

## Impoliteness and humour in roadside drug advertising in Lagos State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This article explores the relevance of impoliteness and humour as advertising strategies among roadside hawkers of alternative medicine, and retailers of herbal aphrodisiacs. The study sets out to analyse the way humorous impolite utterances serve as advertising strategies employed by roadside hawkers of medicinal products with a view to attracting patronage. The study analyses eight purposively extracted excerpts from ten recordings of participants in different parts of Lagos state. The excerpts were subjected to a pragmatic analysis using Culpepper's (2011) impoliteness theory complemented by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory. The marketing strategies presented in the study point up the efficacy of impolite utterances employed by the marketers, highlighting at the same time crucial discourse types to which the public is expected to orient: preventive, curative and proactive, all of which align with and are revelatory of the psycho-social fears and interests of the buyers of these products. The study also finds out that implicit reference to male virility and female appeal seems to be an uncanny fixation in the effort of these sellers to recommend home-made concoctions as alternative therapy to orthodox medicine. The article concludes that humorous impolite utterances are veritable advertising strategies deployed by roadside drug sellers to gain positive outcomes and ultimately drive more sales.

**Keywords:** Drug advertisement; Impoliteness strategies; Humour; Roadside marketing; Lagos State

### Introduction

Advertisement, as a marketing strategy, has been with humanity from time immemorial. Advertisement was popularised in the prehistoric era by some sort of barker and the written form of advertisement was inscribed on rocks by the roadsides (Frolova, 2014). Advertisement is a way of creating awareness about a product in order to attract patronage. One encompassing definition of advertising sees it as 'information distributed in any way, in any form or by any means, addressed to an uncertain number of people and aimed at attracting attention to the subject of advertising, the establishment or maintenance of

interest in it and its promotion on the market (Federal Law of the Russian Federation about advertising). Essentially, advertisement communicates, informs, and persuades people to buy a product or subscribe to an idea. Leech (1996) identifies three types of advertising; namely: print, electronic and commercial consumer adverts. The present study falls within the category of the third category of advertisement. Leech (1996) holds that this type of advertisement is directed towards a mass audience with the aim of promoting sales of a commercial product or service. Such advert type has only the momentary effect since the audience is not likely to listen to it over again (in the case of electronic) or read it over again (in the case of print). One major advantage this form of advertisement has over the print and electronic media is the possibility of immediate reaction usually because the advertisement and sales happen simultaneously.

Extant studies have been carried out on advertisement generally in Nigeria, especially from the perspectives of electronic and print media. On the contrary, there are limited studies that have investigated commercial consumer advertisement in Nigeria. Some of the known studies in Nigeria have engaged commercial consumer advertisement from the sociolinguistic perspective (Olateju, 2009); rhetorical/discursive point of view (Adegoju, 2008; Bamgbose 2016a), register shift (Alugbin, 2019) and pragma-ideological standpoint (Olorunsogo, 2019). In other climes, semiotic and discourse styles (Mavunga, 2013; Adams, Nyakoe & Okal 2017) and strategies (Munyaradzi, 2011) in commercial consumer advertisement have also been investigated. Within applied linguistics, humour has lent itself to scholarly inquiries in different discourse types such as music (Bamgbose, 2019a), standup comedy (Filani 2015), situation comedy (Sunday and Bamgbose, 2021), memes (Bamgbose, 2021) and even casual interaction (Bamgbose, 2020).

Humour, which Weinberger & Gulas (1992) describe as the word which is the hardest to define yet familiar to people across all languages, has been established as a veritable advertising strategy. Koneska, Teofilovska & Dimitrieska (2017, p. 117) report that “humour has been credited with attracting attention to an advertisement, increasing comprehension of the advertisement, contributing to the positive attitude toward the advertisement and enhancing the positive attitude toward the advertised product”. Several studies have connected impoliteness to humour (Bamgbose 2016b; Sunday and Bamgbose, 2021; Culpeper 2011; Dynel 2012). Impoliteness, like humour, is a noticeable form of social behaviour as well because it objects to acceptable and appropriate behaviour (Watts, 2003) and recipients may regard impoliteness as also being humorous and entertaining (Culpeper, 2005). Impolite utterances are grouped under inherent impoliteness and mock-impoliteness (Culpeper 1996; Bamgbose, 2019b). Mock-impoliteness is more relatable to humour. Culpeper refers to mock-impoliteness as “impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 352). Terkourafi (2008, p. 68) defines mock impoliteness as unmarked rudeness; suggesting that “unmarked rudeness occurs when an utterance is used in a conventionalised setting and the participants have a similar jocular mindset”.

While studies have explored impoliteness and humour in different discourse settings, the nexus of impoliteness and humour as advertising strategy in commercial consumer adverts in Nigeria has not received serious scholarly inquiry in the Nigerian sociolinguistic context. This article, therefore, accounts for impoliteness strategies and their humour potential in adverts of selected roadside drug sellers in Lagos state, Nigeria with a view to showing how such impolite utterances are geared towards appealing to emotions and attracting patronage from the passers-by. The study adds to existing literature on commercial consumer advertising through its analysis of the deployment of humour in impolite utterances as a strategy to seek patronage.

### **Literature review**

Previous studies have reported interesting scholarly perspectives to the understanding of advertising both within and outside Nigeria. In print advertising, Mavunga (2013) discusses language use in a range of advertisements for herbal medicines and spiritual healing services, as found in fliers distributed on the pavements of the Johannesburg central business district. The study aims at identifying the ways in which producers of advertisements, through careful choice of discourse, attempt to manipulate potential customers. The study finds that the use of juxtaposition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole, punctuation marks, indigenous languages, first-person narratives in testimonies, illustrations and the naming of herbs are deployed in achieving the persuasion strategy. The study concludes that advertisements demonstrate a perceived power imbalance between their producers and the target audiences.

Analysing language use in electronic media, Akinbode (2012) discusses the essential characteristics of advertising language in the mass media which enable the advertisers to reach the target audience and also to find out how advertising language influences the consumer's purchasing attitude. The study engages in a sociolinguistic analysis of television advertisements from syntactic and semantic perspectives. The author finds that advertisers employ extra-linguistic factors such as context of situation and illustrations which play a significant role in determining the overall texture of an advertisement and its effectiveness. The study concludes that copy writers should improve on the quality or standard of their advertisement linguistically and stylistically. On billboard advertisements, Fomukong (2016) discusses the advertisement of Dangote Cement on billboards in Bamenda, North West Region, Cameroon, analysing what is communicated, how it is communicated and the interpretation. Using Jeffries' textual conceptual functions of prioritisation, implying and assumption, listing, naming and description, the study submits that copy writers of adverts engage various stylistic resources to convey positivity, and mutual knowledge that can help the readers relate well with the advertisements with an implicit appeal to purchase Dangote Cement.

Studies have also been carried out on commercial consumer advertisement which is the focus of the present research from different analytical angles. Olateju (2009) attempts a sociolinguistic analysis of the language of herbal medicine practitioners. The dexterity of language use among drug sellers, their popularity among the people and the alternative they provide as health care providers especially in terms of affordability serve as the bases for the sociolinguistic analysis. The research reveals that traditional-cum-oral materials such as songs, incantation and praise poetry are the strategies used by the sellers to communicate with their potential buyers. Nominalisations, proverbs and prayerful words are other stylistic techniques used by the herbal medicine marketers. The study concludes that the advertisement of herbal medicines can be compared to the work of an artiste who spices his advertisement with several poetic elements that give impetus, clear imagery, and interactive effects to language in order to attract patronage. Olateju's work differs from the present study in that it is outside the ambit of pragmatics and does not focus on how impolite utterances are made to amuse buyers in order to attract patronage.

Bamgbose (2016a) analyses the discursive and advertising strategies that are employed by those who hawk on or by buses in Lagos; with sellers of books and drugs as the focus of the study. The researcher uses Simpson's reason-tickle advertising dichotomy and through a quantitative analysis reported the discursive use of conjunctive adjuncts, humour, problem-solution information, and implicature as advertising strategies deployed by book and drug sellers in Lagos. Although the study identifies humour as one of the strategies of advertising in commercial consumer advertisement, it does not analyse humour in details as this present study hopes to do. It also does not give no attention to the use of impolite utterances as advertising strategies. Alugbin (2019) studies the construction of meaning in the language of herbal hawking by using register variation. The study highlights linguistic choices in the data with a view to determining what causes register shift in the language of the hawkers of traditional medicinal products. Using Conrad and Biber's analytical framework for register studies with insights from Lakoff's contemporary theory of metaphor, the study shows that those who hawk herbal medicine get the attention of prospective buyers through the use of sexual foregrounding of certain words and expressions. Alugbin concludes that register shifting is deployed by those who hawk herbal concoctions to establish intimacy with their prospective buyers, conceal the expressions of sexuality and get the attention of passersby, while enhancing the descriptive potential of the herbs they are advertising.

The study is similar to the present one in terms of its interest in advertising strategies; they however differ in their theoretical orientation and analytical perspectives. Also similar to this study is Mensah al.'s (2024) research which explores the metaphoric construction of the male genitalia in the marketing of herbal aphrodisiacs produced for men in the some markets in Calabar metropolis in southeastern Nigeria. Qualitative data sourced through semi-structured interviews with 30 purposively sampled participants serve as the data for the study and tenets of Lakoff & Johnson's (1980, 2003) conceptual metaphor theory

are used in the analysis. The study reports that the penis is metaphorically (re)constructed as hard, strong, aggressive and destructive, which is suggestive of stereotyped instincts of phallic masculinity. The researchers conclude that the marketing of herbal aphrodisiacs reinforces underlying stance and ideological structure; informing the expression of male sexual power. While this work shares features with the present one in terms of research interest, nature of data and an aspect of theory, it does not account for humour and impoliteness as advertising strategies in the marketing of aphrodisiacs. The review above is indicative of the numerous studies on advertising generally and commercial consumer advertising specifically. However, it is equally evident that the exploration of impolite expressions as humour strategy to attract patronage in commercial consumer advertising has not enjoyed scholarly attention; hence, this paper sets out to analyse the way humorous impolite utterances serve as advertising strategies employed by roadside hawkers of medicinal products with a view to attracting patronage.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is anchored on Culpepper's (1996, 2005, and 2011) impoliteness theory and Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory. Both theories are eclectically deployed to tease out how impolite humorous utterances and metaphors serve as advertising strategies. At inception, being patterned around Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, Culpepper (1996) had conceived the concept of impoliteness as the use of strategies that are designed to cause social disruption instead of maintaining social harmony. Several criticisms led Culpepper to reformulating his theory, wherein he now defined impoliteness as those occasions when '(1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2).' (Culpepper, 2005: 38). In line with the intentionality introduced to the literature of impoliteness, Culpepper (2005) differentiates between inherent impoliteness and mock impoliteness. According to Culpepper, inherent impoliteness covers acts that emphasise other persons' antisocial activity while mock-impoliteness is just on the surface with no intention to offend.

According to Shardakova (2012), either considered as an expression of aggression or as a cushioning device for face-threatening acts and a positive politeness strategy, humour is revealed to have the potential to occupy any point on the politeness-impoliteness continuum (Kotthoff, 2003, Culpepper, 2005). While reporting the use of humour as a friendly banter among some Americans and as some self-deprecation among some Russians, Shardakova (2012, p. 32) argues that such impolite utterances are "bereft of any real impoliteness or face-threat. Instead, they represent non-salient, expected, and appropriate behavior—the politic behavior". This establishes the potentiality of impoliteness as humour strategy for affiliative and facilitating discourse (Bamgbose, 2016). When humour is considered insignificant to the hearers' face/identity, they most likely respond to the literal meaning of the message, opting for the playful mode and playing along with the speakers (Attardo, 2001; Kotthoff, 2003; Partington, 2006). This is

the reality of the roadside drug sellers/advertisers who deploy impolite expressions humorously as advertising strategy. In line with Culpepper's (2011) definition of context as a set of premises used in interpreting an utterance, this study aims to analyse how Culpepper's (1996) major strategies of impoliteness are humorously deployed to attract patronage by roadside drug sellers and advertisers. The strategies are bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, off-record (indirect) and withhold. Bald on record is shown in a direct, clear, unambiguous way and is a deliberate face attack. Positive impoliteness is used to threaten the addressee's positive face wants and to attack the positive face need by not showing value for someone. Negative impoliteness is used to damage the addressee's negative face wants, by attacking the negative face of someone by command, order, threat, and many others. Off-record deploys indirect approaches, such as sarcasm and banter, while withhold means failing to be polite even when situation demands of a particular speaker to be.

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980, p. 3), "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is a predominant aspect of cognitive linguistics. Different linguistic analyses have deployed CMT to underline how thought is structured in different kinds of discourse. Within the field of cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor refers to how one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another. Here, the concept of 'source domains' and 'target domains', and 'mappings' are terminologies for discussing the linguistic and conceptual phenomenon of metaphor. All the minor classes of figurative language and language domains generally are categorised under conceptual metaphor. It often maps between two different conceptual domains termed source domain and target domain, and it is usually expressed as a statement, e.g. LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The tenets of impoliteness theory and conceptual metaphor theory are used to enrich the analysis of the data for this study.

## **Methodology**

The study uses the qualitative research method. Data was gathered for a period of six months between June 2021 and December 2021 in Lagos State, Nigeria. The voices of ten mobile sellers who trade in herbal medicine in different parts of the state were recorded after seeking their consent to do so for a research product. It should be mentioned that the sellers were usually by the roads or in shops with their adverts played out through megaphones. Data were derived from five locations in Lagos; namely Ojo, Ikeja, Ajah, Ikorodu and Lagos Island within the period. The choice of the locations was to spread the data base for the research across the five geopolitical divisions of the state (Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos Island and Epe). Two recordings of the adverts which lasted about 10 to 20 minutes each were made in fairly distant parts of each data collection area, giving a total of ten recordings that make up the data for this study. The recorded voices were transcribed

and glossed where necessary by the researchers. The researchers listened carefully to the recordings for similar discourse patterns and purposively extracted eight excerpts for analysis in line with the three discourse functions identified in the recordings. The recorded adverts were largely in Nigerian Pidgin and were glossed into English for clarity after the presentation of the original versions. The data is subjected to a qualitative analysis using the tents of impoliteness and conceptual metaphor.

## Results

The analysis is structured based on the discourse functions of the excerpts. The identified discourse functions are: curative, preventive and proactive functions. These discourse functions are discussed with excerpts from the data, and the impolite strategies and humour techniques that are used to foreground the functions towards gaining patronage from potential customers are analysed.

### Curative discourse function

This discourse function involves the creation of awareness about drugs that are capable of providing therapy to different ailments. The drug sellers/advertisers present these drugs as the last hope of the buyer by emphasising the inherent danger of such ailments as seen in the excerpts below.

#### Excerpt 1

If your belle dey do gbulugbulu like Bar Beach water.

And you no fit sidon for meeting for five minutes make you no scatter everywhere with mess, brother, na original pie wey Yoruba dey call jedi jedi dey worry you so.

Rush come make you come collect this melesin wey go settle the Biafran war wey dey go on inside your belle

If your tommy makes 'gbulugbulu' sound like the Bar Beach sea.

And you can't be in a meeting for five minutes without distorting the gathering with fart, brother, you are suffering from pile, which is called *jedidi* in Yoruba.

Rush down here to get the medicine that will settle the Biafran war going on in your stomach.

Excerpt 1 has the problem-solution structure where the first two lines present a problem which can pass as a premise for the product being advertised and the last three lines present the problem and offer a solution to it, which is the drug being advertised. This discourse aim of advertising a product which can cure pile is achieved through pragmatic strategies of impoliteness and humour technique. The lack of specific referents for the advertiser's message makes the impolite expressions in the excerpt instances of mock-impoliteness which are geared towards the affiliative side of humour and perform advertising function. The stylistic feature of direct comparison known as simile is deployed in line one to achieve the negative impoliteness which involves the use of strategies designed to damage the

addressee's negative face wants. The substrategy of explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect through a personalised use of the second person pronoun, *you*, (Culpepper, 2005) is reflected as the stomach discomfort of the unratified listeners is compared to the restlessness of the sea, resulting in indiscriminate farting. The use of the common noun, *brother*, in line 3 is a personalisation strategy to get every male listener captivated by the advert and feel obliged to get the drug. A metaphorical reading of the excerpt can also give the mapping: discomfort is war. The only way the war of stomach discomfort which is likened to the Biafran war can be settled is through the purchase of the medicine being advertised.

Also significant for the perception of humour in the excerpt is the phonological distortion of the word, 'medicine' as 'melesin'. Distortions are concerned with *deletions*, *substitutions* or *additions*, wherein extra chunks of various lengths (letters/syllables/words) are inserted, in any position, viz. preceding the original text, following it or splitting it (Veisbergs 1997). Sound /d/ is replaced with /l/ in the pronunciation of medicine, and according to Dynel (2009), a distortion not only alludes to the source but also entirely changes the meaning of the original formulation, resulting in a humorous effect. There is also an allusion to the tribe of the advertiser which is evident in the distortion of the word. This humour strategy is stereotypic as such substitution of /d/ for /l/ is characteristic of certain dialects of the Igbo people of Nigeria. This is again a way of joking with collective existence. According to Shardakova (2017), 'to mitigate the offensive force of playful attacks', a joke maker, in the case of this research the seller/advertiser, 'may ignore the recipients' individual identities, targeting instead their social identities' (Shardakova (2017:226). Impoliteness is, therefore, humorously teased out by the sellers at both personal and ethnic levels to attract patronage.

## Excerpt 2

Brother, no take shame kill yourself.	Brother, don't die in shame.
If your under don turn yoghurt company	If your penis has become a yoghurt company
And na so so your machine gun dey release bullet without going to war,	And your machine keeps releasing bullet without going to war,
Na infection be that o. Make you come con talk to doctor for here.	That's infection. Come talk to a doctor here.
No let infection build upstairs inside your body come make you caretaker.	Don't let infection build a storey building in you and make you a tenant.

Excerpt 2 also has a problem-solution structure although it begins with a warning statement which cautions all male listeners, who are collectively addressed through the



personalisation strategy of the common noun, *brother*. The advertiser warns the male listeners not to nurse an ailment in shame. The impoliteness in the excerpt is achieved through metaphor. In the excerpt, a man's penis which is discreetly referred to as *under* is likened to a company which manufactures yoghurt in line 1. The incongruity in the comparison is the opposing scripts of drink and disease which are jointly enacted in the mind of the listeners. Yoghurt is implicitly used to refer to semen and the penis is metaphorically captured as a company.

This mock-impoliteness which is performed with obvious insincerity is an attempt by the advertiser to create a premise for the ailment he hopes to describe. In furtherance, the war metaphor is activated with the implicit reference made to the penis as machine gun and the semen as bullets. The interpretation of the metaphorical expression is the assumption that the machine gun should not be shot and should not release bullet except in the warfare. In the humorous sense, the machine gun is a reference to the penis, the bullet refers to semen and the war situation intended is sexual intercourse. A man's penis is therefore not expected to release semen when there is no sexual intercourse. The advertiser then reaches his conclusion in line 3 after the analogous premises by saying that the release of semen in other situations outside sexual intercourse is a signal of sexually transmitted disease. This conclusion is followed by a warning in line 4 wherein +human feature is deposited in infection by the advertiser through the claim that it is capable of building a storey-building house in the listener and make him a tenant. The analogies deployed in the excerpts are instances of obscure and use of inappropriate identity markers which are sub-strategies of positive impoliteness. This impoliteness which is achieved through the different analogies does not carry any actual face threatening effect, but is deployed by the seller to gain patronage through the amusement of the listeners. However, the expressions are jocularly face-attacking to the male listeners who are all possible butts of the experiences shared in the advert, such as having involuntary semen discharge and having the infection strongly built in their system which was compared to erecting a storey building. This metaphorical scenarios in the excerpt amount to mock-impoliteness as they tend to create humour through a possible health condition of men. Although there is/are no direct butt(s) for the utterances, they are capable of touching on the sensitivity of listeners even if the jocular intention is clear.

### Excerpt 3

Oga, na every day you dey tire from work	Boss, it's every day you get tired from work
Even your guy name don turn Indomie two minute noodles	Even your nickname is now Indomie two minute noodles
Your piano no fit sing praise and worship make madam say well done.	Your piano cannot sing praise and worship in a manner that your wife will commend you.

Na bros you don turn to so oga. Dem go soon  
begin help you to dey help madam.  
Na this medicine go help you restore your old  
glory

You are already a bros. People will soon begin to  
help you to help your wife.  
It is this medicine that will help you return your old  
glory.

Excerpt 3 presents a solution to men's poor sexual performance in an implicit way. The advertiser decides to code the message of the advertisement but deploys common knowledge which can help the listeners make sense of what the advertisement is about. Line 1 begins the premise for what is going to end as a pragmatic appeal to get people to buy a sex-enhancing product with the supposition that some men complain of tiredness every time they return from work. This is pragmatically construed as a way of avoiding their sexual obligation as husbands. There is the use of the positive impoliteness sub-strategy of inappropriate marker in line 2 as the unrati ed butt (that is, any male listener) is likened to Indomie; knowing that noodles generally cook fast and such fastness is implicitly compared to quick ejaculation. This comparison is a face threatening act as it has the pragmatic import of poking fun at men who cannot sustain sexual intercourse or satisfy their women. At the metaphorical level, the mapping "weak men are fast food" is constructed as a kind of denigration and to serve as a buildup for the need to patronise the seller-cum-advertiser's products.

Line 3 features the word *piano* which is metaphorically used to refer to a man's penis, and the unrati ed listener(s) is mocked for not being able to use the piano to satisfy his wife. Line 4 serves as conscientisation from the advertiser/drug seller wherein he informs the listener that his poor ejaculation has already made him a *bros*. *Bros* is a coinage in Nigerian Pidgin from the English word, brother, and it is generally used to refer to an older male person. In its semantic extension as slang, it is used to describe a man who does not perform his sexual role satisfactorily or who is impotent. Such a man's wife is prone to infidelity due to sexual dissatisfaction. The advertiser reaches his conclusion in line 5 when he mentions that his drug is the lasting solution to the problem of his listening audience. The excerpt above deploys the register of food as seen in the use of indomie in line 2 and the register of music as portrayed by piano in line 3 to code the taboo words on sex and sexuality. This confirms the claim of Bamgbose (2020) that one of the functions of register as a humour strategy is to avoid vulgarity.

### **Preventive discourse function**

This discourse function of drug advertisement creates awareness on how certain ailments can be avoided. This is evident in the excerpts below:

#### Excerpt 4

If you use this our correct cream,	If you use this cream of ours,
All these yanmayanma wey fit let your body get rainbow colour	Every kind of infection that can give your skin rainbow colour
E go run from you kpatakpata.	Will avoid you completely.
Your body go fresh like today bread.	Your body will be fresh like bread baked just today.

Excerpt 4 is used to advertise a cream which is capable of helping the listeners avoid skin infections. It deploys the conjunctive adjunct *if* to establish the need to get the cream. According to Simpson (2001), conjunctive adjuncts may characterise the discourse of reason advertising because they function to draw attention to the reasons for a purchase and explain the benefits of buying the advertised product (Kim, 2007). The conditional conjunctive adjunct used in the excerpt is therefore a means of propelling the listeners to get the drugs if they desire a good skin condition. In line 2, the advertiser uses the word *rainbow* to create a picture of an undesirable skin which the listener can afford by the use of the advertised soap. The first humour potential of the excerpt lies in the absurd comparison of skin infection to a rainbow. The ground for comparison is the multiple colours of rainbow. Although rainbow is beautiful, its colour combination on a person's skin is unlikely to be desired by anyone. This generates the metaphorical mapping of "a bleaching person is a rainbow". This utterance therefore becomes an impolite remark or an FTA on the unspecified butt who could be any listener. In the last line of the excerpt, the humour heightens when the advertiser compares the skin of anyone who uses the cream to a freshly baked loaf of bread. This expression is an admixture of metaphor and hyperbole humour techniques as it, on the one hand, compares a human to a loaf of bread which is incongruous, and on the other hand, attempts to exaggerate the efficacy of the drug being advertised to gain patronage.

### Excerpt 5

Many of us for this Lagos, we don spend half of our life for hold-up.

When you reach house, naso your body go heavy like wall of Jericho

You no even fit touch madam because bone don weak.

Buy this ogbonge medicine make you nack 2 before you sleep.

Your bone go strong kakaraka the next morning and you go jump comot for bed *samsam*.

Many of us in Lagos have spent half of our life time in hold-up.

When you get home, your body gets as heavy as the wall of Jericho

You cannot even touch your wife because your bones are already weak.

Get this effective medicine and use two before you sleep.

Your bones will be strong *kakaraka* and you will jump out of bed *samsam*.

Excerpt 5 deploys two instances of conjunctive adjuncts in a bid to create a premise for the need to buy the medicine being advertised. The temporal adjunct, *when*, in line 2 and the causal adjunct, *because*, in line 3 are used to establish the need for the listeners to get the medicine being advertised. In line 1, the seller/advertiser begins with a collective self-denigrating humour technique by stating that most Lagos residents have spent half of their life time in hold-up. Self-denigrating humour is an impoliteness strategy used to tease than to deliberately deface oneself and others. The reference to *wall of Jericho* is an instance of intertextuality wherein the religious register is used to foreground the level of tiredness experienced by many people. This further serves as a means of establishing the efficacy of the advertised drug. This utterance falls within the realm of mock-impoliteness because the field of discourse shows that the face threat is not a malicious attack on any specific person but an advertising strategy. The rhythmic insertions in the excerpts such as *kakaraka* and *samsam* create onomatopoeic effects which are capable of creating amusement in the listeners.

### Excerpt 6

Sister, when heat rashes attack some people face

The face go come be like road wey get pot hole.

If you dey take this tablet once a day, yanmayanma for

Sister, when heat rash attacks some people's face,

The face would look like a road with potholes.

If you take this tablet once daily, rash would walk

Past you. Your face will be as smooth as mirror.

Face go see you waka pass. Your face go smooth  
like mirror.

Excerpt 6 also features the temporal adjunct *when* as an advertisement strategy through the establishment of a cause and effect relationship. The advertiser/seller makes clear that heat could cause rashes, which, in turn, could give one unpleasant or horrible look. The advertiser deploys humour as an advertisement strategy through the use of the positive impoliteness sub-strategy of inappropriate marker. Potholes are damages on the roads caused by traffic or weather, which are certainly undesirable. The impolite metaphorical mapping of “a rough face is pothole” is therefore enacted as both a humour technique and advertising strategy. Likening a person’s face to potholes does not only create an unpleasant image in the mind of the listeners but also enacts absurdity, given the dissimilarity between the two things being talked about—a human being and a road. This reveals the use of simile as a humour technique. While lines 1 and 2 of the excerpt create a premise for the advert, lines 3 and 4 present the benefit of the drug being advertised. This is also achieved through the rhythmic word, *yanmayanma*, which has the pragmatic import of an unpleasant look, and which the listeners are being assured not to suffer if they get the drug being advertised. Lastly, the advertiser deploys the technique of hyperbole as he assures the listeners of having a face as smooth as a mirror if they use the drug daily. It is a known fact that a person’s face will not be so smooth to serve as a reflection in the manner of a mirror. This is, however, an attempt to amuse the listeners in order to endear them to the product being advertised.

### **Proactive discourse function**

In the proactive function, the drug sellers/advertisers talk about how the listeners can take actions to cause a change and not just by reacting to change when it happens. This function seems similar to the preventive discourse function but differs in that, while the preventive function talks about what to do that some things may not happen, the proactive function emphasises what to do for something pleasant to happen in order to forestall something unpleasant. These are made evident in the excerpts below:

## Excerpt 7

Oga, some men go dey sweat, madam go dey read newspaper	Oga, some men will be sweating while their wives will be reading newspapers
The thing dey be like say dem throw fetcher inside well.	The thing looks like when a fetcher is thrown in a well.
Na danger you dey prepare for so when you marry o.	You are preparing for danger when you get married.
This natural medicine go help you turn your chewing stick to cucumber.	This natural medicine will help you change your chewing stick to a cucumber
Your tin go turn to matter wey dey get weight and occupy space.	Your thing will become a matter which has weight and occupies space.

Excerpt 7 has as its central message as the need for a man's penis to be sufficiently big for his wife's sexual satisfaction. The seller/advertiser thereby presents what he calls a natural therapy for small penises and encourages men whose organs are small to get the natural drug to redeem their situation before getting into marriage. The fascinating thing about the excerpt is the highly implicit sexual innuendos which constitute face attacks to the unratiied listeners, especially anyone who perhaps is a victim of the scenario painted in the excerpt. In line 1, the drug advertiser/seller says that while some men are sweating, the woman in their company gets busy reading a newspaper. This is an implicit way of describing a man's inability to satisfy a woman's sexual urge and it is a buildup to the ridicule which the advertiser hopes to pass on to anyone with a small male organ. He advances his analogy in line 2 by further describing the situation in line 1 as one where a fetcher is thrown into a well; creating the impression of a very small object within a wide one. He makes a conclusion from the implicatures in lines 1 and 2 that a man whose sexual partner reads a newspaper during sexual encounter and whose penis can be compared to a fetcher thrown into a well is going to be in a danger when he gets married.

The use of *newspaper*, *fetcher* and *well* are all sexual innuendos geared towards painting a scenario of sexual incompetence. This deployment of innuendo deepens in the excerpt when the advertiser presents his drug as a therapy for small organ through the use of the words *chewing stick*, which metaphorically refers to a small organ and *cucumber*, which is used to mean a sizeable penis. Aside the food metaphor of cucumber, there is also the use of academic register enacted through the definition of matter which means anything that has weight and occupies space. The advertiser implicitly suggests that after taking the drug, the man's penis will become big enough to give sexual satisfaction. Most cultures in

Nigeria frown on vulgar language. This propels the use of analogies and other items to depict sexual scenarios. The absurdities of the scenarios and the mismatch of the sexual organs and the words used to represent them are not only a way of creating humorous feelings in the listeners but also a deliberate linguistic attempt by the advertisers to achieve sales.

### Excerpt 8

Aunty, you never even marry, but small pikin head fit enter your PLC.	Aunty, you are not even married but a child's head Can get into your PLC.
Yoruba man go say <i>welli re o</i> .	A Yoruba man will say this is a <i>welli</i> .
No worry. No be your fault. Maybe na one wicked man.	Don't worry. It isn't your fault. Perhaps a wicked man.
Use him trailer damage your small car park.	Used his trailer to damage your small car park.
This cream go help you rebuild your garage to normal size wey.	This cream will help you rebuild your garage to a normal size.
Go sweet your future husband.	Will fascinate your future husband.

Excerpt 8 is similar to 7, given that it also serves as a charge to women to be better prepared for matrimony by finding a solution to what may be described as a loose vagina which evidently is not desired by any man wanting to marry a woman. In lines 1 and 2, the advertiser presents what is supposedly a problem using sexual innuendo. *PLC* is metaphorically used to refer to a woman's genitalia given the cultural taboo of such direct pronouncement. The face attack in the analogy is the pragmatic supposition that a lady's genitalia could be wide enough for a baby's head to penetrate. This falls within the positive impoliteness sub-strategy of using obscure or secretive language, which has a shared understanding between the seller and most adult listeners. Through code switching, the advertiser uses the phonological feature of insertion to exaggerate the depicted situation by adding a final /i/ sound to the word, *well* as a way of aggravating the scenario. This manner of articulating *well* is on the one hand stereotypic, given the specific mention of Yoruba people as those who wrongly articulate the word in that manner. It is, on the other hand, revealing of the phonological habit of the Yoruba tribe which serves as interference in the use of English by some members of the tribe. There is also the metaphor of a trailer parked in a garage, thereby causing destruction. This implicitly means that a lady has had a sexual intercourse with a man who has a very big sexual organ. The advertiser afterwards assures the female target audience that there is a solution to this seeming destruction caused to her *garage* which can help *rebuild* it. In clear terms, the cream being advertised can tighten

loosed female genitalia. This is intended as a joke and an advertisement strategy since no particular butt is targeted but it is evidently a putdown as it threatens the face of any listener who might fit into such description. The overall goal, however, is to boost sales.

### **Conclusion**

This article investigates the use of humor and impolite remarks as advertisement strategies among roadside drug sellers in Lagos State, Nigeria. Subjecting eight purposively sampled excerpts to a pragmatic analysis within the ambit of impoliteness theory and conceptual metaphor theory, the research shows that the humorous use of impolite utterances achieves three discourse functions which are curative, preventive and proactive discourse functions. The curative function emphasises the therapeutic essence of the herbal products, the protective function highlights the use of the products as safety measures, and the proactive function presents the usability of the products for immediate or distant future relevance. The study also shows that impolite remarks deployed in the adverts are examples of mock-impoliteness since they are geared towards amusing listeners in order to attract patronage for the drugs and are not targeted at specific butts. Positive and negative impoliteness strategies are deployed with other sub-strategies. The study confirms the position of Sunday and Bamgbose (2021) that impolite remarks are humorously deployed to either castigate or to amuse viewers or listeners. Simile, metaphor, hyperbole, register and code alternation serve as humour techniques used in the realisation of the impolite utterances. The phonological features of replacement and insertion are also primarily deployed as humour techniques and secondarily used to stereotype the Igbo and Yoruba of Nigeria, respectively. This finding is in line with that of Bamgbose and Ladele (2023) which argues that beneath the use of humorous remarks are instances of ethnic stereotypes. Also, the study shows that implicit reference to male virility and female appeal seems to be an uncanny fixation in the effort of the sellers to recommend home-made concoctions as alternative therapy to orthodox medicine. This study does not sample the opinions of passersby to know if the intended humour is appreciated by them. Further studies can investigate the perception of the public to such impolite expressions as an advertising strategy.

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