



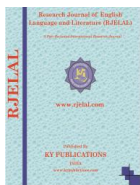
## PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF LAUGHTER, SMILES AND CHUCKLES IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *THE BEATIFICATION OF AREA BOY*

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the pragmatic functions of three vocalisations – laughter, smiles and chuckles in Wole Soyinka's *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1999). The play is chosen for the research because it provides vivid examples of extended discourse or context through which novel functions of laughter and smiles not yet identified in the literature can be explored. Also, the play contains instances of the use of chuckles. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no existing work has documented the functions of chuckles. Hence, the current work, probably, is the first research effort in this direction. The study finds that laughter, smile, and chuckles have different pragmatic functions in specific contexts. These pragmatic functions include: querying an interlocutor's viewpoint, mitigating the effect of information being sent out, reinforcing a subsisting compliment, indicating the implausibility of an idea, and signifying agreement with a fellow communicator. The paper concludes that like many other existing works in this area of study, context serves as the basis for determining the functions of the vocalisations.

**Keywords:** Wole Soyinka, Beatification of Area Boy, functions of vocalisations.

### Introduction

Laughter, smiles and chuckles are non-linguistic, non-paralinguistic acts which human beings make use of to take care of certain situations, express certain meanings and show specific emotions during interaction. Broadly speaking, they may be classified under non-verbal aspect of human communication. O' Hair, Wiemann and Wiemann (1995) cited in Odebunmi (2006) classify laughing and smiling under vocalisations along with others like moaning, sighing and yawning. All human beings, whether sane or insane, male or female, blind or seeing, young or old laugh, smile and chuckle at one time or the other, either advertently or inadvertently. The above assertion is almost

similar to the view of Eduardo (1998:21) that "most human beings laugh – smile, smirk, snicker, giggle, chuckle, cackle, guffaw – almost every single day of their lives". Of the three vocalisations – laughing, smiling and chuckling, laughing and smiling have received more scholarly attention compared with chuckles. Petridis (2015:1) writes that "laughter is produced by the same mechanism as speech but there is an important difference between them, speech is articulated but laughter is not". In essence, human speech sound can be precisely described in terms of place and manner of articulation while laughter may not be easily described using articulatory parameters.

Scholars like O'Donnell – Trujillo and Adams (1983:175) have also written that laughter “is not a linguistic construction but an acoustic one, with no readily apparent semantic or syntactic features”. The view above simply means that although laughter involves some sort of sound from the mouth, it is not a patterned, organised and coordinated sound like the one that forms linguistic items. It is also clear that laughter has no automatic, fixed, conventional, immediate, and generally accepted meaning and it cannot equally be assigned categorial features like noun, verb, adjective etc. compared with linguistic items. This is why Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:135) writes that “traditionally, laughter has been viewed as a non-lexical component in an interaction”. Unlike laughter, smiles, which is another vocalisation written on in this paper is not viewed as acoustic since it does not involve production of sound; it only involves a change in one’s facial configuration which at times may be very brief. Simply put, while smiles is basically a facial expression, chuckles is expressed vocally. Like laughter, smiles and chuckles have no semantic properties. Gile (<https://www.milleluce.com/smile.html/>) has shed light on the three by writing that:

A smile and a laugh... are two obvious contrasting term. A smile is a general term for the facial expression of amusement while a laugh is a term for the combination of both facial and vocal expression. The mouth while smiling is curved. Teeth can be shown or not; jaws are together, and the voice not heard... when laughing, however, the mouth is open a bit more to let air in and out and the voice is then heard. It is impossible to laugh with closed lips. While laughing, the body also makes slight shaking movements. When a person tries to restrain a laugh, it becomes a chuckle. His body also starts to slightly shake and he makes a little bit of a clucking sound.

The above explanation, though very illuminating in revealing the subtle differences among the three, there is, however, in it a drawback which is that a smile is a “facial expression of amusement”. What we mean is that both smiles and laughter may not always be significations of amusement. This position is supported by our own

findings in our data and also by the position of Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:136) that “smiling is no longer considered a subconscious facial expression of emotion triggered by pleasure or happiness. Many studies on facial gestures have found that facial expression can be used to regulate interaction”. In his attempt to maintain a distinction between laughter and smiles, Mikael (2014) opines that “laughter is louder, meaning that it can be heard even at a distance. It can thus have a stronger social function and draw attention to the person that expresses this emotion”.

One interesting thing about the vocalisations above just like others is that nobody teaches a child or an infant when and how to laugh, smile or chuckle; these abilities seem to be genetically predisposed. That laughter and smiles are found in every culture is well documented in the literature. McKay (2015:4) citing Edmondson (1987) writes that “laughter is a human communicative universal”. Ursula, Martin, Nicole (2002:2) declare that “people smile. People smile in public and in private, when they are happy and when they are distressed, during conflict and as a sign of intimacy. People smile often”. They also opine that smiling is a ubiquitous activity for both men and women. (page 4). Furthermore, Petridis (2015:5) says that “laughter... is considered one of the most important universal non-verbal vocalisations. To buttress the point that laughter is universal, Provine and Yvonne (1991) write that “laughter is an ancient mode of prelinguistic vocal communication that is performed in parallel with, but has not been displaced by modern speech and language.

#### **Types of Smile and Laughter**

In the literature, scholars have identified different types of smile and laughter. As a matter of fact, different parameters have been adopted by different scholars to classify different types of smile and laughter. However, it appears as if there is one that encapsulates both laughter and smile which is physiological classification. This is basically explained under Duchenne smile/laughter and non-Duchenne smile/laughter. Keltner and Bonanno (1997:690) briefly explain the above thus:

Research has distinguished between non-Duchenne smiles which involve the zygomatic major muscle action that pulls the lip corners up obliquely, and Duchenne smiles, which also involve the orbicularis oculi muscle action which orbits the eye, pulling the skin from the cheeks and forehead toward the eyeball.

In order to show that Duchenne and non-Duchenne are used for laughter also, the quotation below taken from Petridis (2015:9) will suffice:

Regarding the types of spontaneous laughter, it has been suggested that a distinction should be made between Duchenne, which is stimulus – driven, e.g., response to humour or tickling, and emotionally valenced, and non-Duchenne which is emotionless laughter.

One significant difference between the two as identified in the literature is that the Duchenne smile/laughter is a genuine or true smile/laughter while non-Duchenne smile/laughter is a fake one. Mikael (2014) clarifies the above thus:

The true or congruent smile is also called Duchenne smile and it is produced by the zygomatic major pulling the corners of the mouth towards the ears and makes the orbicularis oculi lift up the cheek-lift and create wrinkles around the corner of the eye (emphasis ours).

This means that the underlined is a necessary condition for detecting true or Duchenne smile or laughter. Duchenne smile/laughter is a response to positive and pleasant emotion and feelings.

The above classification of laughter/smile is, perhaps, the most notable one in the literature on smile and laughter. Apart from the above, Warner-Garcia (2014) has also identified what he calls coping laughter – a type of laughter that is produced for the purpose of coping with face-threatening aspects during disagreement. Based on functions, Ekman & Friesen (1982) have identified three types of smiles – a felt smile, a false smile and a miserable smile.

### **3 . Functions of Smiles and Laughter**

Scholars have identified different functions of smiles and laughter in the literature which are briefly summarised below.

Keltner and Bonnano (1997:688), using insight from previous scholars' works like Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson (1992), Provine, (1992), Weisfeld (1993) Vinston (1989), Martin (1989) have written that laughter promotes social relations by producing pleasure in others through simple contagious processes and by rewarding others' actions, thus encouraging ongoing social activity; laughter increases the cohesiveness of groups and the successes with which romantic couples solve personal conflicts; laughter promotes more intimate relationship and in the case of men reduce loneliness; laughter and humour reduce the negative effects of stress on wellbeing; and laughter and humour improve psychological functioning during distress. Ursula et al. (2002) write that smile is a marker of happiness and that people who smile are most often perceived as happy. They also make use of insight from previous works like Deutsch et al. (1987); Hess, Blairy & Kleck (1997), Otta et al. (1996); Ekman, Friesen & Ancoli (1980); Ekman, Davidson & Friesen (1990) to backup the above assertion. However, they cite other works like Fridlund (1991, 1994) which reject the above view. Apart from the above, Ursula et al. (2002) opine that "humans also use smile as signs of appeasement. This function is hinged on the suggestion that "women smile more because they have less power and hence signal submissiveness by smiling". The scholars above only identify two functions of smiles because they write that "In sum, the two most prominent functions of smiles are as a sign of happiness and as an appeasement/dominant display. Mikael (2014) citing previous scholars' works like Feldman & Tylar (2006); Frank and Ekman (1993); Krant and Johnston (1979) believes that smiles perform two functions. He writes that "It has been suggested that smiles can both be (i) an expression of happiness and (ii) an expression of friendliness or social compliance. Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:150) identifies three functions of smile which are: "smile is used to reject humor/teasing, to mark non-verbal sarcasm, or to show contempt". Petridis (2015:4) identifies three

major functions of laughter which are: laughter is used to fill pauses and regulate the flow of conversation; laughter is beneficial to the person health-wise. Finally, laughter is used to promote social interaction. Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:142) in his work says that: laughter is used to show appreciation of humour; laughter is used for inviting more laughter; and laughter is used for showing disagreement. Wood, Martin Niedenthal (2017) remark that “smiles accomplish three tasks which are fundamental to human social living: rewarding behaviour, establishing and managing affiliative bonds, and negotiating status”. Apart from the above, using insight from Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1971) and Provine & Yvonne (1991), Wood et al, (2017) write that “evidence suggests that laughter can also signal aggressive intentions. Laughing at someone and their inferiority could be the ultimate signal of the laugher’s superior status, signaling the laugher is so far above the target in status that they do not need to engage in direct conflict to prove it”.

### **The Current Study**

The current work is necessitated by perceived lapses in the existing studies on the functions of laughter, smiles and chuckles. First, to the best of our knowledge, there are no current works on the functions of chuckles which is also an important vocalisation and the fact cannot be disputed that people chuckle during interaction. Another perceived drawback in the existing studies is their methods of data collection which have been limited to audiotapes, questionnaire, DV cameras, video-recorded data and laboratory testing. Some of these methods of data collection are meant to investigate acoustic features of smile and the configuration of the face during interaction for the purpose of determining the different functions of smiles and laughter, and most especially for the purpose of distinguishing between Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles. In our own view, the above-mentioned methods of data collection can only reflect limited functions of smiles and laughter in that they only capture the immediate context of interaction. In other words, the above methods of data collection cannot capture past interactions of interlocutors or subjects involved in the research. In essence, the existing works on smiles and laughter

have not been able to identify other important functions of the vocalisations under study because they are not based on extended discourse or context (a discourse or context that is based on a long-term interaction between characters) from which other important functions of laughter smiles and chuckles can be determined. Also, extended discourse or context will provide a sound knowledge of past interactions between interactants which will play a significant role in determining the functions of their immediate laughter, smiles and chuckles.

Sequel to the above, the researchers wish to investigate functions of laughter, smiles and chuckles in Wole Soyinka’s play titled *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1999) which provides an example of an extended discourse or context from which novel functions of the vocalisations under study can be determined. The play is selected because it contains many instances of laughter and smiles of which some perform different functions apart from the ones already identified in the literature. As already pointed out earlier, there is no existing work on the functions of chuckles in the literature. Probably, the current work is going to be the first research effort in this direction. The fact that Wole Soyinka (a Nigerian Nobel Laureate) uses the above vocalisations copiously in his work signifies two things: first, that the vocalizations are universal; second, the vocalisations are meant to serve some specific purposes or functions in their context of occurrence in the play.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data is carried out by identifying the specific functions of the vocalisations under study wherever they occur in the text for analysis. After this, relevant excerpts are provided to illustrate them. This is followed by a short explanation of the context of interaction.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

The analysis makes use of insight from the concept of context for interpreting the functions of the vocalisations in the text under study. This simply means that it is the context that surrounds the uttering of the vocalisations that dictates their functions. Simply put, laughter, smiles and chuckles

are vocalizations that are capable of being interpreted variously depending on the context of face-to-face interaction. Many writers on the vocalisations above have touched on the importance of context in the determination of their functions. Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:142) writes that “As laughter and smiling are no longer considered simply as subconscious responses to stimuli or as expressions of pleasure or happiness, their meanings should be determined at the interactional level. More specifically, the meaning of a speech participant’s laughter or smiling is determined by interaction”. The inference from the above is that the context in which participants operate informs how laughter, ditto, other vocalisations should be interpreted.

In the same vein, Mickay (2015:5) citing Glenn (2003) and Holt (2013) opines that “Modern-day conceptualisations treat laughter as a behaviour actively intended to communicate how a laugher would like his/her words to be taken by co-participants. These understandings draw on the fact that laughter heard out of context is only laughter”. The significant fact from the above quotation is that the words or comments that follow a participant’s laughter, ditto, smiles or chuckles determine how the laughter, smiles or chuckles would be interpreted or the functions of the vocalisations. Simply put, linguistic context, to a reasonable degree, determines the functions of the vocalisations under study. Glenn & Holt (2013) are equally of the opinion that since feelings and desires are not visible to researchers, it is the context of laughter during conversation that should be investigated to determine their meanings and functions. Also, Keltner and Bonanno (1997:658) citing Provine & Fischer (1989) declare that “laughter has been found to occur in social context over 95% of the time”. From this quotation, we can deduce that if laughter occurs in social contexts, it necessarily follows that different contexts will determine different communicative values or functions of laughter and by extension smiles and chuckles. It is important to note that since context is involved in determining the various functions of the vocalisations in different social contexts, it is only appropriate that the functions will be pragmatic and interpersonal in nature.

## DATA ANALYSIS

This section covers the different functions of the vocalisations under study. Each of the functions highlighted is backed up by the context of its occurrence in order to validate the point. It is important to note that the data ( dialogue) are written exactly as they appear in the primary text, that is, with reference to language use.

### Functions of Laughter in the Data

#### I Laughter to indicate that One does not Really Mean what One Says

This means that what the current speaker says to his/her interlocutor is not meant to be taken seriously. In other words, the comment that follows the laughter should be taken lightly.

The excerpt below illustrates the point

TRADER: You welcome, *Oga*

SANDA: Area Two – one!

TRADER: Na your hand we day

SANDA: (*sees, the SHOP WORKER*) Hey, you’re early.

TRADER: (*laughing*) In bobo trow am commot for house. Na here she sleeps all night. E keep judge warm for night.

SHOP WORKER: God punish your head! (page 12)

In the above, when SANDA remarks to the SHOP WORKER who is a female character that she is early to her place of work, TRADER laughingly says that the SHOP WORKER is around so early because her husband has thrown her out of the house and that she passes the night with another character called Judge who is an insane person. It is this derogatory remark that makes SHOP WORKER to answer TRADER that “God punish your head!” The point here is that the laughter (puts in italics above) which is immediately before the comment is a way of informing or telling her listeners that the comment that follows is a mere joke. This function of laughter has not been probably identified in the literature.

**II. Laughter to Indicate a Humorous Situation**

Sometimes, when a conversation is going on, interactants may say, do, or witness something which may appear humorous. More often than not, the characters respond to such a humorous event through laughter. Consider the excerpt below:

CYCLIST: My friend, make we forget better time. No be that time de Minister of Finance inself boast for budget speech say, any increment wey no dey, we go increment am?

TRADER: Any allowance wey no dey, we go allow (Both burst into laughter)

BARBER: (from across) No forget the other one – any incentive wey no dey for worker, we go incent! (They roar with laughter). (page 27-28).

The source of humour of which its physical manifestation is laughter in the excerpt above is derived from inappropriate lexical choice and unacceptable syntactic patterning by the characters involved. The linguistic choice and patterning (underlined above) is for the purpose of deriding the Federal Military Government of Nigeria at that point in time which embarked on extravagant spending (page 27-28). In essence, when something is humorous during face-to-face interaction, people laugh. This function of laughter is unarguably the most recognized in the literature.

**III. Laughter to Show that One’s Interlocutor’s Position or Viewpoint does not Make Much Sense or is Absurd**

Laughter may have derogatory meanings during interaction. When two people are interacting and one of them says something which the other person considers totally unexpected (negatively) based on the level of the speaker’s education and or level of exposure or age, the listener may laugh to show his/her disappointment before making comments or before making verbal response. The excerpt below illustrates the point (pg. 47-48).

SANDA: (sadly). I can see your mind has not kept pace with the rest of you – that’s a great pity.

MISEYI: (heatedly) And your mind has stood still, Sanda! Still, still, stagnant. You are still the way you talked. The eternal student at heart people grow. You... you... Christ it makes one weep inside to look at you! Did you abandon your degree programme, one year to graduation – for this? A *megadi* uniform for what should have been...

SANDA: ... an academic gown? (laughs). Now who is out of touch with change? Me or you? Do you know how many hundreds of PhDs are roaming the streets, jobless? Me, I have a full-time job. And even compared to those with jobs – my take-home pay is twice theirs any week. And when I make up my mind and decide to earn good tips, I can take home six times that pay.

MISEYI: And you are proud of that? You wear the *Megadi* uniform, hold the door for people...

SANDA: It’s a sliding door, haven’t you noticed? Automatic. It opens by itself. (pg. 47-48).

The full context of the above interaction is that two characters who are classmates and friends and who have lost contact from their university days suddenly meet in a plaza in Lagos. They are SANDA (a university dropout who is now a security personnel in charge of the Plaza) and MISEYI (a female graduate). MISEYI finds it totally objectionable and disappointing that SANDA should descend so low to the extent of taking up the job of a security. In the above encounter, SANDA’s laughter is a way of chiding MISEYI and also a way of expressing his disappointment with her that she fails to take note of the reality in the country before condemning him for taking up his present job. Simply put, the laughter is a way of showing that he has a poor opinion of MISEYI in that particular context of interaction and that her having no regard for his present occupation does not show much sense on the part of MISEYI. This function of laughter, too, seems not to have been identified in the literature.

**IV. Laughter to Mitigate the Effect of the Information One Wants to Give to One's Listener/Interlocutor**

During face-to-face interaction, the current speaker may request certain information from the listener. However, sometimes, the listener may think that his/her response to the request may not make his/her interactant to be happy as such, hence, the need to preface the response with laughter in order to mitigate its effect on the listener. The excerpt below clarifies the point.

SANDA: Oh, it's not my business. I just never thought... there are three music bands in attendance, right? Good God.

MISEYI: What's the matter?

SANDA: Talking of bands suddenly reminded me. Do you still play the xylophone?

MISEYI: (*laughing*) Hardly ever, not since I left college. And you? How is the bass guitar?

SANDA: Off and on, off and on. I still jam with the odd group after work. (page 57).

From the interaction above and specifically judging from the way SANDA frames his question, it is evident that MISEYI is good at playing the xylophone in their university days. Miseyi, realizing that her answer may sound very disappointing to SANDA, prefaces her negative response with laughter. In essence, laughter at the beginning of MISEYI's response has the function of mitigating the effect of her response on SANDA.

**V. Laughter to Indicate that a Piece of Information given by One's Interlocutor is Strange, Baffling, Unexpected and Doubtful.**

Sometimes, one's interlocutor may give a piece of information which to the listener is against logic and reason, hence, strange and baffling with the result that the listener may laugh to indicate his/her surprise and incredulity. The excerpt below from our data sheds light on the point.

ADC: Permission to make report, sir.

Military Officer: I'm waiting

ADC: I have to report that the prisoner has escaped.

Military Officer: Escaped? Didn't I order you to make him unconscious?

ADC: He was unconscious, sir.

Military Officer: Then how did he escape?

ADC: Sorry, sir, I think I put it rather badly. He didn't actually escape, sir. He was rescued.

Military Officer: Rescued (*mirthless laughter*) And by whom, may I ask? His pot-bellied colleagues on the bench? Or the Nigerian Bar Association? Yes, just who effected this rescue against a fifty-strong detachment from the crack regiment of the Nigerian army. Rescued in the presence of a fifty-strong military presence? That's nearly company strength, officer (page 58).

The above stated function or meaning of laughter is clear from the excerpt above in that nobody will really believe it immediately that one person can escape or be rescued with all the military personnel detailed to prevent his escape or rescue. Simply put, laughter, in the above context, does not reflect the character's emotional state of happiness, but rather a signification of the character's incredulity based on the negative information given by the last speaker.

**Functions of Smiles in the Data**

**I. Smile is Used to Reinforce Compliment Made by the Current Speaker**

This simply means that smile is very instrumental in reinforcing compliments. That is, more often than not, when somebody pays compliment to another person, it is only appropriate to smile in the process of rendering the compliment in order to make it sound sincere and appropriate to the speaker's countenance. In other words, laughter, in this case may not be so appropriate. Consider the excerpt below

MAMA PUT. Oh you! You make fun of everything. All right girl, off you go. Here, don't forget the money for your school lunch. And make sure you return here directly after school. Tell your teacher I don't want you on any after school assignment. Not this week anyway.

GIRL. All right, Mother. Bye-bye. Mr. Sanda  
(*she runs off*)

SANDA. (*shakes his head, smiling*) You really  
are some kind of Mother courage you  
know; Even right down to the  
superstitious bit.

MAMA PUT. There are dreams and dreams. This  
one... (page 20).

In the excerpt above, GIRL is a daughter to  
MAMA PUT and she is really protective of her  
daughter in the play. To the best of her ability,  
MAMA PUT takes care of the girl. In fact, when  
SANDA sees the way in which MAMA PUT is talking  
to GIRL such as reminding her of her lunch money,  
asking her to return home directly after school,  
telling her to inform her teacher that she cannot  
wait for any after school assignment through-out  
that week (all because of a dream), he is forced to  
pay a compliment to her that she is a “mother  
courage” and the only way in which the compliment  
can look sincere is for him to smile when uttering it.

**II Smile to Indicate Recognition of  
Somebody One has Lost Contact with.**

For two people who have lost contact for a  
long time and they suddenly run across each other  
in an unexpected place, one important physiological  
signifier and marker of recognition is a smile from  
one of them or the two of them at the same time as  
the case may be. The stage direction below and the  
conversations that follow shed light on the point.

*Exit TWO – FOUR, SANDA picks up a journal,  
makes some notes inside, and ticks off a column with  
a flourish. He resumes his reading. Enter MISEYI,  
accompanied by her housemaid, heading for the  
store entrance. SANDA does not look up. Instead, he  
focuses on the high heels, then slowly raises his gaze  
as their owner climbs the steps so that his eyes  
become level with her head as she reaches the  
entrance, by which time her back is turned towards  
him. Suddenly, he freezes. At the same moment, the  
woman stops, then turns round. Their eyes met.*

SANDA. (*a slow smile breaks over his face*). I  
was sure there was no duplicating that  
walk, even going up the steps, or the

carriage side-view. Then of course the  
head profile, especially where the  
neck bridges it with the shoulder.

MISEYI. And I thought there was also no  
mistaking the habit of the head when  
hunched over a book or anything in  
print. But then I grew doubtful, seeing  
that it was hidden under a ludicrous  
storefront security cap-Sanda! What  
on earth are you doing in that outfit?

SANDA. What else? Earning a living of course.  
(page 46).

In the above, the meaning as well as the  
function of SANDA’s smile is to show recognition of  
MISEYI – his classmates in the university even  
though they have lost contact as evident in the  
excerpt above. It is not only recognition that the  
smile indicates, but also warmth and cordiality and  
that the relationship they once shared is still intact.  
As a matter of fact, they got married at the end of  
the play. As expected, MISEYI does not smile back at  
SANDA simply because she cannot immediately  
imagine or picture SANDA in security uniform.

**III. Smile to show Contempt or Sarcasm for a  
Supposedly + Higher Interactant in a  
Communicative Encounter who Exhibits  
Lack of Intelligence.**

Let us consider the excerpt below for illustration.

MILITARY OFFICER: You had better believe it.

SANDA: But surely, officer, not in  
judicial robes.

MILITARY OFFICER: He was in his robes and a  
wig, I tell you...

SANDA: Are you sure he was not a  
vagrant? One of those.. er...  
touched in the head?  
Maybe even one of those  
people displaced from  
Maroko.

MILITARY OFFICER: That would only make the  
matter worse for him  
(*Almost screaming*). He  
TOUCHED my uniform. Can



you imagine one of those Maroko vermin desecrating my uniform? For his own sake, I hope he is a genuine judge.

SANDA.

*(smiling)* Well, I hope so too, officer. Imagine, that would really be an infradig. A common tramp. Maybe even a lunatic escaped from some institution.

MILITARY OFFICER:

*(taken with sudden recollection)* Wait... a ... minute. He ... now that I think of it... his manner... I mean, what was that gibberish running from his mouth? Something about prerogative of mercy but, no, not in any way that made sense. Good God! You mean he could have been one of those street lunatics? He was not wearing any shoes and his er-robos, yes that did look rather tatty. (page 79).

In the play, a MILITARY OFFICER detailed to carry out the evacuation of the Maroko people gets angry because a “judge” challenges him and touches his uniform upon which he feels slighted and insulted. However, what he does not know is that the “judge” is insane. It is only SANDA, his interlocutor, that is privy to the fact that the so-called “judge” is a lunatic. Hence, at a point when it is absolutely clear to SANDA that the MILITARY OFFICER does not really know that the “Judge” is insane despite some tell tale signs (a “Judge” without shoes, a “Judge” who puts on a tatty uniform, a “Judge” that utters gibberish etc.) he (SANDA) starts smiling – a contemptuous and sarcastic smile while at the same time giving some hints regarding the sanity of the Judge which eventually prompts the MILITARY OFFICER to recollect some things about his earlier encounter with the “Judge”. In essence, the smile of SANDA is

the smile of somebody who possesses knowledge of something which a supposedly more powerful person should have but which unfortunately he or she does not have. We can also say that it is a sarcastic smile or a smile to show his contempt for a MILITARY OFFICER who cannot distinguish a lunatic from a sane person despite obvious signs.

#### Functions of Chuckle in the Data

##### I Chuckles to Indicate the Impossibility of an Idea which a Third Party might be Entertaining

In conversation, the above happens when the current speaker is not favourably disposed to what he/she thinks the interlocutor or the third party might do or say. In other words, the current speaker is already envisaging that his/her interactant or third might be toying with certain idea that he/she (the current speaker) may not agree with. In this situation, the current speaker may chuckle before rendering the idea which he/she thinks the interlocutor or third party might be entertaining. Consider the excerpt below

SANDA. ...Our banqueting hall is booked for tonight plus the entire courtyard of the plaza. Big wedding ceremony... Never happened before. The Military Governor signed the permit.

MINSTREL. Thank you, sir. I shall ensure my presence here in the evening.

SANDA. Don't even wait till then. Stay around the neighbourhood today. The relations will be coming and going all day to oversee the arrangement. They are bound to be in a generous mood.

MINSTREL. Mama Put, I can already hear the rustling of fat naira notes. My voice needs lubricating so bring that other stuff you keep for special customers. Give me one shot with the change.

MAMA PUT. See what you've done? You've turned the poor beggar's head and he has not even earned the money he's spending.

SANDA. He'll earn it. There 'll be plenty of bread to go round today. Even the

prisoners won't be let out. A batch of them are already detailed to clean up the neighbourhood. They should get here in the afternoon. (*chuckles*) I suppose they'll expect me to give them an advance on their expectation. (page 16).

In the above, SANDA, a major character in the play, informs other characters around of an upcoming wedding ceremony and even assures them that relations of the wedding parties will be generous in term of giving out money to people around. It is on the basis of this information that MINSTREL requests MAMA PUT to sell some things for him. The reaction of MAMA PUT to MINSTREL's anticipatory act is seen in the excerpt as well as SANDA's assurance in his last turn above that MINSTREL will not be disappointed. Also, forming part of SANDA's last turn above is the information he gives that some prisoners will be coming around to clear the surroundings of the wedding arena. What is of interest to us here is the chuckles and the comment after it. In the above, SANDA chuckles because he thinks that the prisoners might be entertaining the impossible idea that he will supply them their usual demand first without giving him advanced payment until after they have been paid by the wedding parties for the job done – cleaning of the surroundings of the wedding place. In the play, we learn later that SANDA probably supplies “weed” to the prisoners whenever they come to town to work. So SANDA's “chuckles” before making the comment that follows is a way of signaling that he will not subscribe to the idea if and when it is mooted. The expression: “I suppose they'll expect...” confirms the function of “chuckles” identified above.

## II Chuckles to Indicate that One is Pleased with Oneself for Knowing a Secret which the Other Person Thinks nobody Knows

Sanda in the play uses his security outfit as a smokescreen to organise some miscreants to extort money from unsuspecting members of the public who bring their vehicles to the area. Any vehicle owner who does not want his/her vehicle tampered with or who does not want any valuable materials removed from the vehicle usually pays certain

amount of money to look after the vehicle with the result that any car owner who refuses to “cooperate” may have some items missing from the car; incidentally, the police are totally helpless. At the end of the day, the victims are forced to report to SANDA who will promise to use his influence to get the missing items back after they might have paid some amount of money. There is, however, a case in our data where somebody intentionally dents the body of his car and also paints it in an unattractive colour so that it will not attract the attention of the miscreants. This act, really, does not deceive SANDA, the head of the security outfit who manages to catch a glimpse of the inside of the car with the result that he plans to deal with the owner of the vehicle. The excerpt below illustrates the point.

SANDA. ...Wait! Warn TWO-FOUR he shouldn't be fooled by the car's ancient appearance – it's brand new inside. Tell him to tackle the boot – that's where he keeps his briefcase. If it's not there, take the radio and the seat cover – it's all high class stuff – Go!

*Boyko runs off. SANDA sighs, shakes his head dolefully. He speaks as if to no one in particular.*

*If there's one thing I hate, it's disloyalty. People should be loyal. We used to look after that man, never any complaint. If he wished he could leave all the doors of his car open and there'd be nothing missing on his return. Heaven knows what gets into all of them these days. All kinds of duplicity from those who should set an example. Why dent the sides of a custom-built Toyota, just to make it look like a botched up-panel beater job. And then the paint! Looks more like surface primer blended with rust. But just you take a look inside – drinks cabinet, a dainty little refrigerator – very cute – I wouldn't mind something like that myself... No, the interior of that car is something else – polished oak panelling on the doors, electronic dashboard, rugs so deep your feet don't notice the potholes. You'd never suspect any of that. You'll walk past that beat-up Toyota, wondering why such junk should be licensed to ply the motor road. But we got the inside picture, all right (*chuckles*) (page 23).*

In the excerpt above, precisely in the stage direction typed in italics, SANDA is addressing one of his errand boys called BOYKO to go and inform TWO-FOUR (a code name for another miscreant) of what to do to the car being described above. At the end of the long excerpt above, SANDA chuckles to congratulate himself on the fact that he is not deceived by the “wisdom” of the car owner. In other words, he chuckles to indicate that he knows more than what the owner of the car thinks he knows about it which gives him the advantage to steal some things from the car or strip the car of some things.

### III. Chuckles to Indicate Agreement with One’s Interlocutor

This is what we would describe as solidarity function of chuckles. This is a situation where the last speaker has said something and the current speaker wishes to show that he/she agrees with the last speaker. The excerpt below supports the point above.

TRADER: Na waya for me today (*jumps on it and rides, barely able to balance*) common bicycle. Inside this very Lagos of oil-boom and daily millionaire. I tink say everyone done smash in bicycle or sell am for scrap iron.

CYCLIST: (*trying on the ties*) You wait small. As our people say, na cudgel go teach crazeman sense; na hunger go reform labourer picken wey dream say in papa be millionaire. When the time come, na *Omolanke*, common push-cart, na in even senior service go take to work. Na *Omolanke* go full express way inself.

TRADER: (*chuckling as he wobbles from side to side*) True words, my brother. Before before, for early morning, na bicycle dey jam pack Carter Bridge as people dey ride go begin work or return go home... Dem oil boom come. Government dash everybody salary increase, salary advance, salary arrears, motor car advance, motor car incentive...

In the above, CYCLIST brings his bicycle which has become a very rare object in Lagos to where TRADER is selling ties whereupon he (TRADER) wishes to ride it and the conversation above rendered in pidgin English ensues. The essence of CYCLIST’s comments is to show that bicycle is still going to be a valuable means of transportation in Lagos. TRADER quickly chuckles in solidarity with the CYCLIST’s position and even added useful comments to support him since he (CYCLIST) has just obliged him by allowing him to ride the bicycle. In essence, the initial chuckles of TRADER, before making his response to the CYCLIST’s assertion is to show support or solidarity with the CYCLIST, if for no other reason, but at least for allowing him to ride the bicycle.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This paper sets out to investigate the functions of laughter, smiles and chuckles in an extended discourse or context. This method allows long term interaction for the purpose of determining other novel functions of the vocalisations under study compared with the existing studies where participants or interactants only interact for a short term with the result that only limited functions of laughter, smiles and chuckles are identified. Using extended discourse to discover other functions of laughter is in line with the view of Vettin and Todt (2004) that laughter is more common in conversation compared with what had been identified in self-reported studies. The current paper identifies five functions of laughter. Of these, it appears as if it is only one that has been identified in the literature which is that laughter is a physiological reaction to a humorous situation. In the words of McKay (2015:11) “people laugh when they find something funny so as to indicate both that they understand the playfulness of the laughable and to welcome others to play with them”.

However, the fact that there are other functions of laughter identified in the current work confirms the position of Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:136) that “treating laughter as only a response to humorous events / remarks, however, is questionable and improper, as laughter conveys different socio-pragmatic meanings”. Another

function of laughter identified in the paper – laughter to indicate that one does not really mean what one says – signifies that what may appear as a hurtful comment but accompanied by laughter in certain contexts is intended as a joke, hence, no offence meant by the speaker and none is taken by the listener. In other words, laughter repairs what could have resulted to a strained relationship owing to the current speaker's comments/remarks or acts. In essence, laughter reduces tension in social interaction.

The third function of laughter in our paper – laughter to show that one's interactant's position or opinion does not show much sense or is absurd means that laughter can be sarcastic in some contexts. In other words, this function of laughter is a polite way of avoiding verbal sarcasm on one's interlocutor. The current work, perhaps, is the first to identify the function of laughter in this direction. The fourth function of laughter identified in our work which is that laughter is used to mitigate the effect of the information one wants to give to one's interactant is a significant one. It is a way of reducing the psychological or emotional disturbance which the (negative) information might cause the interlocutor. Perhaps, this is why Owren and Bachorowski (2001) cited in Petridis (2015) write that "laughter evolved in order to facilitate the formation and maintenance of positive and cooperative relationships in social groups". However, in our own opinion, this function of laughter depends on the context of interaction, the nature of the ongoing interaction, the power relation between the two interlocutors and other variables that may crop up during social interaction.

Laughter to indicate that a piece of information given by one's interlocutor is strange, baffling, unexpected and doubtful is the last function of laughter identified in the current work. This shows that laughter, sometimes, does not represent emotional state of happiness. In this situation, the current speaker who laughs is not happy with his/her interlocutor's actions or comments but he/she laughs. This is one of the ways by which people manage emotion as identified by Mikael (2014). According to the scholar, people can manage emotion through masking "an experienced emotion

by expressing a different emotion. You feel sad but you express happiness..." In our data, the MILITARY OFFICER is not happy with the ADC, but he masks this by laughing. However, the comments that follow his laughter reveal his true feelings about the situation.

In the aspect of smiles, the current paper identifies three functions of smile of which two, perhaps, have not been identified in the literature. The two are: smile to indicate recognition of somebody one has lost contact with; and smiles used to reinforce compliment made by the current speaker. These additional two functions concretise the assertion in the literature that smiles promote interpersonal relationship. In this sense, smiles can be equated to a kind of "physiological language" that performs phatic communication function. The third function of smiles identified in this work is that smile is used to show contempt or sarcasm for an interactant especially a + Higher One in a communicative encounter who exhibits lack of intelligence or acts in a way that demeans his/her status. This function of smiles has been identified by Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:155) which he termed "smiling used for making non-verbal sarcasm. On this, the scholar writes that:

While laughter may signal that something is funny, people sometimes attempt to suppress laughter due to social norms. For example, laughing at another one's lack of intelligence is regarded as ethically wrong in many cultures and therefore speech participants might attempt to repress the urge to laugh so as to appear polite. Repressing such a feeling, however, might consequently result in a specific smile. When a speaker says something funny that is, however, perceived by the listener to be inappropriate, such a smile can be observed. This smile is used for marking non-verbal sarcasm.

The above function of smiles confirms the assertion of Li-Chi Lee Chen (2016:137) that "smiling does not necessarily signal pleasure, happiness or a friendly attitude"

In order to promote scholarship in the area of functions of vocalisations, the current paper identifies three functions of chuckles. To the best of our knowledge, this is probably the first documented research effort in this direction. The first two of the functions of chuckles identified in our paper seem to perform intrapersonal function rather than interpersonal – chuckles to indicate the impossibility of an idea which a third party or one's interlocutor might be entertaining and chuckles to indicate that one is pleased with oneself for knowing a secret which the other person thinks nobody knows.

However, the third function of chuckles identified in the study is interpersonal in nature. In conclusion, interactants in a social situation make use of laughter, smiles and chuckles to perform different pragmatic, interpersonal and intrapersonal function which for several reasons may not be easy to perform verbally. However, whether interactants are able to interpret correctly the meanings and functions of these vocalisations contextually is another matter. Hence, as people strive to have pragmatic competence, linguistic competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence, so also they should strive to have competence in the use of vocalisations to pass across different messages as well as interpreting correctly their functions and meanings in different contexts.

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