

Pragmatic and Socio-Cognitive Reading of Selected Ugo Jesse's Politically-Motivated Online Cartoons in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Recently, cartoons on digital platforms have been one of the invaluable means of expressing diverse opinions on social-political events. Owing to this, the visual presentation and messages from cartoons have been approached from linguistic, multimodal and pragmatic perspectives. Most of these studies have concentrated on cartoons published in the print media, while some have focused on cartoons from the websites of some mainstream news publishing outfits. Scant attention has been given to Ugo Jesse, one of Nigeria's notable digital cartoonists, who addresses Nigeria's various social interactions and experiences via his Instagram page. Therefore, this paper describes the pragmatic features and identifies their socio-cognitive import towards the foregrounding of the dominant themes inherent in the images. With the application of some linguistic tools, twenty purposively selected cartoons from Ugo Jesse's Instagram page were selected and analysed using Mey's pragmatic act and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory. Various generalisable pragmatic features were found. However, the shared situation knowledge may be easily understood only by the Nigerian audience and/or others who are unaware of the implications of these images and dialogues. These cartoons are invaluable examples of how digital platforms can help document a society's present for the future, from which the citizens of that society may be able to infer. Social media cartoons are a potential avenue for information digitalisation capable of aiding readers' proper interpretation of the underlying meanings of similar information on social platforms.

Keywords: Socio-Cognitive Study, Pragmatics, Ugo Jesse's Cartoons, Instagram

1.0 Introduction

Before the advent of social media in Nigeria, print media platforms such as *The Concord*, *The Guardian*, *TELL*, *The Punch*, *Newswatch*, *This Week*, *Fun Times*, *The Champion*, *Prime People*, *Vintage People*, and *Vanguard*, among others, have presented series of political cartoons that contain criticism and reflection of varying social and political issues in Nigeria. Previous research

has shown that with imagery, metaphor, allegory, and other rhetorical strategies, cartoons have functioned as distinctive tools that are valuable in understanding local and national politics in an amusing and thought-provoking manner. A careful observation indicates that recurrent issues in Nigeria, such as security challenges, bad governance, faulty political system, massive loss of lives and properties, corrupt practices, and electoral malpractices, have been engaged via cartoon illustrations on different print and electronic media. With the emergence of technology, the coverage of cartoons on these issues has extended to social media and tele-messaging platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, among others. All these have been attracting scholarly interest from diverse fields of study with varying perspectives on the artist's or creator's presentation style, among others. This study is a digital cum applied linguistic perspective to some of the artistic creations of an Instagram cartoonist, Ugo Jesse.

Ugochwuku Jesse, also known as Ugo Jesse, is a Nigerian cartoonist who gained popularity on some social media networks, especially Instagram and Twitter, beginning in 2016. This cartoonist presents topical issues such as body shaming, sexual harassment, political commentaries, etc. Offiong (2019) observes that Ugo Jesse has, over time, become popular for his illustrations on cancer awareness and different health issues. He adds that Ugo Jesse has also endeared himself to many who draw inspiration from his works. Careful observation reveals that the image-oriented nature of Instagram has allowed Ugo Jesse to upload his cartoons with thematic preoccupation around health, societal and political issues in Nigeria. His political cartoons are often presented with applied allegory, sarcasm and indirect characters. In Ugo Jesse's interview with Offiong (2019), he stated that the goal for creating his political cartoons is not to trend but to send a conscious and subconscious message to the mind of his audience so that they can be politically awakened, among others.

These observations have motivated this study to contribute to the existing literature on political cartoons by attempting a pragmatic and socio-cognitive analysis of selected politically motivated cartoons posted on Ugo Jesse's Instagram page using Mey's pragmatic act theory and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory. These cartoons were selected because they portray different political themes and issues prevalent in Nigeria at different times.

1.1 Nature of political cartoons

As observed by Musa, Atinga and Iowar (2022), Bright (2013), and Sani, Ali and Abdullah (2012), political cartoons, also known as editorial cartoons, belong to the group of opinion cartoons because they express the cartoonist's political views on events and personalities playfully. Bright (2013) observes that political cartoons are “a deliberate distortion or exaggeration of a person's features to satirise well-known figures who are often politicians...to question authority and draw attention to corruption and other social ills in the society”. According to El-Zouka (2018), a political cartoon is a type of cartoon which uses language and/or images to comment on and criticise political figures and events humorously. Genova (2018) opines that political cartoons address newspaper readers (and recently TV and internet viewers). He adds that the recognition of the images of political and public figures in political cartoons requires extensive background knowledge of current events and politicians' comments on the events on the part of the interpreter.

Al-Hindawi and Abdulazeez (2016) observe that cartoons are created to convey messages about ideas and judgments that the cartoonist makes about people, events or institutions. Oluremi and Ajepe (2016) aver that political cartoons place interest and comments on what the cartoonist perceives to be recurrent issues of the time whereby the intent is to encourage readers to adopt a specific point of view and incline them to a certain course of action. To describe the nature of political cartoons, they explicated that political cartoons in some Nigerian daily newspapers were one of the main tools deployed to educate, inform and moderate the misperceptions of the electorates. As observed by them, these cartoons were critical of politicians, political office holders and political parties as various issues were exposed through symbolism, stereotyping, caricatures, visual metaphors, exaggerations, humour, captions, and the cartoonist's perspectives.

Streicher (1967) avers that what in literature is “satire” in pictorial art is “caricature/cartoon”. As he explained, satire usually deals with a demonstration and exposure of human vices or follies to scorn or ridicule humans, while graphic caricatures ridicule pictorially. He adds that in political cartoons, the intent is to ridicule, discredit or expose persons, groups or organisations engaged in political or social scenarios. Tsakona (2009) argues that the cartoon analysis mechanism rests on verbal and non-verbal devices. In another study, DeSousa and Medhurst (1981) argue that political cartoons serve four functions: entertainment, aggression reduction, agenda-setting, and framing. It also documents specific political policy and history. DeSousa and Medhurst (1981) provide

principal themes to understand the nature of political cartoons. They are political commonplaces, literary/cultural allusions, personal character traits and situational themes. As they explained, these four themes cover all the aims and objectives of the cartoonist. As observed by Ariyo (2017), a cartoonist's job is to attack a represented phenomenon through the convention of satire. He adds that political cartoons are indispensable, a visual medium that engages the audience and helps them understand and interpret the country and the world's political, social and economic scene.

Based on the foregoing, existing research on political cartoons such as Sani, Ali and Abdullah (2012); Kulikova and Detinko (2014); Mwetulundila and Kangira (2015); Shaikh, Tariq and Saqlain (2016); Usman and Momoh (2016); Ariyo (2017), Genova (2018); El-Zouka (2018); El-Falaky (2019) and Olajimbite and Jolaoso (2024) have presented insightful researches that focused on the linguistic and visual representation of different political issues in political cartoons. Pragmatic studies on political cartoons are also included in this category. Examples of such studies include Bright (2013), Kondowe, Ngwira and Madula (2014); Al-Hindawi and Abdulazeez (2016); Oluremi and Ajepe (2016); Musa, Atinga and Iowar (2022) and Alyebo and Zayol (2023) among others. A critical observation shows that despite the availability of these insightful research on political cartoons, there are no previous studies on Ugo Jesse's political cartoons. This study, therefore, documents the significance of Ugo Jesse's cartoons within the theoretical standpoint of pragmatic and socio-cognitive theories.

1.2 Aim and objectives

This study aims to document artistic criticism of political actors and activities in Nigeria's social-political realities by carrying out a pragmatic and socio-cognitive investigation of selected cartoons by Ugo Jesse with the specific intention to:

- a. describe the pragmatic features of the select cartoons
- b. identify the surrounding socio-cognitive features
- c. examine the inherent practs/pragmatic acts, and
- d. foreground the dominant thematic preoccupation(s) in the select cartoons.

2.0 Review of related literature

With the aid of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Grammar of Visual Design* and Machin and Mayr's (2012) *Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis* approaches to the analysis of visual communication, El-Zouka (2018) examines the linguistic and visual resources used in political cartoons that represent human rights in three world powers namely the United States, Russia and China. The study shows that these three world powers adopt a double-standard policy regarding the human rights issue; claim to protect and promote human rights, but commit human rights violations with no concern about the international community or respect for human rights principles. The study also reveals that human right is one issue that can play a role in shaping the relationship between the three world powers. Ariyo (2017) in another multimodal study on political cartoons analyses the multimodal features of selected cartoons from *TELL* news magazine. The study discusses the manner these cartoons were deployed and relates their features to the contexts in which they were applied to discover their intended messages. The study concludes that the selected cartoons are deployed to enhance easy understanding and comprehension of the messages on sensitive political issues.

Deploying conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory, Genova (2018) focuses on the interpretation of political cartoons and means of expression such as visual metaphors, visual metonymies as well as metaphors inferred from the image and/or text a cartoonist uses to convey a message. The study reveals that visual and inferential metaphors are viewed as incongruities as a result of the interaction between image, title and/or caption. The study reveals further that political cartoons can have more than one focal (visual) incongruity that enables the introduction of a logical mechanism from the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) to (partially) resolve the incongruity/ies. The study concludes that visual metaphors and metonymies function as contextualisation indexes in the interpretation of the cartoons and that humour is the means to get the cartoonist's message across to the viewer/reader and not an end in itself.

Using insights from Critical Discourse Analysis, Usman and Momoh (2016) analyse the use of satire as a form of imagery to depict some political issues in cartoons featured in the Nigerian national dailies. The study reveals that images of corruption, official responsibility, political failure and brutality/cruelty/suffering are the dominant concerns of the cartoons featured by the selected papers. The study reveals, further, that the corrupt nature of personalities who have links with the

past government is dominant in the image of corruption portrayed, while those in and out of government are subjected to some satiric exposure in respect of official responsibility, failure in politics and brutality/cruelty/suffering. The study of Shaikh, Tariq and Saqlain (2016) is considered relevant to this current study. The study presents a semiotic analysis of political cartoons published during the general election campaign of 2013 in Pakistan. It analyses how cartoons were used as communicative tools on the internet and print media to produce significant meaning and dominant political themes at a crucial period when Pakistan was marred by Taliban attacks and needed a way forward to a new beginning.

Kondowe, Ngwira and Madula (2014) is a pragmatic study relevant to this present study. The study presents the verbal and non-verbal features of Malawi newspaper political cartoons in the manner they employ linguistic features in their portrayal of political leaders. To achieve this, twenty “Point of Order” cartoons that depict President Joyce Banda and her government were selected from *The Nation* newspaper from October 2012 to May 2013 and were analysed using Grice’s Conversational Implicature. Results of the analysis specify that Malawi cartoonists oftentimes do not stick to the conversational maxims by flouting, suspending, and opting out. The study indicates that flouting the maxim of manner is found to be the most preferred way of exploiting the maxims through the use of hedges.

Oluremi and Ajepe (2016) is another study of pragmatics found relevant to the present study. This study examines some political cartoons published in Nigeria before the 2015 general elections. Data for the study comprise fifteen purposively selected political cartoons published in major Nigerian newspapers from November 2014 to February 2015. The selected cartoons were mainly those that featured the two prominent presidential standard-bearers for the 2015 presidential elections: General Muhammadu Buhari and President Goodluck Jonathan; their parties: All Progressive Congress (APC) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP); their antecedent activities as head of state and incumbent president, and generally Nigerian politicians. Using insights from Mey’s 2001 pragmatic act theory, the study reveals the practs of satirising, promoting/demoting, indicting, condemning/sensitising, revealing, and cautioning within Nigeria’s political context. The study concludes that the interaction of the political cartoons and Mey’s theory of pragmatic act results in an understanding of the selected political cartoons, as well as the context of events, beliefs and activities attached to the 2015 elections in Nigeria.

From a pragmatic perspective, Bright (2013) evaluates the verisimilitude of nine selected editorial cartoons from *The Punch* newspaper website by using insights from Grice's Conversational Implicature. The contexts surrounding the selected cartoons are prevalent issues in Nigerian society. The study reveals that there are cases whereby Grice's cooperative principles were observed, flouted, violated, and suspended. It also reveals that the observance of Grice's cooperative principles and the knowledge of the contextual factors surrounding the selected editorial cartoons help in proving their verisimilitude. Al-Hindawi and Abdulazeez (2016) is a study in pragmatics on irony in American political cartoons. Findings from the study reveal that cartoons are pragmatic occurrences by nature, as they communicate far more than what is written or drawn. The study reveals further that irony in political cartoons is overtly graded because it is meant to achieve the purpose of criticising a particular situation.

Recent researchers related to this study are Musa, Atinga and Iowar (2022); Alyebo and Zayol (2023); and Olajimbiti and Jolaoso (2024). Alyebo and Zayol (2023) analyse the different functions of political cartoons about context, cartoon characters, intentions, world knowledge, implicatures, and mutual contextual beliefs. Their study analyses online cartoons through the lenses of Pragma-crafting Theory as a broad and systematic instrument for the explicit and valid pragmatic analysis of texts. The findings of the study reveal that there are latent meanings in cartoons which transcend sentence meanings and sketched images. The findings also reveal that the intentions, attitudes, expectations, the context in which the cartoons are used and the targets cartooned leave definite impressions on the minds of the readers and viewers. Olajimbiti and Jolaoso (2024) is a related study that examines the pragmatic resources inherent in COVID-19-related cartoons. To achieve this, forty COVID-19-related cartoons, circulated on social media, were collected on Twitter and WhatsApp platforms between March and April 2020 as data. Multimodality and presupposition served as theoretical framework and descriptive research design was adopted. The findings of the study reveal five socio-contextual domains, religion, health, economy, politics and governance and family, characterising the social experiences of Nigerians during the pandemic. Through the evocation of situational reality, pragmatic sarcasm, punning, and orientation to government insensitivity, the cartoonists evoke pragmatic functions of informing and warning about social behaviours in the religion, family and health domains; recreating situational realities on socioeconomic impacts in the domain of economy; and satirizing government policies and mocking politicians' insincerity in the domain of politics and governance

on sociopolitical experiences of Nigerians before and during the pandemic. The study concludes cartoons are a strong means of portraying societal realities and people's experiences comically and graphically.

3.0 Theoretical framework

This study derives its theoretical perspectives from Jacob Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theories. Jacob Mey's pragmatic act theory is adopted because the selected cartoons contain many pragmatic features relevant to this present study. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory is also adopted because it is relevant to this present study.

3.1 Mey's pragmatic act theory (PAT)

Jacob Mey's (2001) pragmatic act theory hence, PAT originates in the sociocultural-interactional view on language which emphasises the primacy of socio-cultural and societal factors in meaning construction and comprehension. According to Mey (2001), PAT is a reaction to the critique of speech act theory that concentrates on "speech" to the omission of other phenomena such as writing that also fall into the category of language. As explicated by Mey (2001), the theory of pragmatic acts does not explain human language use by starting from the words uttered by a single, idealised speaker; rather, it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speakers and hearers realise their aims. Mey clarifies that the explanatory movement is from the outside in, rather than from the inside out: "the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said" Mey (2001:221). The implication of this is that instead of starting with what is said and looking for what the words could mean, the situation in which the words fit is invoked to explain what can be (and is being) said. He emphasises that the focus on PAT is not on rules for the use of individual speech acts but on characterising a typical, pragmatic act as it is realised in a given situation.

From the previous explanations of pragmatic act theory, it can be deduced that the emphasis on pragmatics is based on the notion of context. PAT, therefore, implies that a pragmatic act is an instance of adapting oneself to a context, as well as adapting the context to oneself. To Mey, this depends on the understanding that participants have of the situation and on the outcome of the act in a given context. PAT is schematically represented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

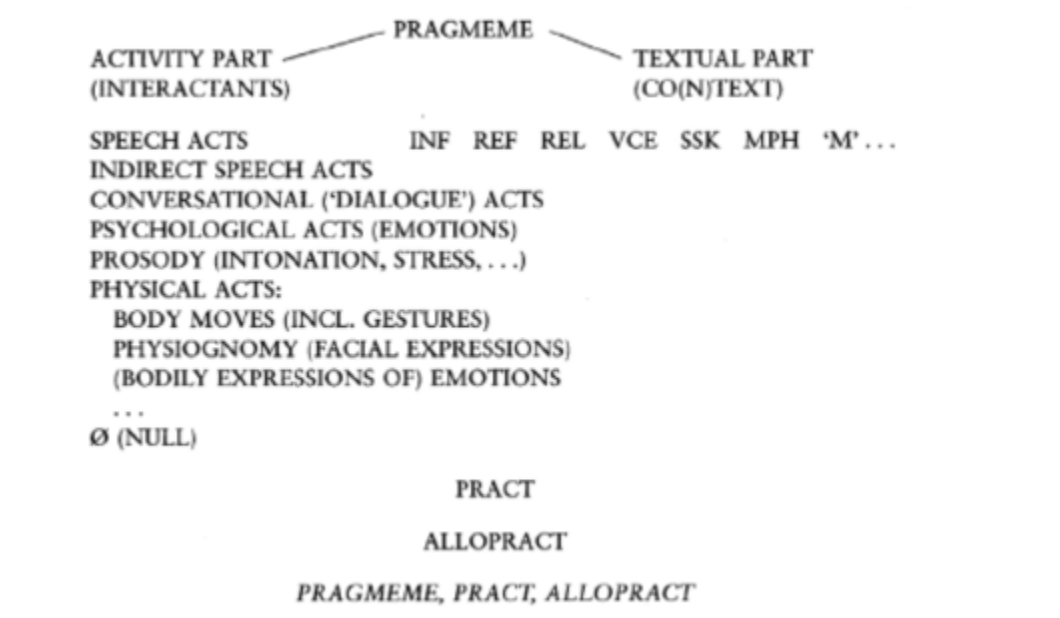


Fig 1: A model of pragmatic acts (Mey 2001: 222)

In Figure 1, the various abbreviations to the right are classified as textual features. They include INF for ‘inference,’ REF for ‘reference,’ REL for ‘relevance,’ VCE for ‘voice,’ SSK for ‘Shared Situation Knowledge,’ MPH for ‘metaphor’ and ‘M’ for ‘metapragmatic joker’ - that is, any element that directs our attention to something happening on the metapragmatic level. The activity part (on the left) covers speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational (‘dialogue’) acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts.

3.2 van Dijk’s socio-cognitive theory

The socio-cognitive theory by van Dijk’s is founded on the aspiration that cognition intersects between society and discourse. As observed by van Dijk (2001), an examination of the issues individuals discuss represents the ideas existing in their minds. In van Dijk’s view, these ideas are psychological and individual beliefs about ethnic actions. He believes that media texts are a rendezvous for a display of cognitive or mental schemata. Van Dijk (1995) argues that cognition or mental models allow for many personal experiences and opinions which also combine with context constraints to influence or reproduce discourse. He describes these as self-identity

descriptions, activity descriptions, goal descriptions, norm and value descriptions, position and relation descriptions, and resource descriptions.

The ideological square is a concept in van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework that embraces the notion of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation". Van Dijk (1998) explains this concept by presenting a four-dimensional classification that characterises the ideological square. These are summarised:

- I. It emphasises optimistic/positive opinions/things about us;
- II. It emphasises undesirable/ negative opinions/things about them;
- III. It de-emphasises undesirable/negative opinions/things about us;
- IV. De-emphasises positive opinions/things about them.

The implication is that through emphasis and mitigation, the aforementioned concepts polarise members of the in-groups and members of the out-groups. Its ideological discourses present the good *self* and the bad *other*, and simultaneously mitigate the bad *self* and the good *other*. The motivations of the speaker/writer inform the above classification as it is in the interests of the speaker or writer to emphasise positive aspects of the in-group and de-emphasise any negative aspects. Likewise, emphasising the negative aspects of the out-group and de-emphasising any positive aspects work in favour of the speaker/writer and his/her group.

4.0 Methodology

Data for this study were collected from Ugo Jesse's verified Instagram account. These cartoons were selected because of their revealing nature and relevance to this study. From over eighty cartoons noticed on the page, twenty cartoons were purposively selected for this study. The selected cartoons were posted between March 2017 and January 2019. They were primarily those that exposed social vices such as corruption, deceitfulness, insecurity, violence, poverty and insensitivity prevailing in the Nigerian landscape. These cartoons were analysed using insights from Jacob Mey's pragmatic act theory and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory. These tools aid the description of the pragmatic and the socio-cognitive features as well as the identification of the inherent practs in the selected artworks.

4.1 Instruments

Since the corpus for the study was collected from an online social platform, internet-enabled personal computers (PC) and mobile telephones were used. A combination of screen-grabbing and “save as” options was used to extract the cartoons. The extracted data was then inserted into a Microsoft Word document and saved for this study.

5.0 Results and Discussions

Cartoons have been and continue to be an integral part of the mainstream societal culture (Pryor, 2004:2). However, cartoons have often been categorised in academic literature as belonging to different resources, ideologies, histories and settings. One of such categorisations is the twentieth century. The twentieth-century drawings are modern in terms of the types of drawing, the platform/material, their messages as well as their canvas of history. The classification of twentieth-century cartoons will, therefore, include illustrative, comic strips, gag strips, animated, and political (Mankoff, 2002).

The data selected for this analysis belongs to the twentieth-century temporal categorisation due to its chosen means of dissemination and target audience which is the digital platform, its messages, and history among others. Though Jesse’s Instagram cartoon collection is more political, it still features the other classes such as comic strips and gag strips. While concentrating on only the trio of comic strips, gag strips and political cartoons in which Jesse's works can be categorised, Pryor (2004) offers some explanation on identifying these types of cartoons. According to her, “comic strips are more often than not found in newspapers and magazines and their purpose is to induce laughter from their readers. Gag strips are described as cartoons which are usually composed of a single picture combined with one to two sentences and can potentially produce laughter. The political cartoons are intended for adults and usually convey a point of view concerning a societal issue current to its time of publication.

Since this study is aimed at documenting the artistic criticisms of political actors and activities in Nigeria’s social-political realities by carrying out a pragmatic and socio-cognitive investigation of Ugo Jesse’s selected cartoons, the set objectives which are pragmatic features and acts, socio-cognitive features, and predominant thematic preoccupation are presented in this section.

5.1 Pragmatic features of the selected cartoons

This section examined the features of pragmatics deployed in the cartoons to foreground the social interactions and experiences being advanced by the cartoonist.

5.2 Satirisation in Ugo Jesse's cartoons

A satire is a figurative way of presenting reality about a person or situation in a rather indirect manner using different but linkable characters, known mannerisms and other linguistic cues. For example, in the excerpt below



Plate 1: February 23, 2018

Various issues such as the abduction of 110 girls from Government Girls Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi, Yobe State on February 19, 2018; the erratic power supply in Nigeria, inability of the government to secure citizens' safety; the non-maintenance of Nigeria's aircrafts by the relevant authorities; and the increased level of corruption prevalent in Nigeria were all subsumed. The practice of satirising was achieved using the caricature of a heroic comic character popularly referred to as Black Panther in a conversation with an unnamed boy who is in another location. The boy, using his personal computer, sends a message to the Black Panther, who is a famous character in an American movie. The Black Panther, being widely accepted as a heroic figure is approached by a boy who is seeking the intervention of the Black Panther to help Nigeria

rescue the abducted Dapchi girls. Afterwards, the cartoonist presents some other prevailing issues in Nigeria via the character of the boy. As a result, the depiction of the boy as a character conforms with one of the ideological concepts in van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework whereby the good self and the bad other are placed side-by-side. In furtherance to this, Ugo Jesse satirises the insincerity of the government towards the rescue and welfare of the Dapchi girls with the utterance *"PLEASE WHEN YOU GET HERE DON'T ASK FOR UPDATE BCOS THEY WILL LIE TO YOU THE SAME WAY THEY LIED THEY RESCUED THE GIRLS INITIALLY"*. He then proceeds to present the erratic power supply being experienced in the country: *"PLEASE COME IN THE MORNING BCOS WE DON'T USE TO HAVE LIGHT IN THE NIGHT"*. In the same vein, the perceived state of Nigeria's aircrafts is inferred with the utterance, *"DON'T ENTER OUR PLANE O, IT WILL THROW YOU INSIDE BUSH"*. Again, the cartoonist de-emphasises the positive opinions about the Nigerian aviation industry using a generalised assumption of badly maintained aircrafts which "throws" the passengers into the "bush".

In advancing the "negative other-presentation", the cartoonist criticises the reported corruption as at the time in the country by referring to the case of an official of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) who claimed that a mysterious snake swallowed the sum of 36 million naira from the Board's vault in her care. In all of these, the cartoonist deploys a pragmatic conversational feature to satirise social, economic and political realities in the country.

5.2.2 Pragmatics of the bad others

In the context of this study, the bad others, a notion in socio-cognitive theory is approached from two perspectives. First, the original (adjusted) message and, second, the presentation of that message by the cartoonist. Consider the example below.

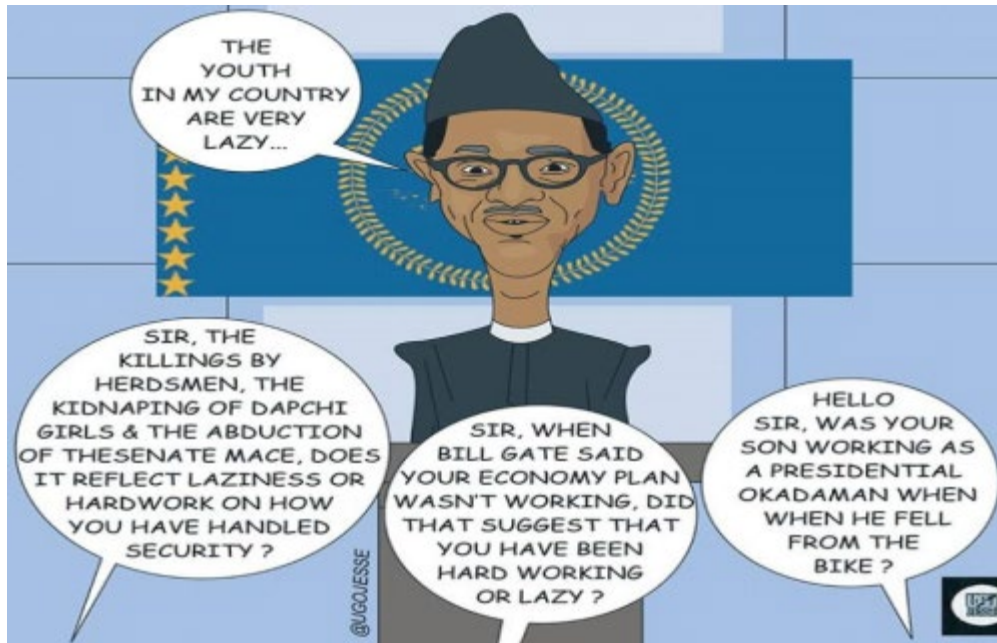


Plate 2: April 19, 2018

In the above, the supposed original message is that of Nigeria’s president who has been presented to have advanced the “bad others” ideology by allegedly calling “the youth” in Nigeria “lazy”. The statement had attracted media irk and many made different deductions from it. As seen in Plate 2, the cartoonist is emphatic that the president made the statement about the youth of the country he leads. He then goes ahead to present the responses of the audience which attacks the original speaker and presents him as the one who is the lazy president. The cartoonist who can be considered the in-group in the socio-cognitive postulation attempts to emphasise the negative aspects of the out-group to which the president belongs. Using the Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) of the cartoon with Instagram’s audience, the cartoon presents a caricature of President Buhari addressing an imaginary press conference. As a form of defence for the in-group which serves as a social-cognitive means of de-emphasising undesirable/negative opinions/things about us, rather than directly attacking the President, the cartoonist referred (REF) to recent occurrences such as the killings by criminal herdsmen in the country, the abduction of the Dapchi girls, the theft of the senate mace and the president’s weak economic plans. The cartoonist seems to be telling the president to address those issues requiring urgent attention instead of labelling Nigerian youths as “lazy”. Also, in a hilarious and rhetorical manner, he made another reference to the accident the President’s son involved in during a power-bike racing on December 26, 2017. With

the contextual features of the Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) and reference (REF), the cartoonist adequately pragmatically satirises the president in plate 2.

5.2.3 Pragmatic foregrounding as discourse reproduction of social realities



Plate 3: January 15, 2019

Cartoonists often use multi-dimensional practices in reproducing discursual issues with their audience. This is seen in plate 3 above. The first part of the cartoon is labelled 2009. It presents the symbol of a masked man carrying two guns and a torn placard with the inscription “*AMNESTY FOR NIGER DELTA RISE OF BOKO HARAM*”, another symbol with the inscriptions “*UNEMPLOYMENT, UNEQUIPPED HOSPITALS, INSECURITY, POVERTY, BAD ROADS, NO LIGHT, FUEL SCARCITY*”. The first part of the cartoon also presents the caricature of a troubled man carrying a placard with the inscription “*ASUU STRIKE*”. The second part of the cartoon is labelled 2019. It presents the caricature of a boy with an amputated leg carrying a torn Nigeria flag dripping with blood, of a shot woman carrying a baby, a masked man slaughtering a defenceless man with a knife in a background with a Biafra flag, a masked terrorist shooting, stray bullets, and the inscriptions “*MAD HUNGER, ASUU STRIKE, RISE OF RITUALISTS, CORRUPTION AND POLICE BRUTALITY*”. The symbols and inscriptions highlighted in the two parts of the cartoon

are relevant (REL). They satirise and negatively label Nigeria as a country with numerous challenges ranging from social to economic and security issues. The inscriptions 2009 and 2019 indicate that the intensity of Nigeria's problems has increased within a space of ten years. All these perform some pragmatic inferences. For example, the inference (INF) drawn from the caricature of the boy carrying a torn Nigeria flag dripping with blood indicates that Nigeria has experienced massive bloodshed within this period. The image reveals further that the massive bloodshed experienced in Nigeria has negatively affected a lot of innocent citizens. Relevance is depicted by the caricature of the woman shot in the chest and simultaneously carrying her baby; that of a man trying to escape from a bullet, a terrorist trying to shoot and another terrorist slaughtering an innocent man. All of these negatively present the pathetic security situation in Nigeria at the time.

5.2.4 Situational contexts in the cartoons



Plate 4: January 19, 2019

Most times, cartoonists try to recreate the contexts of their drawings by presenting instances where their audience can easily relate. As such, most of them establish shared situational knowledge within the arts being displayed. For instance, plate 4 exhumes the Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) surrounding the cartoon by pointing to the failure of President Buhari and Mr Atiku Abubakar (the prominent presidential standard-bearers for the 2019 presidential elections) to

attend the presidential debate held on the 19th of January 2019. These are considered “incompetent”, yet people voted them against others considered as the lightweights in the election which included Professor Kingsley Moghalu of the Youth Progressives Party, Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili of the Allied Congress for Progressive Nigeria Party and Mr Fela Durotoye of the Alliance for New Nigeria Party. Ugo Jesse presents the caricature of a presumably poor man listening to the presidential debate on a transistor radio while lying on a couch. Though the radio is not visible in the picture, through the monologue, *“NO LIGHT, NO FOOD. LISTENING TO THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE ON RADIO, YOU CAN TELL WE HAVE CREDIBLE PEOPLE TO SAVE THIS COUNTRY, BUT MANY OF US WILL STILL GO & VOTE SOMEBODY THAT IS NOT EVEN QUALIFIED TO BE JSS 2 CAPTAIN, THE THING WORRYING SOME OF US IN THIS COUNTRY IS TURNINONINOWN”*, many of the audience can easily identify with the though-flow and share in the feeling of the caricatured speaker.

5.2.5 Mocking as a pragmatic strategy



Plate 5: March 31, 2017

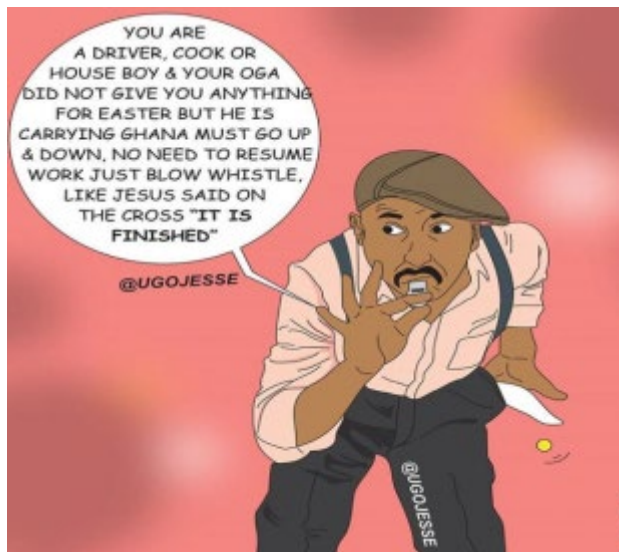


Plate 6: April 17, 2017.

In the pragmatic co-construction of cartoon discourse, various strategies may be deployed to perform certain acts using varying communicative modes. Such can be seen in plates 5 and 6 above. In plate 5, the caricature of an unnamed pressman with a worrisome and inquisitive gesture is seen asking the caricature of President Buhari a question: *“SIR, DO YOU THINK THE YOUTH*

WOULD STILL VOTE FOR CHANGE? SINCE YOU ARE YET TO PAY THE 5K YOU PROMISED MONTHLY”, to which the president responds: *“WALHI, I DON’T KNOW, BUT I AM HEARING SOMETHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA LIKE “KEEP THE CHANGE BRUH”*. In the exchange, the cartoonist tactfully mocks the main actor, the president considering the inability of President Buhari to fulfil his campaign promise of paying a five-thousand-naira stipend to unemployed youths in Nigeria upon his victory at the polls as President in 2015. Hence, this cartoon is used to indict and also mock the President. Through this, the cartoonist foregrounds the inadequacy of the response of the president to the question asked as the president mentions “social media” having earlier declared his lack of awareness of the promise “I don’t know. The use of “bruh” may be interpreted as a camouflaged way of using the register of the youth or/and the social media. By these, the cartoonist presents a president who seems not to be confident nor sufficiently coherent in explaining himself before the press. Thus, the cartoonist pragmatically presents a mockery of the president’s inability to do what he had earlier promised as well as his non-compliance with the happenings around him.

In another example as seen in Plate 6 which was posted on April 17, 2019 and titled “blow it and poverty is finished”, the cartoon which overtly seems to be promoting the government’s effort in combating corruption is pragmatically and covertly performing the mockery of the system. The cartoon, in plate 6, is referring (REF) to Channels Television’s report of April 12, 2017. According to this report, EFCC recovered 43 million Dollars, 23 million Naira and 27,000 Pounds from an apartment located in the Ikoyi area of Lagos state. Channels Television also reported that EFCC announced the recovery of €547,730, £21,090 and N5, 648,500 Naira from a Bureau de Change operator in Balogun Market, Lagos. As reported in the media, the recovery of a huge amount of money in different locations in Nigeria made the Federal Ministry of Finance initiate a whistle-blower policy. According to the Federal Ministry of Finance, the whistle-blower policy is a process whereby information bordering on violation of financial regulations, mismanagement of public funds and assets, financial malpractice or fraud and theft that is believed to be in the interest of the public can be disclosed. In consonance to these, using a shared situational knowledge (SSK), the cartoonist employs a common analogy using the caricature of a man with a whistle in his mouth saying: *“YOU ARE A DRIVER, COOK OR HOUSEBOY AND YOUR OGA DID NOT GIVE YOU ANYTHING FOR EASTER BUT HE IS CARRYING GHANA MUST GO UP & DOWN, NO NEED TO RESUME WORK, JUST BLOW WHISTLE, LIKE JESUS SAID ON THE CROSS, “IT IS*

FINISHED". From this monologue, many pragmatic imports can be deduced. For instance, the words "driver, cook, houseboy" are references to the commoners who are often paid lower than the services they offer. This, in the notion of the socio-cognitive, is good self and bad others. The cartoonist thus offers a way of fighting the bad others by merely "blowing the whistle" which translates to the bad others being "finished". Again, since the policy seems to be poised at enriching individuals who expose the rich and corrupt Nigerians, the infallibility of the bad others is foregrounded

Cartoonist and satirising: a socio-cognitive perspective



Plate 9: February 11, 2018



Plate 10: February 22, 2018

Satire is one major tool used by cartoonists to mimic the society. Ugo Jesse's cartoons sufficiently use this as a socio-cognitive means of hitting back at the "bad others". For example, in Plate 9, the caricatures of a snake and a rat having a conversation are presented. In the ensuing dialogue, the snake says: *"HOW CAN THEY SAY I SWALLOWED 36 MILLION NAIRA; PEOPLE WILL START HUNTING ME TO RETRIEVE MONEY I DID NOT SEE"*, and the rat's response is *"THAT IS HOW THEY SAID I PURSUED THE PRESIDENT FROM HIS OFFICE, YOU WILL SOON HEAR ALANGBA (LIZARD) RAN AWAY WITH VOTES DURING ELECTION"*. In this, though the animals were seen in the dialogues, the cartoonist presents the roles that these animals were mentioned to have played in Nigerian political life. Before this, a government worker had tried to explain away when asked to give an account of a missing amount of money that a snake had in reality carted away the money. Ugo Jesse thus re-presents what is imagined to be the thought of these animals as the animals worry about the roles they are alleged to have played in human affairs. Similarly, another instance is presented in plate 10 which satirises the ruling political party in Nigeria with the inscription *"ANIMAL PALAVER CONGRESS"*. In Plate 10, the caricatured monkey expresses his frustration: *"THIS IS BECOMING TOO MUCH. AFTER ACCUSING RAT & SNAKE, THEY ARE SAYING I STOLE 70 MILLION. TORTOISE WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO? WE NEED YOUR WISDOM"*; to which another actor, this time, the tortoise while trying to leave, responds: *"I DO NOT WANT SOMEONE THAT DOES NOT HAVE SENSE BEFORE TO*

ACCUSE ME OF STEALING THEIR SENSE & SAY THAT'S THE REASON THEY ARE NOT RULING WELL". First, the bad others are well attacked by the dialogues made by the animals. The height of the whole exchange is that the ruling humans are actually "senseless" by involving the animals in their various corrupt enrichment games. The cartoonist provides a basis with his audience as many of them have shared situational knowledge (SSK) surrounding the two cartooned exchanges. Recall that an official of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) had claimed that a mysterious snake allegedly swallowed 36 million Naira from the Board's vault, and that another 70 million Naira handed over to the Northern Senators Forum has been allegedly swallowed by monkeys in the farm of a ranking senator (*Vanguard*, February 21, 2018). The third Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) surrounding Plates 9 and 10 is the revelation made by the Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Media and Publicity, Mr Garba Shehu that the President's office was ravaged by rodents during his medical trip to London (*Daily Post*, August 22, 2017). By the foregoing, the cartoonist uses the two cartoons to satirise the bad others as they lie to cover up their corrupt practices.

Summary

5 Conclusion

Ugo Jesse makes use of the images portrayed in his cartoons to make his message clear to the viewers. This cartoonist utilises the textual part of the pragmeme to buttress his messages. Hence, the observable textual pragmatic features in the collected drawings include reference, relevance, inference, metaphor (through the use of symbols and caricatures), and shared situation knowledge (SSK) based on the comments from the audience. Regarding the pragmemic activity part, this artist utilises some elements of speech acts, indirect speech acts and conversational acts replicated via the labels, speeches, comments, and captions. The aforementioned features and the notion of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation" in the socio-cognitive framework generated the pragmatic acts observed in the selected political cartoons.

From the foregoing discussions, pragmatic features include the practs/pragmatic acts of satirising, satirising/condemning, satirising/sensitising, criticising/sensitising, indicting, promoting, and condemning. Based on different contextual factors situated in Nigeria, these practs commend some of the government's initiatives; and negatively present anomalies such as erratic electricity supply,

the pathetic state of Nigeria's aircrafts, the government's inability to secure its citizens' safety, insecurity, Nigeria's weak economic plans, lack of basic amenities, poverty, alarming corruption cases, unruly behaviour and insincerity of Nigerian leaders. A pragmatic and socio-cognitive interpretation of the selected political cartoons enabled viewers to interpret the underlying meanings of the cartoons as intended by the cartoonist.

In the selected political cartoons used for this study, Ugo Jesse ridicules Nigerian politicians and reveals their deceitful nature. By so doing, he employs the socio-cognitive notion of the good self against the bad others. Through the selected political cartoons, social vices such as corruption, insecurity, poverty and insensitivity prevailing in the Nigerian landscape in general are foregrounded. Hence Ugo Jesse's cartoons can be regarded as an activist cartoon through which he fights the common cause of the people.

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