying to be funny. The humour, however, is entrenched in Nigerian contextual use, which a non-Nigerian might not be able to infer. This corroborates Maledo and Edobor (2023)'s submission that slangs are used to construct an in-group identity among youths in Nigeria.

In this section, the author should interpret, decode, and discuss the findings by supporting the arguments with recent researchers' and academics' previous studies (avoid direct quotes in this section). You are required to answer your research questions. If the findings are different from your research questions, demonstrate why. Your discussion and interpretation should be linked to previous studies that are found in your literature review section.

7 Pedagogical Implications

The current research has shown that most Nigerian slangs and neologisms are hinged on irony and sarcasm. The study demonstrated the several methods used to achieve the new/specialised meanings of these words through semantic incongruities, the use of puns, ironical questions, Nigerian pidgin English and humour. Nigerians, also seem to prefer the use of irony to sarcasm in their language use. This emphasizes a distinct semantic and pragmatic identity in Nigerian linguistic society.

8 Conclusion

The study's main aim is to analyse the use of irony and sarcasm in Nigerian slangs and lexical innovations. The research sets out to investigate how irony and sarcasm are used to construe a distinct Nigerian meaning and to classify the types of irony/sarcasm used in these slangs. The data reflect the different Nigerian traditional and socio-cultural beliefs embedded in irony and sarcasm; it also shows Nigerians semantically extend meanings through the use of irony and sarcasm to mirror the social practice and beliefs of Nigerians. Through irony and sarcasm, Nigerians appear to be conscious of their public economic image as they use linguistic

resources to show their socio-economic status through the exaggerated display of wealth and affluence. The data also portray the highly emotive tendencies of Nigerians through ironic exclamations. Slangs are sometimes embedded in the deviated use of language such as pidgin; this shows the same expression might have different meanings, depending on the mode through which it is conveyed/delivered.Slangs/neologisms serve as record-keeping devices for socio-political events and youths implicitly encode their messages in a seemingly humorous/sarcastic trend. The data reflects the use of irony is more than sarcasm. These ironical instances are embedded in exaggerations and humour. Though sarcasm is used to indirectly correct social vices in the data, irony seems to be more dominant. This portrays one of the linguistic features of Nigerians, who seem to find and create humour through socio-political events, no matter how 'serious' the situation really is.

The study concludes that sarcasm and irony are tools used by Nigerians to carve out a distinct linguistic meaning for themselves. Puns, ironical questions, semantic incongruities, humour of switched perspectives and exaggerations are some of the tools used in achieving irony and sarcasm in the data. Non-Nigerians, who are not familiar with the contextual use of these Nigerianisms might be excluded from the ongoing discourse. Youths, however, also make use of these Nigerianisms to send a subtle message, correct social vices and indirectly document the socio-political events in the country.

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