

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS**



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

DISSERTATION TOPIC:

**A representation of Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic situation in P.O Box
TV.A case study of Anotenga Here, Chaunoda Chii and Hatiuye Ikoko.**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted to the Department of English and Communication,
Midlands State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.**

OCTOBER 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr H. Mangeya for his time and patience. Thank you for encouraging me to pick myself up when I felt demotivated. I would not have written beyond a page if it were not for him. Thank you very much!

Special mention goes to my friends Nyasha Ndemo, Kudakwashe Bhowa, Best Masinire and all those that helped make this research possible. Thank you for the intellectual support, encouragement and love you showed. May the good Lord grant your wishes!

To my beloved brother Steven Nyoni, you are one in a million. I couldn't have asked for a better brother. Thank you for the advice and sacrifices you made to make this research possible. I will forever be grateful.

Above all I would like to thank the Almighty God for guiding me throughout this research. Thank you Lord for guiding me and for bringing me this far, I would not have done it without you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my two best friends Mr and Mrs Nyoni, my pillars of strength. I thank God every day for you. Love you so much!

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this research is my original work that has never been written before by any other student for any purpose whatsoever within or outside the confines of Midlands State University.

Date.....

Signature.....

Signature.....

Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the representation of Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic climate in P.O Box's skits entitled *Anotenga here? Chaunoda chii?* and *Hatiuye ikoko!* It looks at the background of comedy highlighting how this genre of comedy is different from other comedy genres such as stand-up comedy. The methodology used to obtain data is the qualitative research method. The study also made use of the constructionist approach which examines the way representations are made through dialect, including visual codes. The constructionist perspective views knowledge and truth as that which is generated and not discovered in the mind. Comedy awards us the chance to view life honestly because with comedy we are made to laugh at ourselves regardless of how uncomfortable it is. Through humour, comedians can say anything, even joke about the most sensitive things and evoke laughter to its audience and at the same time enlightening them on the socio-political and economic concerns. The three skits by P.O Box functioned as the main source of information for the investigative part of this study. The analysis brought out themes such as unemployment, poor governance, harsh economic climate and political suppression.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTON

1.0 Introduction

The research is an investigation of how humour is used as both a commentary and satire on the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. This chapter outlines the background of study showing how comedy developed to what it is today. Next will be the problem of the study stating the gap overlooked by other scholars. The aims and objectives of the study show the objectives that the researcher intends to achieve. Assumptions of the study, delimitations and limitations are also included in the investigation of this thesis. The significance of the study outlines the advantages of studying this research topic.

1.1 Background of study

The Oxford Modern English Dictionary characterises comedy as, an amusing or farcical incident or a progression of occurrences in everyday life. Humour makes circumstances lighter and bearable. Comedy is a great way to bring to light issues that affect us as Zimbabweans in our day to day life. These are political, social and economic problems that we face every day and are looking for ways to go around our problems

Comedy, in Zimbabwe, has however seen a rapid increase in these types of sketch comedy productions which have gone viral on various social media sites. Some of these sketches aim to give the audience a good laugh whilst others both provoke thought and entertain. Their proliferation however, can warrant an academic research so as to enable people to better appreciate this genre of comedy.

P O Box comedy falls under a new genre of modern comedy called sketch comedy. This new form of comedy embodies a progression of short comedy scenes called 'sketches' which are commonly between 1 and 10 minutes in length. The term 'sketch' is often interchanged with 'skit' which is defined as a short piece of satire. No one is really certain on who coined the term sketch comedy but Fred Karno, whose real name is Frederick John Westcott, is accredited for developing a form of sketch comedy without dialogue and has worked with the likes of Charlie Chaplin.

Sketch comedy is created for visual medium such as television or through audio mediums such as the radio and are normally displayed by a group of comic actors or comedians. Sketch comedy has its origins in vaudeville which is a theatrical genre of variety entertainment and was common in United States and Canada in the early 1880s with popular acts during the time such as *The Three Stooges* and *Sesame Street*.

Popular acts in Africa include the likes of Anne Kansime whose sketches are hilarious but are at the same time both moralistic and educational. She reflects society's ills in quite a humorous way using Pidgin English. In Zimbabwe, comedy has risen from

dramas that included the likes of the popular Mutirowafanza, Kapfupi, stand-up comedians such as Carl Joshua Ncube to the more modern comedy which we now witness today.

Olson (1968:7) argues that, “we have no completely unexceptional theory of laughter and this fact is very generally accepted”. He reinforces the idea that there is no definition of comedy that is considered to be correct because what is funny to one person may not be funny to another. Charney (1980:186) states that, “we do not all, as readers laugh at the same things or even twice at the same place”. Thus, several definitions have been put across in the effort to capture and define comedy and what makes comedy comedy.

Olson (1968:26) in support of the fact that no single definition of comedy is correct because in as much as human beings are different so are their tastes in humour states that, “how can we have a single definition of things which are heterogeneous? If definition is the statement of something, how can one definition state the natures of things which are different in nature?”

It is in this context, where Oring (2003:145) defines humour as anything that provokes laughter, It has to be pointed out that humour is socio cultural specific and is determined by the experiences an individual brings to the humour performed, social interactions in which the humour is embedded and the historical conditions in which the jokes arise. One can therefore assert that the sketches by P.O Box arise from current occurrences in a Zimbabwean context, that is to say the socio-political and economic situation.

Their videos have spread on various social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter and YouTube, which stands as a great way to both entertain and educate the masses. P.O Box started in the late 2014 and has since become popular in Zimbabwe. What makes them really popular is the fact that they make use of the vernacular language and also that their storylines refer to current topical issues.

1.2 Problem of study

Palmer (1994) is for the view that comic failure is likely to result if too much thought is required to understand a joke. The research aims to show how the socio-political and economic situation is being represented by the three sketches. A lot can be interpreted from these sketches despite the fact that they are less than five minutes long. Scholars like Meyer (2000) and Shutz (1977) have ignored a modern genre of comedy that is so pregnant with meaning. They have said so much as far as stand up comedy is concerned but not much has been said about sketch comedy, a genre that is full of meaning. Unlike stand up comedy, the sketches are short thus allowing the audience or receivers to concentrate on the issues being discussed.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The research aims:

- To determine how the issues of economic meltdown, poverty and political repression are brought out in the sketches.

- To investigate how irony as a technique is being used to bring out issues affecting Zimbabwe.

- To establish how the use of the vernacular is a contributing factor to the understanding of the message relayed to the audience.

- To investigate the relationship between sketch comedy and representation of contemporary socio-economic and political issues in Zimbabwe.

- To substantiate that not all comedy is innocent but that there is something to learn from them. Comedians use humour to avoid persecution.

1.4 Assumptions of study

Comedy is a form of necessary truth. Humour accomplishes many things; chief among them being it serves as a coping mechanism as well as displaying courage in adversity. This is so because it is perceived as a ‘way out’.

1. Comedians are out to highlight certain issues. Not all comedy is innocent, that is to say some comedy actually serves as platforms where they address issues affecting the country. It is hard to ignore such issues especially when they come in form of wittiness.
2. Everyone is able to interpret and read in between the lines. You are not only laughing at the jokes but also learning from them.
3. The comedy clips have circulated around social media platforms and are popular with most Zimbabweans

1.5 Delimitation of study

- The research only focuses on Zimbabwe’s three sketch comedies from P.O Box, which are *Hatiuye ikoko* (*We are not coming there*), *Anotenga here?* (*Can they be used to buy?*) and *Chaunoda chii?* (*What is it you prefer?*). The researcher would have wanted to compare with other Zimbabwean sketch comedies that

also highlight socio-political concerns but comedy in Zimbabwe is still in its budding phase.

1.6 Limitations of study

- A major limitation to this study is availability of information on sketch comedy. A lot has been written about other genres of comedy for example stand up comedy but little has been written about sketch comedy. In essence, sketch comedy has been ignored.

1.7 Significance of study

This research can be used as a benchmark to try and gauge how satire through representation is used to highlight every day issues affecting the country. The research will benefit the society as it aims to educate people not to ignore comedy, not to only laugh at their jokes but to realise that they are actually being reminded about what is going on around them. Comedy has now become a double-edged sword as it now educates as well as entertains. The research will also benefit the department in that it offers new avenues to pursue studies on.

1.8 Definition of terms-

Humour – anything funny or entertaining.

Sketch comedy– a series of short comedy scenes which last between one and ten minutes. a series of short comedy scenes, usually between one and ten minutes long.

Skit – a short comedy or sketch.

Vaudeville – a type of entertainment popular in the America which included comedy, song and dance.

Social media platforms – these are sites that which enable people to interact, exchange information, create as well as share pictures, videos in communities.

Genre – a classification or specific type of something. For example comedy

Representation – saying or acting on behalf of someone

Socio-political – a combination of both social and political aspects. Social referring to a communities' shared customs and the political refers to the government.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two is aimed at achieving two major goals. First, it focuses on literature review whereby it explores available literature related to the researcher's topic. The literature review looks at the views from different scholars as well as highlighting the research gaps. It focuses on comedy in general with its main focus on sketch comedy. Secondly, it outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the research and the theory used by the researcher to explain how representation works.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Meyer (2000) defines humour as a vent through which people get relief from tensions that originate from their desire or fears. Comedy provides laughter and recent work by other scholars have pointed towards the self-reflexive nature of laughter. As the popular saying goes, laughter is the best medicine. Comedy allows people to relax and enjoy themselves but at the same time get educated or conscientised on important issues of the

day. Comedy can also act as a valve for letting out pent up emotions or issues that may otherwise be difficult to articulate on the public main.

Scholars argue that jokes do not just come from nowhere but they are actually socio-culturally situated. That is, they are a result of something that might have happened or is happening around us. In support of this Douglass (1975:98) says, “A joke is seen as and allowed when it offers a symbolic pattern of a social pattern occurring at the same time...all jokes are expressive of the social situations in which they occur”. It becomes imperative to investigate how the three sketches bring out the current challenges that Zimbabwe is facing. They are a result of what has been taking place in Zimbabwe.

Langer (1953) argues that comedy is ‘an art form that arises naturally wherever people are gathered to celebrate life, in spring festivals, triumphs, birthdays, weddings or invitations. In other words comedy only happens at specific occasions. Langer has however ignored the fact that comedy happens anywhere and anytime and does not specifically wait for a certain occasion. It can be about anything that happens or is happening in our community. One needs to understand the extent to which the three sketches are what are currently being experienced in Zimbabwe.

Analysing the Kenyan comedian group Redykyulass, Musila (2010: 286) notes that the group’s satire could be seen as a form of “self-reflexive laughter” which “is the kind of humour that entails laughing at ourselves, at our various weaknesses, vices and flaws”. This can be also used in the Zimbabwean context where humour forces Zimbabweans to pause and reflect on how they can or what they can do to make Zimbabwe a better

place. Comedians provide a mirror to the society and indirectly through humour force the society to meet head on with the reality on the ground. The research aims to investigate how socio-political and economic concerns are being brought out through representation.

However, in as much as comedy allows us to ‘self-reflect’ by holding mirrors to our social faces, it only highlights what we already know but does not provide solutions to the problems we are facing. Thus, it only serves as a reminder to the audience should they decide to do something about it. The sketches are highlighting the socio-political and economic challenges that the country is facing but no solutions to the problems. We are living in a world where being reminded about what we are facing is not enough, there is need for solutions or answers to the problems. Therefore, comedy should not only highlight the problems being faced but should also provide solutions.

Bakhtin (1984:31) on the other hand states that, “that which is important and essential cannot be comical” and “the essential truth about the world and man cannot be told in the language of laughter”. Therefore, serious issues about the current challenges being faced, represented by the three sketches should be told in a more serious manner. To a lesser extent, Bakhtin (1984) assertion that serious things should be said in a serious manner is correct but saying serious issues in a joking manner helps lighten up the situation. With this view one can accordingly say that if one needs to be taken seriously they need to deliver news in a serious manner. In this way the three sketches should not be considered as jokes because they are talking about serious matters. It is us the ordinary people that have made these sketches to jokes.

Obadare (2009: 250) argues that the focus of jokes is not just the state but the sheer absurdity of life as currently lived in the country. Thus “jokes are often targeted at official vulgarity, and are also a means through which the ‘powerless’ hold a mirror to themselves”. The ‘powerless’ refers to the Zimbabweans going through socio-political and economic challenges. The research aims to explore how these challenges are represented in the three sketches.

Not all jokes are targeted at official vulgarity as Obadare (2009) puts it. He overlooks the idea that jokes are merely meant to educate as well as entertain the audience and not only targeted at certain people. The sketches under study are a clear representation of current challenges being faced by Zimbabwe. Through the use of the vernacular language, one can clearly relate to the relationship between sketch comedy and representation of the socio-political and economic challenges.

Various scholars have identified three theories of humour which are the Relief theory, Incongruity theory and the Superiority theory. Meyer (2002) states that with the Relief theory people laugh because they sense a relief from tension. He explains the Incongruity theory in the sense that people laugh when surprised by a sudden turn of events, - something unexpected. Schutz (1977) concludes with the Superiority theory where he states that people laugh when they feel victory over the target of humour.

As the name suggests, the Relief theory serves as a painkiller to the audience anxiety; it eases stress and tension. Humour can cross certain confines and as indicated by Ross

(1998:61) it does so 'by breaking some rules and keeping some limits'. Humorists normally hide behind jokes whilst they will be attacking the listeners or public figures. Their aim is to incite and or entice the audience into thinking about the particular topic under discussion. Not all things said are funny; people have different tastes in as far as comedy is concerned. Thus Ross (1998) goes on to say those comedians face the risk of not being funny or even worse, inflicting anger towards them. This is a claim that is supported by Charney (1980) who says that there is no theory of laughter that is considered to be the correct one because the audience do not all laugh at the same things.

The Incongruity theory differs from the relief theory in that it offers a sense of surprise. The audience laughs in light of the fact that they have been fascinated by a sudden startling unforeseen turn of events thus creating the element of surprise. This theory involves proclamations with a two-sided connotation as proved by the representation. There is a difference between what is expected by the audience and what is delivered by the comedians. In other words the jokes will be misleading as people are made to believe the exact opposite.

Lastly the Superiority theory, as the name suggests, one part feels satisfied with the superiority or dominance over another. With this theory there is normally the degrading of people, cultures, religious groups or races for instance the correlation between the Ndebele and the Shona or the rich and the poor. In this context however, the comedian can be mistaken for indicating human lapse. Ross (1998:51) claims that this type of laughter is not desirable since the audience can turn on the comedian if the jokes are perceived as mockery of a certain target.

These theories place both the readers and researcher in a better position to better analyse humour. Therefore, the three sketches fall under the Incongruity theory as they bear the element of surprise. As Meyer (2000) states that the audience laugh because of the unexpected turn of events. In the three sketches there is an unexpected turn of events that makes the audience laugh. It is in this unexpected turn of events that one gets the whole meaning of the sketches. Thus the researcher made use of the Incongruity theory to analyse the three sketches. This is so in light of the fact that what we see or experience with these sketches is an infringement of our normal expectations.

The Oxford Dictionary defines satire as the use of ridicule, exaggeration, humour or irony to both expose and criticize people's stupidity. LeBoufe (2007) posits that satire is a powerful artistic form used to critique specific human behaviours as can be noted in the sketches. Billig (2005) and Rybacki (1991), on the other hand, allude to the idea that satire uses ridicule and verbal aggression to reveal the faults and transgression of a particular target. The sketches highlight the socio-political and economic challenges that the country is facing.

Verbal aggression as the name suggests refers to a progression of words uttered in a harsh manner. Berger (1993) characterises ridicule as some form of verbal attack against a person or idea. By using verbal aggression, the comedians are attacking not the individuals but certain behaviours of both the superior persons and the ordinary people. As indicated by Wilson (1979), ridicule serves to expose the social criticisms or persuasion when the speaker wants to humiliate or discredit their opponent in front of

their viewers. Thus ridicule can be used in the sense of satire meaning that the duo ridiculed the kind of behaviour they disapproved of.

Berger (1993) additionally states that with satire, comedians attack particular individuals, institutions or specific happenings. One can clearly note in the three sketches that certain behaviours are being rejected by the duo. Apart from using verbal aggression to disregard particular behaviours, paralanguage is also a technique that can contribute towards making something heard. Apte (1985) is in support of the idea that nonverbal forms of communication can say and mean so much more than words can convey. Thus paying attention to the body language, gestures and facial expressions in the sketches becomes as important as paying attention to the words they are saying.

Discussing the issue of satire in a popular Kenyan newspaper, Ogola (2005: 147) has argued that “not only does comedy satirize the empty pomp of dictatorial politics; they also enact the ambiguities of popular participation in these processes”.

LeBoufe (2007) also defines satire as any piece, be it literary, artistic, spoken or otherwise presented and bears the following traits;

- i) **Critique.** He says that satire is always a critique of some sort of human behaviour with the aim of persuading the audience to view it mockingly and therefore encouraging a degree of social change. In as much as the duo are criticising the government for introducing coins that were at that moment

being rejected, they are also critiquing the public for not accepting help to better their economy.

- ii) **Irony.** LeBoufe (2007) goes on to say that satire makes use of irony in a hilarious way but at the same time pointing out the problems with the behaviour being critiqued. The duo always says one thing but mean the exact opposite.

- iii) **Implicitness.** Again, BeLoufe (2007) alludes that satire is not an overstatement but rather the critiqued behaviour deconstructs itself by being absurd, most often because it is exaggerated or taken out of its normal context.

Sketch comedy differs from all forms of comedy especially stand-up comedy in that stand-up comedy uses invective which is a personal attack on a public figure. This can be noted in most stand-up comedy shows where the comedians make an attack on for example the president of a certain country. Sketch comedy on the other hand does not make a direct attack on individuals. No one has to feel humiliated in public and corrective action happens through laughter.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research employs the constructionist approach to representation. The term representation can be defined as the creation of significance through language. The research was based on how the socio-political and economic conditions of Zimbabwe are brought to light by representation through the constructionist approach. Representation therefore consists of repeated elements. The duo continuously makes use of irony in expressing their views. The more we see these elements repeated, the more the representation will seem by all accounts to be natural or normal.

Representations assume a particular perspective. There are at least four main types of representations, as indicated by sociologist Devereux (2007). These are:

1. **Codes and conventions.** Representations can be seen by investigating the specialised and typical codes that are utilised to convey meaning. For instance, the use of irony is highlighting the socio-political and economic status of the country. They say one thing and mean the aggregate inverse. In this case irony becomes a convention as it is being used to express meaning.
2. **Discourses.** Understanding the discourse that a representation is part of can help clarify how it functions. According to Stubbs (1983), discourse analysis is i) concerned with language use beyond boundaries of a sentence, ii) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and iii) and as

concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication. For instance, in the sketches under study, there is the use of slang as a mode of communication which is popular among the youths. Secondly, there is use of the vernacular language thus making the comedy easy to understand. What the sketches represent is what is happening within the society.

- 3. Framing.** A representation can be encircled inside of a certain perspective or it can be indicated just inside a certain setting.

Framing in a constructionist perspective means the production of news which is not an exclusive cognitive process as many structural factors are influencing media content Shoemaker and Reese (1996). According to Bateson (1972), framing is considered as a form of meta-communication (all nonverbal cues used to communicate including tone of voice, facial expression, gestures etc that support what we say in words) when he says that the frame specifies the relationship the number of collected elements in a text on the basis of what issue or a topic maybe defined and understood. Meta-communication plays a big role in as far as comedy is concerned. We derive meanings from these nonverbal ways of communicating.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) posit that the way people interpret a particular form of media is not solely, internally motivated but also guided by the cultural

process that is a particular way of doing things. The sketches are interpreted according to the socio-political and economic challenges the country is facing, thus in other words, comedy is contextualised.

4. **Narrative analysis.** Often a person or an event can be packaged as belonging to a certain kind of familiar story or pattern.

With these four above mentioned approaches to representation, it is evident that sketch comedy is freer to censure on a wide range of topics. Sketches are often tied to very recent political or social events, so they are much closer to recent change than situation comedy is. Humour as mediated by comics may also point fingers at those subject to power in an attempt to make readers adapt to the deplorable occasions developing around them.

According to Bateson (1972), framing is a form of meta-communication which means that it specifies the relationship between the number of collected elements in a text on the basis of which an issue or a topic maybe defined and understood. Gurevitch and Levy (1986) propose that the notion of meta-communication refers to the meaning that readers assign to a text is not determined merely by the concrete information that it contains but also by implicit information between the lines. Sketch comedy has allowed people to read in between the lines and discover the meaning.

The constructionist theory of representation looks at how events are correlated with the concepts that we carry around, the things we witness happening around us every day. Language is also viewed as a system of representation. According to Hall (1997), meaning is constructed by the individual users of language. Things do not mean; we construct meaning using representational signs. The jokes by P.O Box only cater for those who understand Shona.

Hall (2003) states that in language there is the use of signs and symbols which may come in form of electronically produced images, written words or sounds which represent to other people how we perceive things. Thus language plays a major role in as far as decoding meaning is concerned. Language also works as a representational framework, thus we attach meaning and importance to language. Language is a result of social convention. Luitel (2002) came up with what he termed the ‘social constructionist orientation of knowledge’ where interaction plays a major role in constructing knowledge.

This approach recognises the public, social character of language. Things alone don’t mean- we construct meaning using representational systems. The researcher also looked at the two variants of the constructionist approach which are: the semiotic and discursive approach.

- i) The semiotic approach, coined by Saussure which is concerned with the how of representation, how language produces meaning. The sketches use the vernacular language, a language that almost everyone understands. Thus their

videos are easy to understand. They also made use of slang and songs which are quite popular with the youths. This could possibly mean that their target audience is the youth.

According to Culler (1976), Saussure proposed that the production of meaning depends on language. He also viewed language as a system of signs, sounds, written words, images, paintings and photographs and that these function as signs provided they are used to communicate meaning or ideas. In this context, the three sketches are being used to express meaning in as far as the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe is concerned.

Saussure is said to have analysed the sign into two further elements, the signifier and the signified that is the actual word or image and the concept of that specific thing in one's head. That is the idea of the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe vis a vis the actual things happening on the ground. Culler (1976:23) goes on to say that according to Saussure, the connection between the signifier and the signified which is linked by cultural codes is not fixed permanently. With this he tries to explain that meanings of things are always changing because they are not fixed.

- ii) Discursive approach by Foucault which is concerned with effects and consequences of representation, what is it we see, that is the image portrayed by the videos. Foucault according to Culler (1976) is said to have departed from

the definition of discourse by his focus on three major ideas which are: the concept of discourse, the issue of power and the question of the subject.

He takes a different view from that of Saussure who views language as a system of representation. Foucault views discourse as a system of representation instead. By discourse Foucault meant a group of statements which provide a language for talking – a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. According to Hall (1992:291) discourse is about the production of meaning through language. But since all social practices entail meaning and meanings shape and influence what we do- our conduct, all practices have a discursive element.

Discourse as Foucault argued does not consist of one statement, one text, or one source. The idea that physical things and actions exist but they only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse is at the heart of the constructionist theory of meaning and representation. Thus there has always been comedy that represents particular issues but sketch comedy from Zimbabwe is a specific way of studying, analysing and observing this type of comedy. The comedians are youth, representing the young generation, future leaders. They have no form of employment thus migrating to other countries in search of greener pastures.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Various scholars have defined comedy in quite a number of terms. This chapter shows how comedy is seen as a mirror which reflects the society we live in. The sketches bring out the socio-political and economic concerns in the country. For representations to have a concrete meaning, there has to be an agreed upon recognition by the society. This chapter also shows how sketch comedy differs from all the other forms of comedy. Sketch comedy can be very effective in that it offers a better way to understand what is going on around us because the sketches are short and to the point. It can also be noted that not all comedy is innocent comedy; there is always something to learn from them. One interesting aspect about these sketches is how they have widely spread through social media sites.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three focuses mainly on data collection methods used to gather the relevant data. It outlines the research instruments used to come up with the data, the sampling procedures as well as constraints of the methodology used to collect relevant data. Attention is also put on focus group discussions as well as the researcher's own observation to come up with the desired results as well as the sampling procedures undertaken.

3.1 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT (S)

The best research methodology for this research is qualitative methodology. The qualitative research method seeks to answer the what, how and the why of a phenomenon rather than the how much or how many which are answered by the quantitative method a view supported by Creswell (1994). As such, it assists us with comprehension of the world we live in and why things are the way they are. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) are for the view that qualitative research is less structured in description as it builds on new theories. It is particularly compelling when little is known about an

issue under consideration and the issue could possibly be of a sensitive nature. As indicated by Bernard (1995), qualitative and quantitative research methods contrast in their analytical objections, types of questions posed and the data collection instruments they use as well as the forms of data they use.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It comprises of an arrangement of interpretive material practices that makes the world visible. The world is transformed by such practices. They transform the world into a progression of representations, including field notes, interviews, discussions, photographs and updates to the self. The production of knowledge happens through representation.

At this level, qualitative study involves an interpretive, naturalistic way to deal with the world. This means that qualitative investigators study things in their natural setting, endeavouring to understand, or to translate, phenomena in terms of the implications people convey to them, an account supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3). According to Merriam (2009:13), qualitative analysts are keen on understanding the importance people have developed, that is, the manner by which people make sense of their world and the encounters they have in the world.

The research instruments used by the researcher are focus group discussions and the observation method. The focus group consisted of a group of ten people, six boys and 4

girls all from the 4.2 English and Communication class. For the information generated to be effective, the group had to consist of members who share the same interests. Focus groups are effective when collecting information on the grounds that they enable co-operation from members of a group who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own or who feel worried that they have nothing to say, a view supported by Kitzinger (1995).

They also help generate discussions and allow probing where necessary thus gaining insight into various epistemologies. The main issues to be observed were recurrence - how frequently certain words or ideas were put across, specificity - what issues were repeatedly specified, emotion- what emotions or types of facial expression were brought out as people were contributing to the discussions and extensiveness shown by probing. Shajan (2005:56) defines observation as 'a systematic viewing and noting of the seen phenomena'. It consists of discerning the sketches under study by taking note of the dialect used and how it was utilized, nonverbal cues as well as the meaning of the utterances. Thus observation was done by scanning through the three sketches under study.

3.2 SAMPLING PROCEDURE (S) FOR DATA COLLECTION

The selected populace of the study is comedy in Zimbabwe with specific reference to sketch comedy. Comedy has risen in Zimbabwe with various genres to it for example street theatre. The sub populace is therefore sketch comedy by P.O Box. Their videos

have gone viral on social media sites which are a great way to underline the socio-political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. We as Zimbabweans cannot depend on outsiders to tell us what is taking place in our own nation as there will be some sort of bias. Their target of social media platforms helps them get a lot of audience thus entertaining as well as educating the masses by provoking their thought process.

Purposive sampling also referred to as judgmental, subjective or selective sampling is known for picking particular individuals within a population to use for a study. This type of sampling technique falls under non-probability sampling. Babbie (1990: 97) defines purposive sampling as selecting a sample, “on the basis of your knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of your research aims”. This indicates that the population being selected is non-randomly selected based on the particular characteristic as supported by Frey (2000) et al.

Palys (2008) views purposive sampling as basically synonymous with qualitative research as they are both keen on case study analysis. He further affirms that purposive sampling involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain principle or period. Thus, the research material selected is the latest 2014 video clips. The researcher made use of sketch comedy in a Zimbabwean setting. Who can better tell what is going on in Zimbabwe than the Zimbabweans themselves?

The sample chosen by the researcher can be viewed as adequate for this research. In other words, Bernard (2000) alludes that the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge.

A sample in a research is defined as a portion of a larger group. Investopedia further clarifies sampling as a strategy utilised as part of a geometric examination in which preset number of observations will be taken from a bigger populace. Alike, the researcher made use of sketch comedies by P.O Box as sample. To come up with a neutral affirmation the researcher analysed the three sketches that is *Hatiuye ikoko!* (We are not coming there!), *Anotenga here?* (Can they be used to buy?) and *Chaunoda chii?* (What is it you want?), to highlight the socio-political and economic concerns. As sampling entails obtaining representative data observations from a group the researcher used these three sketches to better understand and reassess how comedians hide behind humor in a bid to outline the concerns affecting the youth and Zimbabwe as a whole.

3.3 LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

- It requires a great deal of effort to assemble a group for discussion as people had little time on their hands to spare thus gathering the information took a long time.

- The researcher's own knowledge, preconceptions and ideologies can distort the final outcome since results are then put together by the researcher.

- Information that was gathered from the internet was not precise as there are no laws protecting against the posting of information therefore everyone can do it. Thus the data sourced over the web needed to be checked against library sources that have been distributed by authentic library sources.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was concentrating on the research methodology and the methods used to gather information which will be analyzed in this chapter. The main objective is to find out how representation has been used to inscribe meaning into their sketches. The chapter will also explore the themes brought out in the three sketches and how they relate to the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. This chapter will also explore the techniques used in comedy and how they are used to express meaning. Thus representation does not simply mirror or reflect reality but how the three sketches re-create a new reality.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

The satirical clips are pregnant with meaning as they expose the harsh socio-political and economic climate in Zimbabwe. The three sketches namely *Anotenga here*, *Hatiuye ikoko* and *Chaunoda chii*, mirror the problems of neediness, unemployment, political suppression, migration and economic meltdown that has constrained the able bodied to

leave the country and supposedly seek for greener pastures. But those leaving the country to neighboring countries are finding it hard to cope because more often than not, they return home empty handed. So instead of assisting those suffering at home, they become a source of burden because things are not what they seem.

The skit *Chaunoda chii?*(What is it you want?), also shows what unemployment does to people. The skit starts off with the duo sitting by the durawall with a plastic cup in between them which could probably mean that they were sharing an alcoholic drink and that they are sucking on lollipops to freshen their breath. This assumption can be supported by Winky D's song *Mirai kusimbisana pazvi corner*, (stop motivating one another by the corner). Apparently the duo is sitting by what looks like the corner of a yard. The song continues by saying, *Topamhosva kunemimadzikoma, vana varikurasika muchiona* (we blame the elders because the young ones are losing it at your watch), suggesting that the youth have lost track of what they are doing and spend most of their time drinking and doing absolutely nothing. This represents the issue that youth are unemployed and don't have anything to do.

4.2 UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment can be defined as being jobless. Zimbabwe has been faced with high unemployment rates which have spread from the youth to almost every citizen. It is this high unemployment rate which is leading people to do whatever they can in order to

survive. Joblessness has soured unprecedented levels with company closures and laying off of workers pushing them into the dungeons of poverty. Mokoena (2013) pointed out that unemployment plunges youth in poverty which implies social marginalization, lack of involvement, lack of command over resources, insecurity and vulnerability.

The sketch *Hatiuye ikoko* (We are not coming there!) represents how the youth, those who are economically active are leaving the country in search of better or rather greener pastures. But the grass is not always green on the other side. This is evident where even after *Bhutisi* gives praises to South Africa as well as boast about the things he owns down south, Boss Kheda says, *kuJoza handiuye mdara, muchikumbira zvinhu zvevanhu so*, (I will not come with you to Joburg my friend, you are asking for everthing from people). In the sketch, *Bhutisi* (Booties) is asking for almost everything from his colleague but he is coming from the supposedly ‘green pastures’. He explains how life is good and boasts about the good infrastructure as well as good food when he says, “*Tiri pa Joza mfanha kune McDonald, inorova tuchicken chicken, kwete izvi*”, (In Joburg, there is what we call McDonald which sells chicken, not this!). He even calls Johannesburg “little London”. All this shows that *Bhutisi* has nothing of his own.

In as much as Zimbabweans try to adopt and identify with members of the country they have seek refuge to, they will and can never be accepted as natives. *Bhutisi* keeps on saying “*kwedu kuJoza*”, (Our Joburg) meaning that he has adopted their culture and already identifies with them. However, they can never be accepted as citizens of South Africa as noted by the xenophobic attacks that we witnessed taking place in South

Africa. These attacks saw South Africans killing their fellow brothers on the grounds that, their foreign brothers are taking away their jobs.

In the sketch Bhutisi says to his colleague that 'you are using our money' *aah saka munotoyuza mari dzekweddu uko*, (so, you are actually using our money) and continues to repeat using the plural 'we' but they can never be part of the South African family. Thousands and thousands of youths are being injected into the labour market every year and are faced with this unemployment crisis. Bhutisi even invites his friend Boss Kheda to come to South Africa and search for employment. Boss Kheda responds to this invitation by saying that he will not come down South to search for employment because his friend has nothing to prove that he is working because he is asking for everything from him, a sign showing that there are no green pastures where he was. This is seen when he says, '*kuJoza handiuyeye mdara*'. – (I will not come to Johannesburg my friend).

The skit *Hatiuyeye ikoko*, also brings out the migration of people to seek employment elsewhere. Shaw (1975) defines migration as "the relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance". Because of harsh economic conditions, Zimbabweans are failing to make ends meet. The skits are providing relief to most people and at the same time highlighting challenges people are facing on a daily basis. Therefore, because of unemployment, we see a rise in poverty as well as migration.

Thus one can note the excessive use of the pronoun *kwedu*(we). *Bhutisi* has distanced himself from his fellow Zimbabweans as can be noted by his excessive use of *kwedu*. The pronoun is being used sarcastically to highlight the fact that Zimbabweans can never be a part of South Africa even if they try by all means to fit in. He tries to make a clear demarcation that he does not belong to Zimbabwe when he says *haa kunokukwenyuka!,haa unotoona kuti pane nharo* (Because here you can see that things are tough). He distances himself from the problems Zimbabwe is facing.

4.3 HARSH ECONOMIC CLIMATE

The duo in *Anotenga here* starts off by eating raw mangoes with salt. This is a clear representation of the harsh economic climate in Zimbabwe. They are probably eating raw mangoes because there is nothing else to eat. Thus due to unemployment they cannot get money anywhere to buy proper food to fill their stomachs. The duo ponders on the reception of bond coins where the injection of bond coins to the Zimbabwean market saw confusion in people thus the title *Anotenga here*. Eating raw mangoes can also be seen as a sign of poverty as Zimbabwe's economy is unstable.

The duo has sad faces as they recall how the so called bond coins are being rejected by people. This is seen when he says, *andiinawo acho vanhu varikungomaramba baba* (people are rejecting the ones I have my friend). They cannot use them to buy anything because no one will accept them. Sarcasm is shown towards the end of the skit when

they pull out empty bottles. This could be a representation of how the economy has been drained dry as symbolized by the empty bottles; the economy has come to absolutely nothing. There is also repetition when the Boss Kheda continuously says *anototenga mabhodhoro aya* (these empty bottles will buy something). Thus empty bottles are symbolic of a dead economy. It is as if the duo is trying to give hope that the bond coins will work someday, something that we now see happening around us, the bond coin is now of value to the Zimbabwean market.

4.4 POOR GOVERNANCE

Youths are tomorrow's future; they are the leaders of tomorrow. But the youths are finding themselves jobless because of poor governance. "Mabasa haaperiku South", (jobs are not scarce in South Africa) meaning that in Zimbabwe jobs are scarce. Thus there is a lot of brain drain taking place as youths are migrating to look for greener pastures. Again in *Hatiuye ikoko*, Bhutisi compares Zimbabwe to South Africa. He says, "*fly over yakushanda here ye pa Joina City?* (Is the fly over by Joina City now working?). He boasts about South Africa's infrastructure and indirectly blames Zimbabwe's lack of good roads to poor governance. The theme of poor governance is also brought out when Bhutisi says, "*ndotu phone turikunoku utwu?*" (These are the phones that you use here?). He compares the small phone he is given to his I-phone 5 that he left in South Africa. He continues to say that, "*kuJoza ndakatosiya I-Phone 5, kunoku hadzinyatsoshandeka*", (I left my I-phone 5 back in Joburg, they don't really

work here.). Again poor governance is being blamed for poor, slow network.

Thus infrastructure as symbolized by the fly over and the mobile technology symbolized by an I-phone 5 that *Bhutisi* mentions shows that South Africa is better than Zimbabwe. Their technology and infrastructure are more advanced than that of Zimbabwe. *Bhutisi* says this in a bid to lure his companion to where he is staying. However, *Bhutisi* fails to recognize that even though South Africa is his “little London”, home is always best.

At the beginning of the skit, there is a bicycle with a wheel missing. This shows the incompleteness of life itself. For a bicycle to fully function there is need for it to have both wheels on. But in this case one wheel is missing. This is a representation of how a government needs its people and vice versa. There is need for both the government as well as the people work together in order to avoid poor governance; the government will know what it is people require if they interact with the public more often.

4.5 POLITICAL SUPPRESSION

The skit *Chaunoda chii?*, highlights how Zimbabweans generally suffer from political suppression. People are not free to air out their views for fear of being persecuted, they fear for their own safety. This can be noted in how *Bhutisi* responds to *Boss Kheda's*

mention of *mazowe* (citrus drink). At the mention of the term *mazowe*, he panics and attempts to correct his friend by telling him not to mention that word. The term *mazowe* has become of significance to Zimbabwe as it is associated with politics as evidenced by *Bhutisi's* statement which says, “*Ndirikuziva mazowe aurikutaura. Ini zvevatongerwo enyika handidi*”- (I know the *mazowe* you are talking about. I do not want to be involved in political matters).

In Zimbabwe you can talk about everything else, just not politics. In support of this view, Allen (1998:36), states that, “many jokes involve making more or less obvious point, but managing not to state the point directly”. It permits us to uncover numerous things we would not straightforwardly say so it gives us the leeway of referring to socially sensitive and even taboo topics using indirect language.

The duo can freely choose what they prefer in as far as food, music and sport are concerned but when it comes to ‘*mazowe*’ they panic. They can talk in detail about everything else but are not free to air out what they really want about politics. This is because the First Family has their interests in the place known as *Mazowe*, where they have a farm as well as a school. When *Boss Kheda* is asked to explain what he means by the term *mazowe*, he becomes defensive. No one wants to be caught on the wrong side of politics. Thus his source of panic emerges from the fact that he does not want to say anything.

The title *Chaunoda chii?*(What is it you want?), is a clear representation of the fact that the issue of choice is not as straightforward as one would want it to be. The title suggests that you can choose what you want among the various things available but this is not really the case. The duo has the liberty to choose between their favorite soccer teams, their favourite musicians as well as their favourite genre of music, even the foods they prefer but are not at the liberty to choose which political party they want for fear of being victimized. This can be seen when *Bhutisi* says *pane asingade mazowe here? Ndoadaka mazowe acho-* (Is there anyone who does not like mazowe? I like mazowe). He however says it as if he is being forced to.

Hall, (1997) views language as a system of representation. The duo makes use of slang expressions for example referring to chicken as *ngeke*, *mdara* or *baba* - referring to a friend, *gozh pa den* meaning that he has a lot of empty bottles at home, *miriwo-* slang meaning for a girl. Their dialect targets the youth. Holmes (1992:285) asserts that different speech populations emphasize different functions and express particular functions differently. Therefore language assumes a significant role in how the message conveyed will be understood by the audience. As indicated by Mills (2003), there are positive and negative politeness strategies to the use of a certain dialect. He further confirms that the positive strategy is “concerned with demonstrating closeness and affliction”. Negative politeness on the other hand expresses indirectness. He continues to say that, “it is the behaviour of not wanting to impose on others.

There is a lot of word play in the sketches. The word play in the sketches under study has enabled the comedians to communicate their message to the audience. Feud (1960), states that the double meaning which arises from the literal and metaphorical meanings of a word are, “one of the most fertile sources for the technique of jokes. Ross (1998:7) on the other hand underlines the two sided connotation of a word when he says that, “an ambiguity or double meaning which deliberately misleads the audience” can be considered, “the most obvious feature of much humor.

Satire is an artistic tool for assessing human conduct. Koestler (1969:72) defines satire as “verbal caricature which distorts characteristic features of an individual or society by exaggeration and simplification”. This is evident in the three sketches under study. Kane et al in Chapman and Foot (1977:15) agree with Koestler (1969) by stressing that “a satire may have a purpose of showing the absurdity of certain mannerisms, class privilege, professional pretensions and institutional rules.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter's main focus was on the presentation and interpretation of data which saw the analysis of themes hence bringing out how representation functions in bringing out the socio-political and economic climate in Zimbabwe. In this chapter however, the researcher gives a run-down of the findings got from assessing how representation works. This chapter also makes conclusions in light of the study as well as offer recommendations to the study which will aid in pursuing studies on sketch comedy.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The research was an investigation of how humour is used as both commentary and satire on the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. It outlines the background of study showing the development of comedy. It likewise highlights the research gap that has been overlooked by other scholars in the study of comedy. The literature review explored available literature related to the researcher's topic as it looked at the views from different scholars. The main focus was on comedy in general with its main focus on sketch comedy.

There was also a focus on the data collection methods that were used to gather the relevant data. The research outlined the research instruments used to come up with the data, the sampling procedures as well as constraints of the methodology used to collect relevant data. Attention was also put on focus group discussions as well as the researcher's own observation to come up with the desired results as well as the sampling procedures undertaken.

The salient objectives of the study was to find out how representation has been used to inscribe meaning into the three sketches, how socio-political and economic issues are brought to light through representation. This necessitated the analysis of major themes such as poor governance, unemployment and political suppression and how they relate to the socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. This was done using the constructionist approach which is concerned with how representations are made through dialect including visual codes. Thus representation does not simply mirror or reflect reality but how the three sketches re-create a new reality.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

To sum up, the researcher came to the conclusion that sketch comedy does not only mirror reality but that it also serves to re-present or rather create a new reality. The sketches under study which are *Anotenga here?* *Chaunoda chii?* and *Hatiuye ikoko!*,

show that comedy can be funny but at the same time be educative and informative. The conclusion was based on the results gathered from the sketches under study. The research also shows that comedy in itself provokes thought to the receivers of the message. The videos by P.O Box have gone viral on online networking platforms which are a good approach to attract a lot of audience as well as make them aware of the socio-political and economic situation. Their objective of social media serves as a great way to educate the masses by inciting their point of view. Since the sketches last between three to four minutes, the audience does not need to experience extended periods of attempting to get the meaning. The socio-political and economic situation is brought to light by representation as can be seen in the sketches.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher recommends the following:

- Sketch comedy should also be done in English in order to cater for those who enjoy sketch comedy but cannot understand Shona.
- Fellow researchers should also consider comparing other forms of comedy in Zimbabwe so as to highlight what message they will be trying to portray.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The researcher would have wanted to compare the sketches with other sketches from Zimbabwe but comedy in Zimbabwe is still in its initial stages.
- Information on sketch comedy was not readily available so gathering the related information was somewhat a bit of a challenge.
- Most people did not know about this genre of comedy. So when it came to data collection, it was time consuming as the researcher had to explain what these sketches are about.

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DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDINGS

P.O Box skits (2014): *Anotenga here?* (2.28 minutes), *Chaunoda chii?*(3.10minutes)and *Hatiuye ikoko!*(3.11 minutes).