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**Analysis of Verbal Humour in Algerian Stand-up Comedy:  
The Case of Abdelkader Secteur's Sketches**

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

DA: Discourse Analysis.

SSTH: Semantic Script-Based Theory of Humour.

SO: Script Opposition

TA: Target

LA: language

NA: Narrative Strategy

SI: Situation

GTVH: General Theory of Verbal Humour.

CS: Code Switching

RO: Right and Obligation

L: low variety

H: High variety

AA: Algerian Arabic

SA: Standard Arabic

ANT: Algerian National Theatre

## List of Phonetic Symbols

Vowels	
Short vowels	Long Vowels
/a, ʊ, i, u, ə /	/aː , iː , uː/

Consonants					
Symbols	Arabic consonants	Symbols	Arabic consonants	Symbols	Arabic consonants
<b>b</b>	ب	<b>r</b>	ر	<b>q</b>	ق
<b>t</b>	ت	<b>z</b>	ز	<b>f</b>	ف
<b>θ</b>	ث	<b>s</b>	س	<b>q</b>	ق
<b>d</b>	د	<b>ʃ</b>	ش	<b>k</b>	ك
<b>ð</b>	ذ	<b>ʒ</b>	ص	<b>m</b>	م
<b>h</b>	ه	<b>ħ</b>	ح	<b>n</b>	ن
<b>w</b>	و	<b>j</b>	ي	<b>χ</b>	خ
<b>ʁ</b>	غ	<b>f</b>	ع	<b>g</b>	ق
<b>ʔ</b>	ء				

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## Abstract

Regarding its undeniable and crucial locus in humans' lives, verbal humour has ultimately been a recognized area of research in dissimilar disciplines. Such matter of study is basically a linguistic construct which takes place in different social arenas, and permeates several forms of entertainment such as stand-up comedy. On the basis of such comedic milieu, this present paper aims to provide a novel insight to the analysis of verbal humour in Algerian stand-up comedy, by taking the case of Abdelkader secteur's sketches as the crux of investigation. The choice of this topic lies in the actual thriving of stand-up comedy, and for the omnipresent popularity of the humorist. Therefore, the subject of analysis will focus on performance data of the humorist's language in use, which triggers humour, unveils the Algerian identity and conveys socio-cultural issues. In order to make this topic trustworthy, an empirical study is necessary. It is confined with five video-jokes trimmed from the comedian's sketches using Real Player software. Such procedure substitutes the attendance of the comedian's live performance where the humorist's show and audience's response are vivid. But for the sake of further feedbacks for an accurate interpretation of the database, the selected excerpts will be given to a sample of forty participants to be watched. In order to assess the contestants' perception and interpretation of the given excerpts, they will be given a set of open and closed questions in the form of a questionnaire. The corollary of findings confirms the proposed two hypotheses and extends the third one. It also expounds that this work is best suggestive, but not conclusive since it allows further analysis of para-verbal and non-verbal humour which are also salient in the interpretation of the causes of laughter in stand-up comedy.

## **General Introduction**

The creative and artful use of language can be spotted in individuals' ability to produce verbal humour. Being a universal trait and an intriguing parcel of human language behaviour, verbal humour insinuates itself into each aspect of everyone's life. For instance, it has become a widespread feature in many types of interaction and discourse with myriad functions, and it has pervaded in several forms of entertainments such as television shows, comic strips, sitcoms and stand up comedy.

This latter refers to a spontaneous performance held by a comedian in which s/he presents a humorous discourse in front of a live audience. Stand up comedy has become a popular form of entertainment all around the world during the last few decades, and thus, it intrigues large masses of viewers. It also transcends such level since it becomes the fieldwork of study among scholars in different disciplines with divergent aims.

On the basis of such discursive site, i.e., stand-up comedy, this present paper aims to provide a novel insight to the analysis of verbal humour of an Algerian stand-up comedian, who is considered as a new figure in the globe of Algerian stand up comedy called Abdelkader Secteur. Thus, the subject of analysis will focus on performance data of the humorist's language in use, through which he triggers humour, unveils the Algerian identity and conveys socio-cultural issues.

Such matters are drawn from the correlation between language and society. Socio-linguistically speaking, language is a complex dynamic phenomenon, strongly associated with the socio-cultural structure of society. It can serve as an instrument of cultural and social transmission, and it can also be a means of negotiating meaning. Indeed, it is

undoubtedly recognized that language exhibits systematic variation within any speech community and in individual's speech behaviour. Taking into account such view, the objective of the dissertation is an attempt to analyse the orator-comedian's language in use which constructs his/her discourse to function humorously and to fulfil intentional meanings. Therefore, the main question has been put forward: why can't stand-up comedy be a locus of socio-linguistic investigation by giving credit to the analysis of the stand-up comedian's humoristic discourse?

Thus, to make the topic reliable, some relevant questions are put forward as principal issues that can be raised as:

- What makes the stand-up comedian's discourse funny and humorous?
- What is the purpose behind the comedian's humoristic discourse?
- Is the comedian's code switching socially motivated?

The above questions lead to the assumption of the hypotheses which try to suggest that the comedian uses a figurative language embodied in a chunk of opposite scripts which mark his/her performance. Indeed, the comedian unveils the Algerian identity as well as its socio-cultural realities in his/her monologue. Moreover, code choice in his/her humoristic discourse is unmarked pursuing the norms of the Algerian community s/he belongs to.

The proposed hypotheses may lead to an authentic analysis of verbal humour by utilizing discourse as its frameworks. Therefore, for a better understanding of such analysis, this work is divided into three chapters. The first one is purely theoretical, concerned with exposing what had been done on the subject matter, i.e. verbal humour, in terms of attempting to bring light on the concept of humour and expose some conventional and linguistic theories of it. Indeed, a glance

at stand-up comedy will be provided. But as the subject matter is a kind of discourse (humoristic discourse), the background for designing research study should be devoted to try highlighting the scopes of discourse analysis by defining the term discourse, and identifying some preliminaries related disciplines. In addition to this, the first chapter strives to propose some approaches which explain the factors which lead to code choice since this latter is a prominent feature of almost all naturally verbal communication including verbal humour.

For an appropriate awareness of the fieldwork in which the analysis takes place, the second chapter will provide an overview of stand up comedy in Algeria. But due to the dearth of information concerning this topic, the second chapter is devoted to sketch a historical background of theatre in Algeria with its major expressed themes as regarding stand-up comedy a genre of theatre. In order to understand the languages at play in those theatrical settings, the chapter endeavours to highlight a glance at the linguistic profile in Algeria and attempts to advocate some characteristics of Algerian stand-up comedy.

In effect, this chapter is a pathway to engage in the empirical work with the goal of collecting and interpreting data. Hence, it will present the means by which data will be collected as well as the methodology used to do so, and finally, it will draw the findings and discuss the results.

## **1.1. Introduction**

Regarding its undeniable and crucial locus in human's life, verbal humour has ultimately been a recognized area of research in different disciplines. Such matter of study is basically a linguistic construct which takes place in different social arenas, in its dissimilar forms of interactions such as discourse. Therefore, verbal humour which occurs in the aforementioned sort of interaction, i.e., discourse, is better interpreted by applying the concept of discourse analysis which we attempt to define in this chapter, by shedding light on its scope through exposing some preliminaries concepts. Indeed, humour is the heart of this topic. Thus, it seems relevant to endeavour bringing some definitions of it and exposing a number of theories ranging from conventional to linguistic ones in order to have a better understanding on how humour works to cause laughter. Moreover, it is obviously noticed that humour permeates several forms of entertainment such as stand-up comedy, a theatrical genre that we try to identify by uncovering the features of the humorists, the role of the audience and the setting(s) where it occurs. Furthermore, the humorist's monologue in stand-up comedy remains a verbal construct. It is characterized by linguistic heterogeneity as it occurs in virtually all natural communication. Hence, this chapter strives to propose some approaches which explain the factors which lead to code choice. That what the first chapter holds.

## **1.2. The Scope of Discourse Analysis**

**It does not seem far-fetched to avow that verbal communication involves more than saying words. When people communicate, they obviously use certain signs and linguistic codes as their prevalent tool through which they attain specific purposes. Such purposes are confined with a number of tasks such as making sense of what they say in order to transmit specific messages and exchange meanings, encoding,**

decoding and interpreting what other language users intend to convey according to the speakers- hearers' socio-cultural backgrounds and identities. These tasks which occur in any type of natural speech including different conversations, interactions and discourses are amenable to study from divergent perspectives such as discourse analysis (hereafter DA) .

This is a fundamentally a practical discipline which bases its scrutiny on authentic pieces of discourse, either spoken or written. The term was first coined in 1952 by Zellig Harris as a method to analyse naturally occurring discourse (Paltridge, 2006). But what does discourse mean?

### 1.2.1. Discourse Defined

Originally, the term discourse derives from Latin 'discursus' to mean 'to run', 'to run on', or 'to run to and fro'. Over time, the term has been used in several ways. Previously, it was used to rehearse forms of spoken language such as speeches, where speakers 'run on' a topic, rather than natural and spontaneous speech, while currently, it is applied to cover the various forms of speech and other language practices, i.e., written texts.

Basically, the term designates a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing such as a dissertation, a sermon, a political speech, etc. In this respect, Robert (2008:72), states "**Le terme de discours (mot issue du latin *discursus*, « discours, conversation ») désigne en langue standard généralement un exposé oral ou, plus rarement, un exposé écrit**"<sup>1</sup>. (Italics in original)

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<sup>1</sup> My translation: The term discourse (from the Latin word *discursus* "discourse, conversation") designates, generally, spoken language or, more seldom, written statements.

In fact, the concept of discourse falls squarely within the interest of divergent disciplines, which view it in a disparity of ways. Hence, it becomes a contested notion among scholars, and thus, the subject of dissimilar definitions and formulations. Stubbs for instance, defines discourse as **"language above the sentence or above the clause"** (1983:1), According to him the term is confined within a structural inspect, i.e., it focuses on the language units which are governed by a set of rules underlying language usage.

Discourse is also regarded as **"stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified and purposive"** (Cook, 1989: 156). In his definition, Cook, attempts to explain that discourse either spoken or written, is a continuous parcel of language, ostensibly loomed to fulfil different functions: it carries a communicative meaning integrally linked with speakers/writers' intentions and hearers/readers' recognition of the associative, implicit, conceptual or the invisible meaning related with those intentions. Yet, in order to attain such intentions, discourse should be cohesive, possessing a number of semantic connectors (words, prepositions, conjunctions, etc) between clauses and sentences within a text or speech. In this respect, Halliday and Hassan (1976) define cohesion as **"linguistically explicit and signals underlying semantic relationships between text elements"**<sup>2</sup>.

In fact, Cook mentions in his definition the basic functions which make a discourse lucid. Yet, he does not provide a suitable term to what he calls: meaningful and purposive. Thus, Crystal (1992:25) proposed an alternative term which mostly corresponds to any spoken discourse, namely: coherent units, when he states that **"discourse is a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit, such as a sermon argument"**

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in the web article :  
<http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/KormosJudit/appling7.pdf>



**joke or narrative**"<sup>3</sup>. According to him, discourse is an elongated verbal communication which occurs between speakers and their interlocutors at a particular setting, in a specific social and cultural context. It requires from listeners to make sense of the perceived message by correlating between meaning and context.

It can be inferred from the aforementioned definitions that discourse refers to a social interaction through which human beings use grammatically correct language in its two forms, either spoken or written, in different speech events (e.g. a debate, a discussion, a job application letter, an interview, etc) to communicate effectively and negotiate meanings via applying important devices such as cohesion and coherence.

Despite this lucid deduction, it should be born in mind that the analysis of discourse does not take identical paths for the reason that the term discourse per se, is seen as an interdisciplinary movement. So what does the analysis of discourse involve?

### **1.2.2. Doing DA**

So far, it has been mentioned that the definition of what discourse is depends on the purpose for which it is used. In parallel, the term DA wraps an array of views and insights. DA evolved with the advent work the American structuralist Harris who believes that sentences are not the ultimate unit of verbal communication since **"language does not occur in stray words or sentences, but in connected discourse"**<sup>4</sup>(1952: 357). Therefore, the study of of language according to him, should be concerned with larger chunks of language as they flow together for example, discourse, conversations, texts, etc, and the analysis of discourse should be approached from two different perspectives:

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Tauschel, 2004:2.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Stern, 1983:133

The first is the problem of continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limit of a single sentence at a time. The other is the question of correlating 'culture' and 'language' (i.e. non-linguistic and linguistic behavior) (Harris, 1952:1)<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of these two approaches, the analysis of discourse takes divergent paths. Within descriptive linguistics, the concern of DA becomes merely theoretical including grammatical examinations. The major schools associated with such analysis are formal linguistics such as Van Dijk's text linguistics or systemic linguistics like Bhatia's genre analysis (Murcia and Olshtain, 2001).

The second approach of DA was not taken into account until the 1960s, when new fields of inquiry that rely on the correlation between language and society/culture appeared. The preeminent example is sociolinguistics. This latter reconsiders the previous paradigms of former linguists<sup>6</sup> by applying them in social context. It is committed to the study of naturalistic forms of speech with reference to the social milieu. It treats 'discourse' as language in use (or parole) and considers 'DA' as a method to analyse such language in use; for instance, Stubbs (1983:1) delineates DA to be a **"sociolinguistic analysis of natural language"**, and is tightly linked with **"language in use in social contexts, and in particular in interaction or dialogue between speakers"**.

In fact, the analysis of 'language in use' has also been the concern of Brown and Yule who consider that purely formal linguistics is not a sufficient analysis but should be bound up with the intentional meaning and functions of

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Paulston et al, 2012:23

<sup>6</sup> Formal linguists regarded language as an invariant entity abstracted from any language change or use. Their analysis was purely structural.

language in human life. In this respect, they say (1983:1) that

**The analysis of discourse is necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent from the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs.**

According to this claim, doing DA encompasses a structural and a functional analysis. For example, the analyst should consider how stretches of discourse are organized with coherent devices. In this case, DA may involve a syntactic or a semantic analysis. But the analysis does not reach its peak for the reason that the analyst might also conceive the particular meaning in context and the communicative intention related with what is said or written, such as inspecting a speaker's purpose in interacting verbally. Therefore, the functional approach to DA involves a set of questions like: how do speakers convey their target message? How is language used convincingly, as such to request, threaten, apologize, etc? How is language used to reflect speakers' solidarity within a particular group? What are the implicit motivations behind the use of a certain code? etc. Such examples of functional analytical questions are derived from a sociolinguistic perspective as well as pragmatic stance, two interconnected disciplines (Levinson: 1992, Thomas: 1995)<sup>7</sup>. Hence, **"doing discourse analysis primarily consists on doing pragmatics"** (Brown and Yule, 1983:26) as reviewed in the following.

#### **1.2.2.1. DA and Pragmatics**

As previously mentioned, discourse analysts attempt to find out the way small linguistic elements are combined to form meaningful and intentional communication. In other words, an analysis scrutinizes what speakers do with their words. Thus,

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<sup>7</sup>Mentioned in Nurmi et al, 1984:9

s/he takes into consideration how speakers' uttered linguistic forms convey a specific meaning according to the context. Such consideration is commonly approached in pragmatics, a sub-disciplinary field of linguistics, which bases its interest on the ways meaning is inferred from context.

In fact, pragmatics has received various scholars' attention, and thus, it has been the subject of divergent formulations. Crystal (1987:120) for example, believes that pragmatics includes **"the study of factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choices on others"**<sup>8</sup>, a definition that implies that speakers' linguistic behaviour in communicative exchange is constrained by a set of rules which in turn determine optimal communicative outcomes.

Hence, successful social interaction relies on the hearer's ability to interpret the speaker's message. This is done when the orator is able to construct utterances with an intentional meaning according to the context which depends on some factors such as the speaker-hearer social distance, social status, age, gender, and background knowledge, etc. But what does background knowledge mean?

#### **1.2.2.1.1. Background Knowledge**

In different kinds of oratory or written situations or speech events, a hearer/reader naturally activates his or her background knowledge in order to make inferences and interpret such speech situations and/or events. As Collins, et al (1994: 231-232) says, **"The listener uses background knowledge of the world and cues linking different contributions to conversation to make inferences from what is said"**.

Yet, individuals' background knowledge is related to their cognitive ability toward language processing. Therefore, researchers have often used the notions of 'schema' and

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Yus, 2011:3

'script' to explain the concept of 'background knowledge'. The former is **"a general term for a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory"** as Yule (2010: 132) claimed, for example, a schema of a 'restaurant' holds the knowledge of different objects such as 'table', 'food', 'menu', etc. Yet, the series of actions like 'to eat', 'to serve', 'to pay', associated with the same example, i.e., 'restaurant' are called scripts. Thus, script can be defined as a **"dynamic schema in which conventional action takes place"**. (Yule, 2010:133).

Indeed, individuals' conventions and their cultural milieu affect their background knowledge resulting differences in interpreting and encrypting witnessed events and discourses in general. In this respect, Gumperz (1995, 120) states that a **"lack of shared background knowledge leads initially to misunderstandings"**. For instance, a humorous speech in one culture cannot always cause amusement or provoke laughter in another culture. It may be rather offensive and inappropriate.

Therefore, the notion of background knowledge is a significant key toward optimal social interaction between speakers and hearers. Let us consider the following example for further illustration: an Algerian student requesting from his French teacher to lend him a book may say: 'Monsieur, est-ce que vous pouvez me prêter votre livre de littérature?' (Sir, can you lend me you literature book?) . In this example, the Algerian student addresses his teacher using the plural pronoun 'vous' instead of the single pronoun 'tu' thanks to his background knowledge of the French culture which considers the use of 'vous' as a polite form.

Therefore, in DA as well as in pragmatics, the context is an instrumental means used to frame speakers' selection of lexical items. It unveils a range of social attitudes such as

politeness, intimacy, insolence, etc, which are best explained in speech act considerations.

### 1.2.2.1.2. Speech Act and Discourse

The concept of speech act is relevant to both pragmatics and discourse analysis. It was developed by Austin and Searle to mean that language is used not only to describe situations but to perform an action. In this respect, Austin (1969) defines speech acts as **"minimal units of discourse representing how actions are carried out through words"**<sup>9</sup>. For example, when a seller tells his client / ʁsɛl hɛd/ le T-shirt/ bɛʒɛdik/ (wash this T-shirt with your hands) is actually communicating the action of washing as a warning.

Hence, human's daily communication involves a set of speech acts such as promising, threatening, ordering, warning, refusing, etc. This implies that accurate interaction between people transcends the literal meaning of spoken language, and it is via speech acts that the hearer could recognize or interpret the function behind linguistic forms according to a given situation.

In fact, what speakers say is associated with three types of acts: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. Let us consider the following example to elucidate these acts. If someone says "It is cold in here", the interpretation may vary. The literal meaning denotes the temperature. In this case, the speaker is performing a locutionary act, which refers to **"the literal meaning of actual words"** (Paltridge, 2006:55). But if the speaker intends something else such as asking someone to shut the door/window, this is referred to as an illocutionary act. According to Cutting (2002:16), the illocutionary act describes **"the function of words, the specific purpose that the speaker has in**

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<sup>9</sup>Cited in VonCanon, 2006 :5

**mind"**, whereas the perlocutionary act refers to the listener's response to the illocutionary act, which could be in the case, the fact that someone gets up and closes the door/window.

Usually, the actual sentences expressed can fit literal meaning, and this case shows direct acts like 'sorry!' to express the act of apologizing, but it often occurs that the linguistic forms reveal implicit meanings as in the example of someone expressing refusal without formally saying it. S/he may find an alternative way to express such refusal as 'I cannot join you; I have a lot of things to do'. In this case, it is the task of the hearer to disclose the illocutionary act.

This implies that speech act theory's major aim is to determine the speaker/hearer's knowledge of the basic conditions for the production and interpretation of acts via language use. Such speech act knowledge is assumed to be part of speakers' communicative competence, a term coined by Dell Hymes (1971) to delineate speakers' knowledge of both the structural and functional elements of a language. Hence, in order to be a competent speaker in a language, one has to acquire the grammatical competence in parallel with effective language use. This latter encompasses knowledge of appropriate socio-cultural behaviour, the cultural rules, shared norms and conventions of a given speech community.

Similarly, the notion of speech act according to Hymes, transcends the grammatical level since it is also framed by the social rules that structure different speech situations or events. In this respect, he (1972b: 57) confirms:

**The level of speech acts mediates immediately between the usual levels of grammar and the rest of a speech event or situation in that it implicates both linguistic form and social norms.**

Consequently, lucid interpretation of speech acts in particular, and of speeches in general, requires awareness of

structural forms and socio-cultural norms. For example, a successful humorous discourse as in a stand-up comedy depends on the audience's understanding of the culture in which it is embedded and requires from them enough background knowledge in order to get the joke. Indeed, although verbal humour is a universal phenomenon, it is still inextricably bound up with people's cultural background and ethnicity. Such salient component of our lives is an interesting topic of investigation and worthy to be defined.

### **1.3. Humour Defined**

Being a prevalent feature of human language behaviour, humour, quite obviously, permeates every social context. Despite this fact, humour seems to be rather trivial and unimportant, as Oring (2003: x) says **"humor is often considered to be trivial, and it seems that serious talk about humor is regarded as participating in that triviality"**.

Yet, this view of humour has changed towards new standpoints vis-à-vis its extensive presence in ones' lives. Hence, it has become a fertile research field and a significant subject to be probed by diverse scholars ranging from psychologists such as Ruch (1991); Lefcourt (2001); Chiaro (2004), linguists like Alam (1989); De Bruyn (1988); Farghal (2006) , discourse analysts as Sherzer (1985); Al-Khatib (1997), sociolinguists like Martineau (1970); Tannen (1984) and Benton (1988), etc. <sup>10</sup>This heterogeneity of views reveals the complexity of the term "humour" since the pursuit

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in Al-Kharabsheh's journal Article (2008)



of unveiling what humour is triggers much controversy and discrepancy.

Maybe one of the reasons which lead to such diversity of definitions of the term 'humour' is the expansion of its terminology. Previously, it was used as a component of the term comic (a hybrid medium of provoking laugh and amusement<sup>11</sup>) to convey only sympathy and benevolence as a response to the perception of incongruity; as stated by Ruch (1998:6),

**Humour is simply one element of the comic - as are wit, fun, nonsense, sarcasm, ridicule, satire, or irony - and basically denotes a smiling attitude toward life and its imperfections: an understanding of the incongruities of existence.** [Italic in original]

Actually, with the recent work of the Anglo- American researchers, humour has been used as an umbrella term to designate a range of nomenclatures such as joke, mockery, ridicule, satire, fun, etc. Thus, it carries both positive and negative connotations. In this respect, Rush adds (1998:6) "**Humour replaced the comic and was treated as a neutral term; i.e. not restricted to positive meanings**" [italics in original]

By and large, "**the definition of what humour is ultimately depends on the purpose for which it is used**" (Attrado, 1994:4). Therefore, humour can be defined in terms of its effect and response. In other words, humour can be deduced from its effect, i.e., intended (laugh) or unintended (no reaction), as Vandaele (2002:155) says "**humour is whatever has a humorous effect**" (Italics in original). But in many cases, humour does not necessarily result laughter, and thus, the response is unintended.

Ultimately, it can be inferred from the above definitions that humour is often intended to elicit laughter, smiles and provoke amusements, even if it is not always interpreted as such. Yet, in order to have a better understanding of what

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<sup>11</sup>A brief definition of the term Comic.

humour is, scholars have put down many theories of humour. These theories do not contradict each other, they are rather dissimilar perspectives. The subsequent section will tackle some of these theories.

### **1.3.1. Theories of Humour**

Regarding its intricacy and complexity, the term humour has been the crux concern of manifold disciplines. As it has been the matter of various definitions, it has, also, in parallel, been the subject of diverse theories. The most conventional ones are: the superiority theory, the relief theory and the incongruity theory (Raskin, 1985).

#### **1.3.1.1. The Superiority Theory**

This theory holds different appellations since it is also called: the hostility theory, the disparagement theory (Sulls, 1997), the conflict theory (cf. Liao, 1998:28), etc. It has emerged from the earlier work of the philosophers Plato, Aristotle as well as Hobbes. Its main hypothesis is to reveal that laughter is generated by humiliating, disparaging specific opponents and laughing at the misfortunes of others to reflect ones' superiority and show their inferiority. Plato, for instance conceives humour as **"a kind of malice toward people that are considered relatively powerless"**<sup>12</sup>. Morreall (1987:3) also suggests that **"laughter is always directed at someone as a kind of scorn"**.

In 1679, Hobbes shows that the nature of human beings is to show off their superiority in opposition to others' shortcomings. He conceives laughter as an expression of an unexpected realization that we are better than others, an expression of 'sudden glory'.

Thus, the superiority theory is a way of explaining that humour is used in a negative, an aggressive and a hostile sense. Such rigid attitudes toward the others can bequeath new

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Morreall, 1987:10

behaviours and create what is called "**humour as a social corrective**".<sup>13</sup> For example, thin people usually mock/laugh at an obese person, for his/her overweight or way of walking. Thus, this attitude may lead that person to lose weight.

In addition to the above causes which generate humour, there are other ways and manners which make people laugh as shown in the following theory.

### **1.3.1.2. The Relief Theory**

This theory is also called the release theory. As its name suggests, the theory concentrates on the fact that laughter releases tensions and frees the one from anxiety and stress, and thus, has a psychological nature which impacts on humans' minds providing them with a 'psychic energy'. Such energy progressively proliferates in their body, and is used as an aid to liberate the one when talking about taboo topics (Freud<sup>14</sup>). Thus, when humans are released, these topics and thoughts can be the subject of laughter and amusements. In this respect, Meyer (2000:312) states that "**humour springs from experience of relief when tension is removed from an individual**"

This sort of humour can be used in specific communicative situations. It is observed in many contexts that jokes are used at the beginning of a speech event to release the tensions, and defuse an anxious atmosphere. For example, in an interview, the interviewer may start his speech by telling a funny and humorous joke to create a pleasant atmosphere, release the tension for the interviewee and to make him relax.

### **1.3.1.3. The Incongruity Theory**

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<sup>13</sup> This terming is reminiscent to Bergson's gist view of humour and laughter (1899-1975), mentioned in Avner's article.

<sup>14</sup> Freud is one of the prominent figures in explaining this theory.

Perceived as the most influential approach of humour, the incongruity theory has the assumption to bring a holistic insight toward the causes which provoke laughter and elicit humour in general. It regards humour as a reaction to an incongruity. This latter is used to encompass the ideas of ambiguity, logical impossibility, irrelevance, and inappropriateness. Thus, humour is an intellectual or cognitive response to something that is unexpected, illogical or inappropriate. In other words, people laugh when they experience something that does not fit to the norms, i.e., something that stimulates a surprise. In this respect, Pascal<sup>15</sup> states **"Nothing produces laughter more than a surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that which one sees"**.

In a joke, the surprise is an essential element. It is generally conveyed via a punch line, the final part of a joke, which ostensibly provides an incongruous or a paradoxical ending. Confirming this idea, Wilson (1979:9) says **"the general proposition is that the components of a joke, or humorous incident, are in mutual clash, conflict or contradiction"**. Thus, the punch line makes people's expectations vanish, bringing out a kind of discrepancy which elicits laughter. For example, in the joke where a son telling his mother: /ma, bɔi:t nzeweʒ wahda bi:ɖa, [twi:la wə ɣadama/ (Mum, I want to marry a white, tall and working girl), and the mother replies: /ʃuf keʃ friʒider/ (search for a good Fridge), the incongruous part is lucid: It is the punch line of the joke in which there is unexpected and illogical response, i.e., the fridge, which does not fit the norm. The expected answer is 'I will find you a girl with such characteristics'. Thus, the cause of laughter in this case derives from the sudden perception of incongruity between joke components.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Ludovici, 1993, 27.

It can be inferred from the aforementioned theories that the causes of laughter are quite variable, and that each theory highlights a specific aspect to comprehend the nature of humour. From a sociological perspective, the superiority theory considers humour as a kind of malice toward powerless people, from a psychological point of view, the release theory stresses on the mental process of the hearer, while from a cognitive perception, the incongruity theory concentrates on the stimulus. Such theories account for the diverse types of humour ranging from visual to verbal humour, and thus, they are considered as prominent ones in the scope of humour. Despite this, the holistic insight about this field of research is not fully-fledged. Hence, researchers from dissimilar schools have provided other theories such as the linguistic theories of verbal humour which will be discussed in the following.

#### **1.3.1.4. Linguistic Theories of Verbal Humour**

As humour turns out to be an intrinsic topic of inquiry in diverse disciplines, it becomes, until recently, the crux concern of linguists, who attempt to construct a linguistic theory of humour by taking into account its verbalized form. Hence, such theories are abstracted from any visual or physical humour. Their crux interest is concerned with humour which is transmitted via a language that could be transcribed and analysed such as jokes, short stories, anecdotes, etc. In effect, verbalized humour can be either referential or verbal. The former refers to the implicit meaning hold in the text of a joke or a story, while the latter considers the peculiar features of linguistic forms used to express it such as homonyms, homophones, etc. Despite this distinction, the phrase 'verbal humour' remains an umbrella term encompassing not merely specific language devices used to create humour but also covering the conceptual meaning of a joke. It is used as

a generic phrase by most researchers in their linguistic theories who approach it from different points of view.

#### **1.3.1.4.1. Alexander's Approach to Humour**

Alexander (1980, 1997) for instance, deals with verbal humour from a socio-semiotic perspective. On the basis of Halliday's framework which discloses that meaning should be analysed in terms of both linguistic system (text) and social system in which it occurs, i.e., social context, Alexander delineates his assumption. To do so, he adopts a sociolinguistic approach for being able to correlate between verbal humour and socio-semiotic system. In fact, in his approach, Alexander (1997:8) places his pivotal interest on:

**(1)A preliminary discussion on the criteria by which modes of humour can be differentiated from one another, (2) the lexicogrammatical dimensions of verbal humour ie what specific elements linguistic analysis can highlight, and (3) the manner in which particular aspects of humour and, accordingly, too, their appreciation are 'keyed into' the culture in which they are found.**

Therefore, his inquisitive concern lies under the nature of humour, to be investigated at three points:

a) He measured humour and its related terms (e.g., joke, gag, comedy, etc) by providing six criteria, which are:

1. Intention of the speaker or writer: humour is either intentional or unintentional.

2. Consciousness of the speaker or writer. Yet, it should be born in mind that these two criteria overlap and depend on the parts of the speaker or the hearer, since there are cases where the speaker intends to be funny while the listener is unconscious of such fact.

3. Malevolent/benevolent intention: sometimes humour is used to express malicious intentions with the apparent aim of hurting , insulting, making fun, and ridiculing, while other times, it carries positive and kind intentions with two purposes that are the next fourth and fifth criteria.

4. Amuse people.

5. Convey light-heartedness (or cheerfulness).

6. Wit: An intellectual pleasure

b) It naturally appears that people from similar cultural backgrounds can appreciate and participate in humour. Such fact implies that humour is part of human language behaviour. Therefore, language is a crucial element for verbal humour; it possesses certain devices which allow humorous effects to be attained.

Accordingly, the scrutiny of verbal humour should be spotted on its 'productive side', i.e., linguistic performance by taking into account five lexico-grammatical levels, which Alexander (1997) works on. These levels are: the graphological level, the morphological level, the syntactic level, the lexical-semantic level and the pragmatic or discourse level. By employing such levels in the analysis of verbal humour, one can deduce the surface structure of it, in terms of spotting the linguistic features of the humorous discourse like pauses, repetition, etc, and the deep structure which refers to the figurative language used such as punning, allusion, ambiguity, etc to deduce the implicit meaning.

c) Alexander's view of verbal humour is analogous to his perspective of language, due to the fact that language is implicated in verbal humour. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language, according to him, serves two major functions: first, it is regarded as a tool of cultural and social transmission and second, it is conceived as a means of negotiating meanings, whereby social signification is

achievable. Thus, Language is part of a social process. Taking into account such view of language, verbal humour is also considered as an occurrence in social play. Being an instinctive feature of human social communication, humour functions as a **"social cement or even, more seldom, as a preliminary means towards re-constituting society"** (Alexander, 1997:7).

Indeed, humour operates according to the based knowledge of the culture involved. Hence, it is approved that instances of verbal humour brought to an alien cultural setting may be considered as a nuisance and a chock to its people.

Ultimately, it can be deemed that Alexander's viewpoint may have intrinsic worth in analysing verbal humour of different kinds of data. Despite this, his assumption is just descriptive, it lacks a precise theory, as Attardo (1994: 193-194) points out

**Many stylistic, semiotic and textual theories are at most merely interesting programmatic statements rather than complete and detailed theories. They all deal with humour which goes beyond the joke, and they share some methodological tools which can be considered pragmatic.**

Consequently, other linguists proposed other theories of humour such as the Semantic Script-based Theory of Humour (henceforth SSTH) yielded by Raskin (1985).

#### **1.3.1.4.2. The Semantic Script-based Theory of Humour (hereafter, SSTH)**



The SSTH has emerged from the principles of generative grammar, a linguistic model introduced during the late 1950s by Noam Chomsky. The theory is based on the application of Chomsky's competence notion which describes on the one hand, speakers' ability to produce sentences from a finite set of lexemes thanks to grammar and, on the other hand, hearers' understanding of utterances never heard before. In other words, the theory puts forward the hypothesis that if speakers are able to distinguish grammatically correct sentences from incorrect ones, they can determine whether the sentence is humorous or not. Supporting this idea, Attardo(1994:196) claims **"because a speaker can tell if a sentence belongs to the set of grammatical sentences[...]the speaker can tell if a text is funny or not."**

This implies that the SSTH is concerned merely with humour competence, within the apparent aim of reconstructing a sort of knowledge which permits speakers to understand and generate humorous text. Therefore, it neglects humorists' performance (i.e., humorous language use) and models only a situation of an idealized speaker/hearer, unaffected by gender and ethnic prejudices and **"undisturbed by scatological obscene, or disgusting materials, not subject to boredom, and most importantly, who has never "heard it before" when presented with a joke"** (Attardo, 1994: 197). Yet, one should bear in mind that this idealized situation does not occur in reality since humour is affected by certain biases and shaped by cultures.

Besides, the theory draws attention to the analysis of scripts within a semantic framework. The notion of script has already been identified, but for a more elucidation, it seems salient to expose Raskin's own definition. According to him (1985:81)

**A script is a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it. It is a cognitive structure internalized by the native**

speaker.[...]every speaker has internalized rather a large repertoire of scripts of 'common sense' which represent his/her knowledge of certain routines, standard procedures, basic situations, etc.

In other words, a script is a mental configuration present in each individual. It is a 'lexical item' (Raskin, 1985) which contains crucial information about a situation, an event or an activity (actions). Usually, scripts are associated by 'semantic networks' different in nature (synonymy, hyponymy, etc), and which correspond to the speaker's cultural background. For example, if a non Arabic listener hears someone saying /rahum yəlaʕbu bəl qanu:n/, he cannot grasp two meanings, either 'they are playing with law', or 'they are playing with Zither'. So the semantic network is tightly linked with individual's culture and may hold different homonyms, as the script /qanu:n/ which refers either to 'law' or 'Zither'.

The notion of script in this theory is used to denote the meaning of the text of a joke. Hence, the main hypothesis of the SSTH is the following:

A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the conditions [...] are satisfied.

i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts

ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite [...]

The two scripts with which some text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text. (Raskin, 1985: 99)

It can be inferred from the above assumption that a joke can be funny if text segments are compatible and overlap with two scripts: The first script is the preliminary part of the joke with obvious and apparent interpretations for the hearer, while the second is the opposite script, which contains the punch line holding a sudden surprise ending.

In addition to this, Raskin demonstrates that jokes flout the normal code of communication, i.e., a switch from the bona-fide communication to the non bona-fide communication is noticed. The principle of bona-fide communication is based on four maxims by Grice's cooperative principles which are:

- 1) **Maxim of quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required.**
- 2) **Maxim of quality: Do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.**
- 3) **Maxim of relation: Be relevant.**
- 4) **Maxim of manner: Be clear, brief and orderly.** (Yule: 2006:130) (Italics in original)

Hence, a joke usually violates some of the cooperative principles, using the non bona-fide communication as its mode which leads to humour and amusement. In this case, a hearer does not expect the speaker (the humorist) to be honest, neither tells a lie.

On the whole, it can be deduced that the SSTH is restricted to the analysis of jokes only, by approaching them semantically using the notion of script-opposition (incongruity and antonym) as its main assumption.

Yet, this theory cannot be applicable in longer humorous texts such as comedy, sitcoms, etc, because it uses jokes as

its preliminary material. Consequently, Raskin extends this theory with his student Attardo to the so-called: General theory of Verbal Humour.

#### **1.3.1.4.3. The General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)**

In 1991, Raskin and Attardo introduce their GTVH, an extension of the SSTH, which deals with "**humorous narrative texts longer than jokes, such as poems, sitcoms, short stories, novels**" (Archakis/Tsakona, 2001:45)<sup>16</sup>.

In contrast with the SSTH, which is a semantic-base theory, the GTVH is more general. It incorporates five Knowledge Resources (KR) which are:

1. Script Opposition (SO): as explained above in the SSTH. It denotes that laughter is a response of unexpected happening (incongruity).
2. Target (TA): 'butt' of the joke. For example, it describes a person, a country, or a group of people who are the subject of laughter. It reveals the aggressive nature of humour, as presented in the superiority theory.
3. Narrative Strategy (NS) describes the genre of the joke (speech event) such as a riddle, a dialogue, a conversation, etc.
4. Language (LA): refers to all the linguistic units used in the verbalization of a joke, such as word order, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, etc.
5. Situation (SI): considers the participants, the objects, and the activities included in the joke.

Thus, a joke or a humorous text can be analyzed by applying the above KRs. To conclude, one can mention that the GTVH seems to be a complete theory of examining humorous text by encompassing concepts from other theories. It treats humour

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<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Walte, 2007.

from a cognitive perspective (inspired from the incongruity theory), a social stance (derived from the superiority theory) and from a semantic/ pragmatic side.

After exposing some theories of humour, one can have a better view and understanding of the phenomenon, how it occurs, and why it is considered as funny. In effect, it should be marked out that humour possesses different types and genres such as stand-up comedy, which we attempt to highlight as follow.

#### **1.4. An Overview of Stand-up Comedy**

Stand-up comedy is an offshoot of the comedic and theatrical genres described by Attardo (2001: 162) as **"a highly artificial, scripted genre"**. It refers to **"a particular kind of performance, often given while standing on a stage in front of a microphone, during which a performer tells a scripted series of fictitious accounts in such a way as to suggest that they are unscripted, in an attempt to make audience laugh"** Sankey (1998:3). To put it another way, stand-up comedy is a discursive site, or a speech event in which a comedian standing on a stage with a microphone, in front of a live audience performs a comic monologue. This latter is a set of scripted humorous stories and short jokes called 'bits' told verbally in such a spontaneous and improvised way and accompanied by physical gags for the holistic intention of entertainment and amusement, but also for rhetorical purposes, as Greenbaun (1999:33) believes when stating that **"stand-up comedy is an inherently rhetorical discourse which strives not only to entertain but to persuade"**.

**Stand-up comedy is accorded various appellations such as joke monologue, comic monologue or one man/woman show, vis-à-vis their common performing manner as described above, i.e., it is a one-side conversation, delivered on a stage by a single speaker to an audience. This terminology can be**

confined with the generic term of comedic sketch or skits. Yet, the question that one is prompted to ask is: what is a sketch?

#### 1.4.1. Sketch defined

The term sketch literary means "a hasty or undetailed or painting often made as a preliminary study" as defined by the free dictionary. It also means a short report or presentation that gives basic details about something such as a sketch of a person's life. But from a comedic perspective, the term sketch, also called a skit, refers to a set of improvised or scripted short and humorous stories told by renowned actors or comedians on stage, in theatre or through an audio or visual medium such as broadcasting. Such funny plays or scenes are short since they require a fraction of time, i.e., no more than ten minutes unlike movies, sitcoms, screenplay which last much longer, i.e., from twenty minutes to one hour.

The term sketch has its root in American vaudeville and British music-hall, two popular theatrical entertainment genres of nineteenth century, which entail a series of unrelated brief humorous stories, comic acts, dancing, songs, and magic strung together to form a common bill. Generally, those short skits portrayed funny anecdotes accompanied with satirical songs and funny acts like "sliding on a banana peel or clubbing on a collapsed roof" (Rishel, 2002:242) for the apparent aim to generate laughter. Such short comedic performances spread out throughout various countries, and thus, it becomes a borrowed word which transcends its literal meaning to be known only as a short funny scene as it occurs in Algeria. In fact, it should be born in mind that the term 'sketch' was most probably introduced in the Algerian setting by the French who borrowed it from English to mean just this 'short funny public representation'; thus the word is well-known by Algerians.

Indeed, comedic sketch was influenced by other genres like the 'burlesque', with its vulgar entertainments. Hence, the comic pristine sketches turn to be more disreputable entertainment involving rowdy scenes and plays featuring adults' entertainments. However, in the current days, comedic sketches cover an array of shows such as comedy programs, adults' entertainments, children's series and stand-up comedy. This latter, like sketch, also has its origin in America as will be shown.

### **1.4.2. Emergence of Stand-up Comedy**

Stand-up comedy has particularly a rich history. It evolved initially in the United States, decades ago (in the mid 1800s) especially with the advent minstrel shows of Thomas Dartmouth, which consisted of comic skit, variety acts, dancing and music performed by white people in black faces to divulge racial stereotypes and to mock at people who were subjugated (black people). During the four decades that followed, stand up comedy had known its decline since it disappeared from the cultural landscape until the coming of 1970s, where it was revitalised by the emergence of new comedy clubs, and novel generation of comedians like Lenny Bruce, Gorge Carlin in America, and Bobby Thompson in UK. From the 1970s to the 90s, more ridiculous styles of comedy began to emerge, led by the madcap styling of Robin Williams, the odd observations of Jerry Seinfeld, etc.

Following this era, i.e., during the 2000s, stand-up comedy has bounced back stronger than ever, it has exploded to becomes a very popular genre of entertaining. Accordingly, several forms of media such as mainstream TV and video recordings, have contributed to its flourishing. In addition to this, within the explosion of Internet, a myriad of websites like You Tube, and several social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have taken part in its rise by allowing the audience new access to stand-up and providing new venues for comedians to expose their performances in order to gain a large mass of fans.

### **1.4.3. Features of Stand up Comedy**

Stand up comedy is characterized by some salient features such as task of stand ups, role of the audience, and the venue where it occurs.

#### **1.4.3.1. Characteristics of Stand-up Comedians**

As previously mentioned, humour is a common trait of human linguistic behaviour which occurs more or less spontaneously in their conversations and communication. Yet, it should be acknowledged that despite its pervasiveness in our daily social interaction, humour can be better performed by a number of people who are gifted to do so, and/or outshine using it in front of a public audience as it occurs with comedians in general. Indeed, it is observed that **"although the linguistic performance of most native speakers of a language is suitable in everyday social interaction, few individuals excel in using speech for the purpose of dramatization"** (Apte, 1985: 199). Therefore, the fact of telling a number of successive funny stories and acting humorously such as using some comic gestures or miming, in front of a live audience, is not a talent everyone can afford. This is why some stand-ups <sup>17</sup>are said to be skilful.

Moreover, stand-up comedians are a professional group with distinctive characteristics: their creativity in illuminating aspects of humour production and appreciation is not an easy task. Their role is to be able to invent and perform their own work by taking into account timing as well as the instantaneous feedback of the audience (either laughter or irony). On their stage, stand-ups' verbal content lies at the heart of their performance. But what really characterizes their humorous discourse?

Like other forms of simultaneous verbal interactions, stand-ups' discourse possesses a number of features; for instance, it tends to be less sophisticated in terms of structure, lexical density and style. Thus, their spoken discourse relies on simple sentences due to the extensive use of verb-based phrases, active verbs, and coordinate structure rather than subordinate ones. It also contains fewer complex

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<sup>17</sup>Another name given to stand-up comedians.



words usually accompanied with repetitions with the aim of being lucid and making sure that the idea reaches the listener. In fact, repetition or redundancy is a common feature of any spoken discourse, for the reason that **"it is produced in real time, with speakers working out what they want to say at the same time as they are saying it"** (Paltridge, 2006 :18). In addition to this, spontaneous speech is also typified by the use of pause and fillers like "hmm" "hhh" to think about what speakers are going to say, or to express hesitation.

A natural characteristic which occurs in any spontaneous conversation is the exchange of ideas between interlocutors in order to signal feedback from the speaker. This is done when listeners attempt to take part in the conversation like when saying comments or showing consent to the speaker. Therefore, the fact of interrupting a speaker refers to the process of 'overlapping' which refers to the turn-taking between participants during a period of time. Sometimes, a listener picks up the last idea or the last word of the speaker in order to continue the conversation. Such fact is called the latching process. Both overlapping and latching processes are lacking in stand-ups' discourse for the obvious reason that in a monologue<sup>18</sup> the audience does not take turns or participate in the discourse. But if their presence is crucial for the building of stand-up comedy, then, what is its role? The following section will attempt to clarify the position of the audience in this sort of entertainment.

#### **1.4.3.2. The Role of the Audience**

Rutter (1997:92) stresses the significant role of the audience in stand-up comedy when claiming that **"Like conversation, stand-up is a 'collaborative production' "and "is**

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<sup>18</sup> A monologue is form of dramatic entertainment, comedic solo, in which a single actor speaks alone.

made possible by the active involvement of those that make up the interaction." Ross (1998:101) further confirms that **"the 'naked' confrontation with an audience makes stand-up more dynamic, but is risky for the performer"**. Hence, stand-up comedy could refer to a kind of teamwork held by collaboration between the performers and their audience. This implies that the audience plays a crucial role in the flow of the show, and it is the responsible for the actor's timing.

Their laughter or silence response demonstrate to the stand-ups if they have understood the joke or not, and more precisely, if they appreciate it or not. In this respect, Norrick (2003:1344) describes the audience appropriately when stating that laughter **"ratifies and evaluates the teller's performance."**

Hence, it can be depicted that the actor's performance may impact directly on the audience's response. But in some cases, it is observed that within professional and popular comedians, the audience can intervene with laughter at the very beginning of the joke or right after the build-up. Such cases imply that laughter does not only serve to assess the content of the joke. It rather results from the skilful performance of the joke teller or the fact that the audience has begun to at least partly predict an incongruous punch line.

Yet, it should be born in mind that there is no standard audience, and thus, there is no standard style which guarantees that the performer will be appreciated and attain success. Each audience is different and reacts in a diverse way even if the performance is exactly the same. Some recipients can also support the joke teller's performance by making gestures, nods or simple utterances as "mm hmm", or "yeah". These gestures and utterances show that the recipients are interested in listening to the joke and are capable of getting it. Hence, they may find the punch line hilarious and reward their performer with hearty applause. But it is not

always the case, since some of them may show silence, others may just smile.

Whatever their reaction is, stand-ups should be capable to respond to all unexpected interruptions and distractions of the audience, such as extended laughter, mobile phone ring tones or heckling. In Toikka and Vento's view (2000:53), these disruptions during the performance can be be beneficial for the comedian, allowing him/her to interact with the audience, and thus, making the performance more genuine and less scripted. Indeed, interaction with the audience provides the comedian with a chance to use their wit and take control of the situations, exploiting the unexpected interruptions, making them an ingredient of the show.

Yet, the question that may rise is: where do such uni-or bi- directional interactions occur? In other words, is there a specific location where stand-up comedy occurs? The answer to this question will be highlighted in the following.

#### **1.4.3.3. Venues of Stand-up Comedy**

Stand-up comedy may occur in various venues, such as nightclubs, festivals, business events, theatre shows, private shows, television and radio performances, as pointed out by Toikka and Vento (2000:64). From the first sight, these venues vary in size and in the amount of attending audience. Yet, there are also particular venues devoted to stand-up comedy, mainly comedy clubs which are very widespread in the United States.

As Toikka and Vento (2000:65) demonstrate, these types of clubs should be centres for stand-up comedy to provide the best medium for comedians to see other performers and evaluate their own performances. Moreover, the audience can be seen as somewhat committed to the show, which in turn creates the suitable ambience. Most of the time, stand-up comedy shows are performed in a theatre. Generally, the two loci, i.e., theatre

and comedy clubs, share some common characteristics: they lack changes of scenery or backdrops, which implies that there is no pre-performance act to watch before a stand-up comedian takes the stage.

From the aforementioned features, it can be inferred that stand-up comedy can be regarded as a typical conversational exchange between the comedian and his/her audience whose response is confined with laughter and applauses. Yet, it should be born in mind that the comedian's monologue remains a verbal construct, characterized by linguistic heterogeneity as sociolinguists confirm. In this respect, YAI (2008:5) claims

**La vision d'une langue uniforme est en fait une fiction, une vue de l'esprit. Toute langue est hétéroglossique dans le sens où elle se caractérise par une stratification complexe des genres, registres, styles, sociolectes, dialectes, et par une interaction entre ces catégories<sup>19</sup> .**

Therefore, approaching a humoristic discourse in stand-up comedy would be intriguing if the matter of analysis relies also on unveiling the reasons behind the stand ups' micro linguistic diversity. In effect, a myriad of theories have been put forward to explain in general the motives of speakers' code choice as will be shown in the following.

### **1.5. Code Choice**

It is obviously recognized that variability is a prevalent feature in human's verbal communication. When people speak they usually choose, from their verbal repertoires, the appropriate code in order to attain their communicative goals.

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<sup>19</sup> My translation: That language is a uniform and static phenomenon is in fact a fiction, a view of imagination. Any language is said to be heteroglossic in the sense that it is characterized by a complex stratification of genres, registers, styles, sociolects, dialects, and by an interaction between these categories.

But what does 'code' mean? From a sociolinguistic perspective, the term 'code' covers an array of nomenclatures since it is conceived as a neutral term. Thus, it is used to denote a language, a particular variety of that language, but also, by a loose definition, any style or register that a speaker selects to employ in a communicative performance.

This denotes that there are no single-code speakers, as Bell (1976:110) confirms "**no language user is monolingual, in the strict sense of possessing a single code**". Hence, each individual is subject to switch or mix between the codes, at least two, during a communicative episode according to specific circumstances. Such process is usually referred to as code switching (hereafter, CS), and has received extensive definitions from various scholars.

### **1.5.1. An overview of Code Switching:**

The contact between people from different ethnic groups is evidently a social phenomenon that involves a linguistic dimension known as the contact of languages. This latter is marked by various outcomes among which code switching remains the most inevitable and pervasive phenomenon observed in various communities, mainly multilingual ones.

In effect, it is commonly noticed that bilingual speakers are often involved in switching or mixing between the languages they speak during a conversation, or even within a single utterance. Such phenomena was, long ago, misinterpreted and regarded as deviant because bilinguals do so to fill in lexical gaps. In other words, bilinguals were seen as lacking competence in one or both spoken languages.

But as bilingualism pervades in almost all communities due to some external factors such as colonisation, globalization, technology, marriage, etc, CS becomes common and usual. Hence, extensive interests rise about it in dissimilar domains, and thus, multiple definitions have been put forward. Within

sociolinguistics for instance, Milroy and Muysken (1995:7) propose that CS is **"the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation"**<sup>20</sup>. Such view is constrained with two discrete entities called 'languages'. In this case CS is said to be external or cross linguistic CS.

Yet, it should be marked out that some scholars envisage CS not the only feature of bilingual situations; but also a trait of diglossic contexts, in which switching occurs between two varieties of the same language (high and low), or between different social and regional dialects. Such view is confirmed by the findings of Bloom and Gumperz (1972) after a study done in Norway. So, within a monolingual context, CS is claimed to be internal. According to this perspective, Hoffmann (1991:10) defines CS as, **"the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation"**.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the above classifications of CS, the subject matter still remains very intriguing. It gains dissimilar scrutiny such as syntactic, grammatical, pragmatic, etc. but the question which raised the curiosity of various researchers is 'why do speakers code switch?'. To put it differently, the inquisitiveness of speakers' code choice is regarded as a critical issue among researchers in different disciplines in order to determine the reasons, the factors and the motives behind such choice. So, for the sake of a deeper insight on what has been done on this subject matter, a number of approaches will be exposed in the next section.

### **1.5.2. The Competence/Performance Approach**

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Cantone, 2007:56.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Zéphir, 1996: 134.

Since code choice is regarded as a linguistic issue, its scrutiny has been delimited at these two salient levels which are competence and performance. But which of these two levels is most amenable to elucidate individuals' code choice? Is it adequate to count on a mere performance model in order to explain switching linguistic behaviour? Or is it sufficient to rely on a competence model to clarify this individual linguistic variability?

In an attempt to answer such questions, Spolsky (1988:105) points out that **"it is attractive to build a process model or performance model that can account for every behavioural decision"** but more logical to begin with the task of **"trying to find the underlying system that informs and constrains (if it does not always actually governs) choice"** (ibid). Therefore, both performance and competence models should overlap in order to have an accurate analysis of code selection. In other words, a sole performance model would be deficient and lack comprehensiveness if a speaker ignored his underlying rules, and a mere grammatical knowledge would be lacking if a speaker did not know how to use a language and select the appropriate code from his/her linguistic repertoire according to the norms of the community and the communicative context.

Such issue should be dealt with in terms of the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) which unveils the ability to choose 'ways' of speaking by taking into account psychological, social and cultural norms. Supporting this view, Gal (1979:6) says:

**The communicative competence which enables people to speak in a socially appropriate and interpretable way includes implicit knowledge not only about the rules that distinguish between**

**grammatical, less grammatical, and ungrammatical utterances, but also knowledge of when to use the varieties in their linguistic repertoire.**

According to Spolsky (1988), there are necessary conditions for code selection among which these are important:

- a. The speaker uses the language that s/he knows.
- b. S/he employs the language that the addressed person knows and understands.
- c. S/he uses the language that s/he knows best for the topic being discussed.
- d. S/he employs the language that s/he believed to be known best by the addressed person, for the topic being discussed.
- e. S/he uses the language that s/he employed the last time when addressing this person.

Such conditions are more or less applied in the Algerian context where sociolinguistic heterogeneity constitute one of the peculiarities of Algeria's linguistic environment as a result of the coexistence of bilingualism, diglossia, code switching, borrowing, etc. On the micro level and within the case of humorists in particular, appropriate language use requires from the comedian to be communicatively competent in terms of employing appropriate language behaviour that should be understood from the part of the addressed audience and which indexes their socio-cultural norms and conventions, on the one hand, and on the other, to select suitable codes according to the topic or the situation discussed; for instance, when imitating a French person, the humorist uses the French language.

### **1.5.3. Gumperz's Approach**

Gumperz assumes that the topic, the setting and the interlocutors are pertinent factors which impact on language choice by focusing his scrutiny at the interactional level from a micro perspective, confirming that it is the individual who structures code switching. He says (1982a, 61)



Rather than claiming that speakers use language in response to a fixed predetermined set of prescriptions, it seems more reasonable that they build on their own and their audience's abstract understanding of situational norms, to communicate metaphoric information about how they intend their words to be understood.<sup>22</sup>

In 1972, Blom and Gumperz have attentively observed the alternation of codes in a small village of Norway, where a group of people switch back and forth between their dialect and the standard dialect. This study stimulated "a flood of investigation of CS between languages" (Meyers Scotton, 1998, 46) and infers that code choice is not random, but rather strategic.

They introduce the term 'situational switching' because they conceive that code choice is triggered by changes of the social situation, which involves changes of the participants, the setting and the context. Yet, when switching occurs in a discourse or in a conversation, involving the use of two codes, within one social setting and with the same interlocutor, another term was brought, known as 'metaphorical CS'.

Later, in 1982, Gumperz, alone, introduces the dichotomy 'we code' and 'they code' to refer respectively to, a socially inclusive code linked with home and family bonds, and to a socially distanced code allied with public interactions. In addition to this, he believes that the speaker plays the role of an actor who predicts the language s/he is going to use according to the following purposes (also called function of CS):

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Bassiouney, 2009:59.

- 1) Quotations: a speaker usually alters his code when s/he reports others' speech. For example, when reporting a French speech, the comedian obviously uses French language.
- 2) To specify the addressee as the recipient of the message: in this case CS may be used as a strategy to include or exclude someone when using another code the addressee does not understand.
- 3) Interjections: when switching is used as a sentence filler or mark an interjection, as it occurs in tag switching<sup>23</sup> as in /bon, nəmʃI/ 'well, I go'.
- 4) Reiterations: when a message is repeated by another language for emphasis or more clarification.
- 5) Message qualification: to qualify something that has already been said.
- 6) To distinguish between what is general (the 'they code') and what is personal (the 'we code').

By and large, Gumperz's work was merely an emphasis on the discourse strategies of code choice. Indeed, he shifts his interest of situational and metaphorical switching toward conversational switching as found in his book '*Discourse Strategies*'. In fact, studies on conversational code switching reveal that speakers' code choice is relevant to the topic per se, the contextualization strategies, such as intonation or accent, or other strategies under socio-pragmatic nature which determine the intentional meaning that the addressee wants to convey. In stand-up comedy, where the interaction is only from one part, the humorists may use Standard Arabic to speak about the Arabic union but also to transmit his solidarity with the Arabs.

The idea of giving credit to the individual in code switching was on the one hand, very influential; Goffman (1981) believes that an individual uses a specific language to mark the new role s/he plays. That is to say, "**each person plays different roles with different people in different situations**" (Bassiouny, 2009:157). Such perception is called

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<sup>23</sup> Tag switching refers to the insertion of a tag phrase or a word (usually a discourse marker, such as 'bon') from the target language into the recipient language.

according to Goffman, 'a change in footing', a concept which refers to a change in prosodic and paralinguistic features as well as the alteration of the frame<sup>24</sup> of an event that a speaker uses when addressing the audience.

On the other hand, the concept of Gumperz receives much criticism. Meyers-Scotton (1980) for instance, thinks that Gumperz has over-focused on individuals, neglecting the surrounding environmental factors which should also be taken into consideration. Indeed the proposed functions of code switching are not applicable in all speech communities, i.e., they cannot be generalized; therefore, there is a need for a theory that can explain code switching as a universal phenomenon. In an attempt to do so, Meyers-Scotton proposes her markedness model.

#### **1.5.4. The Markedness Theory**

The markedness model designs its framework by encompassing the paradigms of various disciplines such as the sociology of language, pragmatics, linguistic anthropology, etc, This model was proposed by Meyers-Scotton (1980, 1983, 1993a, 1993b) with the onward objective of explaining speakers' socio-psychological motivations when they switch between the codes.

Myers-Scotton proposes her markedness model which considers that linguistic codes are "**individually motivated negotiation**" (1980:360). This implies that her model consists of a negotiation principle, for which she claims universality and predictive validity, as underlying all code choices in bilingual speech. Thus, speakers' selection of a particular

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<sup>24</sup> Frame means a change in the way speakers perceive each other and perceive the situation (Bassiouney, 2005:157).

code is relevant upon their degree of awareness and adequate use of "**communically recognized norms**" (1983a: 123) which she calls them Rights and obligation sets (RO sets). These sets are intuitively acquired as part of their communicative competence as she states<sup>25</sup>

**Speakers have a tacit knowledge about this indexicality[...] as part of their communicative competence. The result is that all speakers will have a mental representation of matching between code choices and rights and obligation sets.**

Thus, code choice index RO between participants in a given interaction type. This denotes that communicative forms in all communities possess more or less some predetermined schemata concerning role relations and norms fitting social and linguistic behaviours. These schemata are the expected and unmarked choice that should be applied, and which reflect speakers' solidarity within a group membership. Thus, speakers will associate each code within a particular setting, context, topic, participants, and types of activities. Such fact confirms Blom and Gumperz's situational CS. To put it very briefly, situational code switching involves change of the participant, situation and setting. In effect, unmarked choice can be better elucidated through the following example. A casual way of speech is the unmarked choice of informal domains such as familiar conversations, or in the street.

But in some instances, speakers code switch purposefully to negotiate their RO balance. In this case, they use a marked choice for implicit reasons as such to increase/decrease the social distance, or to make esthetical effect. In this respect, Myers-Scotton (1993a :478) states "**speakers use making code choices to negotiate interpersonal relationships**". Such marked choice is usually accompanied with prosodic features such as pause. For example, parents may use a second language

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<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Wei, 2000: 128.

in front of their kids in order to exclude them from a conversation. Sometimes, speakers do not know which code they should apply, particularly if there is an ambiguity in role relations and norms due to a change of situational factors. Such case is referred to as exploratory choice by Scotton (1993a).

The markedness model can be more or less applied in the case of humorists in Algeria who, thanks to their communicative competence, can select the suitable code according to the unmarked and the prevalent speech norms in Algeria (CS, borrowing, etc). Yet, when shifting purposefully to another dialect, accent or speech style, (a marked choice), it is for a hidden reason. This divergence in speech is perhaps used for showing their own customs and revealing the typical identity of the speech community they belong to. The concept of divergence or convergence in speech has been probed by scholars such as Giles and his followers (1973, 1975, 1979) in their speech accommodation theory.

#### **1.5.5. Speech Accommodation Theory**

Among the theories that have examined the motives which lead to variability in linguistic behaviour within a socio-psychological framework is Speech Accommodation Theory, developed by Giles (1973) with the assumption to evoke the strategies speakers employ to establish, contest or maintain relationships via talk. It is often noticed that speakers usually attune or adapt their behaviour in response to their interlocutors' behaviour to achieve certain goals, or to receive certain attitudes. On the basis of such principle, and

drawing on the relationship in personal-group interactions, Wardhough (2010:113) says:

**Accommodation is one way of explaining how individuals and groups may be seen to relate to each other. One individual can try to induce another to judge him or her more favourably by reducing differences between the two.**

In fact, the process of attunement transcend the change of behaviour since it entails a change of range of communicative behaviour such as speech style, accent, lexical items, discourse patterns ,etc with the apparent aims of showing individual's desire for listeners' social approval, expressing solidarity with them and/or reducing social distance. Such manners of accommodating behaviour, including the linguistic one; is called 'convergence'. Yet, it happens that in some situations speakers keep using their indigenious behaviour or act distinctively, in terms of language use, to differentiate themselves from the group; this may be due to the negative connotation and attitude they have toward the rival group; or for the sake of disclosing their discrete social and cultural identity . In this case, they diverge from the other, and such process is called 'speech divergence'. In this respect, Bell (1997:28) demonstrates that **"speakers design their style primarily for and in response to their audience"**.

By and large, Speech accommodation theory operates on the principle of 'speech convergence' which delineates the mutual comprehension between a speaker and his or her interlocutors, usually in face to face encounters. This phenomenon is widely observed within the interactional gatherings between the Arab people from different countries, who usually accommodate and attune their linguistic behaviour, switching from their native dialects to the use of Standard Arabic for the sake of mutual understanding and comprehension, and for conserving the

backbone of the Arabic identity, power and their sacred language.

After exposing the aforementioned theories of code choice, it becomes evident that switching between codes is not a matter of filling in linguistic gaps as it was thought previously, even if it usually occurs due to the lack of proficiency in one or both codes. In some cases, the alternation between codes is rule governed and predicted by the socio-cultural norms of the community, and in others, it is strategic to attain certain communicative goals within a socio-pragmatic nature. But the most crucial thing in both cases requires from a speaker to be communicatively competent.

### **1.6. Conclusion**

After dealing with the aforementioned points, it seems clear that humour is a delicate subject to deal with. Basically, humour is intended to elicit laughter and amusement due to a number of factors such as an unexpected or sudden shift in perspective, i.e., incongruous outcome, or a feeling of superiority. But generally, the definition of humour depends on the purpose for which it is used.

This is why its understanding, good interpretation and generation require background knowledge of language processing of the given community and its socio-cultural norms as well. Therefore, its analysis should take into account linguistic levels such as semantics and pragmatics, as well as sociolinguistic parameters in terms of advocating its language in use (mainly code choice) through which the socio-cultural identity of a certain community is revealed. Actually, humour has pervaded in several forms of entertainments such as stand-up comedy, a theatrical genre which requires some essential element compulsory to its success and attainment, namely the humorist's competence, the presence of an audience and a cosy

venue. In effect, it should be pointed out that stand-up comedy underwent different historical stages in Europe and America until it reached its omnipresent popularity. But what about stand-up comedy in Algeria? How was it triggered? What characterizes its performance? We will attempt to delve into these questions in the second chapter.



## 2.1. Introduction

Algeria has been a land of confluence between culturally diverse communities since Antiquity. Its geographical situation at the crossroad of Africa, Europe and the Middle East has influenced it for centuries in different fields. A preeminent example is its sociolinguistic situation which straightforwardly impacts on its divergent layers of cultural spheres like literature, cinema, theatre, stand -up comedy, etc.

In effect, it is undeniable that the issue of 'language' in Algeria has always been controversial, and the debate about which language should be used is still relevant mainly among authors, journalists, playwrights, comedians, etc. This is due to the fact that Algeria possesses a number of competing codes which are: Arabic (Classical Arabic (hereafter CA), Standard Arabic (hereafter SA), and Algerian Arabic (hereafter AA), French and Berber languages as a consequence of diverse historical events, political issues and socio-cultural factors. Algeria labels itself as part of the Arab and Muslim world. According to its constitution (2011), SA is enshrined as the national and the official language, Berber language is considered as the national language, while French language is regarded as a foreign language. But, a large -scale sociolinguistic analysis of the actual situation in Algeria reveals its linguistic diversity as well as a peculiar linguistic dynamic, forming intricate multilingual, diglossic situations resulting in the noticeable use of code switching, code mixing and borrowing as will be shown in this chapter.

This intricate linguistic situation can be captured in the humoristic discourse of almost all Algerian stand-up comedians who make use of the different existing codes in an

esthetical manner as will be shown. But before advocating this latter matter, it seems significant to start with a panoramic view concerning the emergence of stand-up comedy in Algeria. Such task seems difficult to attain due to the dearth of data and references about the subject matter. Instead, this chapter is devoted to sketch a historical background of theatre in Algeria with its major expressed themes as stand-up comedy is regarded as a genre of theatre. In addition to this, this chapter endeavours to bring light on some significant features characterizing Algerian stand-up comedy.

## **2.2. A Glance at the Linguistic Profile in Algeria**

As the linguistic situation in Algeria is characterized by its intricacy and complexity, it remains a fertile laboratory worthy of endless sociolinguistic interrogations and investigations. Hence, a myriad of questions can be raised like: what are the factors which have led to the current Algerian linguistic profile? And, what are the sociolinguistic outcomes behind the contact of the existing languages?

The issue concerning the linguistic situation in Algeria would be missed if there were no reference to its historical background, which implicitly plays a great role in its current shape. Therefore, it should be pointed out that Algeria has been the land of confluence between culturally diverse communities since Antiquity, and experienced consecutive historical events that resulted in a number of sociolinguistic outcomes due to the contact of the following codes:

### **2.2.1. Arabic**

First, the country was inhabited by the Berber tribes whose language was Tamazight, but with the coming of Islam, there was a religious, socio-cultural and linguistic transformation marked by the introduction of CA, the sacralised language of the Quran, through an 'Arabisation' process. According to the historians, the implementation of CA in Algeria occurred in two phases: The first one refers to the earliest waves of the Arabs who came to the region with the ideological aim of introducing Islam during the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The consequent reception of Arabic was limited to some urban areas as confirms Bouchentouf Siagh (1978/1981:11-12) when stating that

**Au premier siècle hégirien/septième siècle J.C, l'arabisation toucha d'abord les grands centres urbains : Constantine, Béjaia, Alger, Tlemcen, Oran, etc. Puis, ces cités arabisèrent à leur tour l'arrière-pays (généralement montagneux) avec lequel elles entretenaient des relations.**<sup>26</sup>

The second period refers to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is marked by the coming of the Arab conquerors namely the Banu Hillal, Banu Maaqil and the Banu Suleiman who altered the linguistic shape of the region by implementing Arabic and obscuring most indigenous Berber varieties except a few remoted mountainous areas and isolated Saharan spots which rejected Arabisation. In this respect, Benchentouf Siagh (Ibid) says

**Cinquième siècle hégirien /onzième siècle J.C, l'arrivée des tribus bédouines (Béni Hillal et Soulaym principalement) par le Sud-Est du**

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<sup>26</sup> My Translation: The first hegrien century/7<sup>th</sup> century, the Arabisation was introduced in the biggest urban areas like Constantine, Béjaia, Alger, tlemcen, Oran, etc. In turn, these towns arabised rural areas, with which they had mutual relations.

pays et remontant vers le Nord, va contribuer de manière plus étendue à l'arabisation de la population autochtone.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, it is very intriguing to know if CA continued to be at play in the Algerians' daily conversation at that time especially that CA underwent a new variant called SA. This latter emerges as a consequence of Arabs' discovery and translation of European works into Arabic language giving birth to their lexical shortcomings. But it should be pointed out that SA is just a simplified version of CA which differs from it in terms of vocabulary due to the thousand of neologism and borrowed words have been introduced to it, such as technical and scientific ones. Nowadays, SA plays a significant role in Algeria, since it is used in education, government, in the media, and printed Arabic publications.

Going back to earlier time, it is undeniably confirmed that researchers always wonder what Arabic variety was spoken in Algeria, but what is inevitably asserted is that its linguistic situation became more intricate when the country was occupied by the Turkish, the Spanish and the Italians whose linguistic influence is still captured in words like /tepsi/ (plate) which derives from Turkish language, and /falta/ which comes from 'fault' in Spanish.

#### 2.2.2. French

The largest linguistic influence that Algeria underwent is tightly linked with the French colonialism of the country, which lasted more than a century. Right after the occupation, the colonial government attempted to alter the social structure of the Algerian society resulting in a

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<sup>27</sup>My translation: The coming of the tribes of Béni Hillal and Soulaym in the South-Eastern part of the country to the northern area, have contributed to the Arabisation of the whole native population.

ruthless suppress of the Arabic language through the process of de-Arabisation. Hence, the French language was considered as the official language and replaced Arabic in all domains, particularly in the educational system. Hence, today Algerians use a significant amount of French in their daily conversations in addition to Arabic. This fact results in creating a de facto Arabic - French bilingualism.

### 2.2.3. Arabic/French bilingualism

Bilingualism has been defined by various linguists. For instance, Haugen (1956:9) defines it as "a cover term for people with a number of different language skills, having in common only that they are not monolinguals"<sup>28</sup>. In the Algerian case, bilingualism is not homogeneous. At the macro level, societal bilingualism can be seen horizontally according to the geographical distribution of the population. This linguistic phenomenon is more practiced in urban areas where literacy is high and the contact with the French language is strong, in addition to the existence of administrative and educational institutions operating in French.

Indeed, bilingualism in Algeria is attested in many types and degrees, depending on the individuals' competences in both languages. For instance, the level of education has a great impact on the bilinguals' experience, providing them with a sufficient competence in both languages. This is the case of the élite people during the colonial era; they had equal competences in both Arabic and French due to the regular contact with French people and their adherence to Quranic schools. They were classified as balanced bilinguals. However, Algerian bilinguals nowadays are categorized as unbalanced bilinguals, even though they have

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<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Ennaji, 2005:124.

coordinate representation of words in both languages, i.e., they learn French consecutively after SA, they are dominant in their mother tongue and have less competence in French. (Mouhadjer, 2004:2-3).

An extra feature when categorizing the degree of bilingualism is to make the distinction between active and passive bilinguals. Active bilinguals are able to speak and understand the languages even though they cannot read or write. This is the case of pre-independence Algerian uneducated individuals who had the ability to produce and perceive Arabic and French. Passive bilinguals on the other hand, are able to understand the second language but do not speak it. For instance, immigrant families in France master French, but are passive in their parents' mother tongue. (Mouhadjer, *ibid*)

By and large, bilingualism in Algeria is subtractive since Arabic is replacing French progressively in many domains such as politics and administration as a consequence of the Arabization policy.

#### **2.2.4. Arabisation Policy**

During the French occupation, France tried to suppress ruthlessly Arabic replacing it by French in all domains. In return, after independence, and particularly during Houari Boumedienes' presidency, there was an attempt to eradicate the French language and restore Arabic, the language of tradition and 'authenticity'. Thus, Algerians' adherence to the Quran and acceptance of the tenets of Islam make them adopt the policy of Arabisation, with the apparent aim of creating a monolingual nation where SA is the official language used in formal domains, written forms and religion. This decision met some ideological confrontation and

challenge among the elite because of the inextricable relation between languages, Arabophones Vs francophones, religion, political affiliations, ethnic identity (Arabs versus Berbers) and social economic factors.

Despite this, many Algerians still show positive attitudes toward French for its high status and prestige. Hence, it is noticed that even fifty years after the independence, the French language maintains a privileged position in such important domains such as education, medicine, economy and at certain layers of the cultural spheres like art, comedy, journalism, etc. In addition, the Algerian's mother tongue (AA), also called el-ammiyya (colloquial), and which represent, the large mutually intelligible regional dialects scattered throughout the country, includes a significant amount of French lexis. In many instances, French words are adapted phonologically and morphologically to fit the morpho-phonological patterns of AA. This phenomenon is called borrowing which results from language contact.

### **2.2.5. Borrowing**

According to Thomason and Kaufman (1988:37) borrowing is **"the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language."**<sup>29</sup> For example, the word 'kuzina' in AA (kitchen) comes from the French word 'cuisine', is adapted phonologically when changing 'ui' into 'v', and adjusted morphologically when adding the suffix 'a' for the sake of feminization. In Myers-Scotton's view (1997), there are two types of borrowing: cultural borrowing which involves those lexical items which are new to the recipient language culture. For example: PIZZA, and, core

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<sup>29</sup>Quoted in McWHorter, 1984: 203.

borrowings, items that have the equivalents in the native language, but are not used such as: 'marché' instead of /suk/ (market), or 'loto' instead of /sajara/ (car).

### 2.2.6. Code Switching

In addition to the borrowed words, Algerians are involved in a CS, which has become the unmarked choice, a means of communication. This happens when the bilinguals, often, unconsciously, tend to mix and/or switch between the languages as their prevalent and common code of interaction. According to Hoffmann (1991:10) code switching is "**the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation**"<sup>30</sup>. Myers-Scotton(1997:24) identified CS by the labels 'intersentential' and 'intrasentential'. The first label refers to switching across sentences. For example, switching between AA and French can be heard in a conversation like:

- A: *Comment vas-tu?* (How are you?)
- B: /*raja wnta*/ (good, and you?).

The second type refers to switching that takes place within a sentence, for example: *Je pense que cette voiture / hijja fšaba fihum/* (I think this car is the most beautiful).

At the micro level, CS is used according to the aforementioned motivations that are under some socio-pragmatic nature, already presented in chapter one. For example, some Algerian parents may use French in order not to make their kids understand.

At the macro level, bilinguals use AA as an informal way of interaction, however, when the topic is about science or technology; the speaker often uses French, for example,

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Zéphir, 1996: 134.



the computer mouse is always referred to as 'la souris' instead of /elfaʔra/. However, in the mosque, the speakers use SA. This mixture swings between a bilingual situation and a diglossic one.

### **2.2.7. Diglossia**

The process of Arabisation has reinforced a diglossic situation spotted with the interplay of two genetically related varieties, existing in Algeria with each having specific functions and features. The two varieties are AA and SA, the former is acquired from birth to become the medium of informal domains such as familiar conversations. Thus, it is regarded as the Low variety. The latter is the High variety, which represents a supra-language associated with religion, literature and formal education. Such status reveals approving attitudes and favorable evaluations from the Algerians' point of view, and that of the Arabs as a whole, via-à-vis all the positive connotations which carry, including its richness, prestige, religious status, and historical background.

Such distinction of function between AA and SA is explained in Ferguson's gist publication of the article "Diglossia". According to him (1959, repr. 1972:232) **"diglossia characterizes a situation where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout a community with each having a definite role to play"**. These varieties are distinctively labelled: H and L; the H is codified, prestigious and used in formal domains, while the L is acquired from birth to become the medium of informal conversations.

This view stirred much controversy among researchers, such as Fasold(1984), who believes that Ferguson's diglossia is restricted only to two varieties of the same language. Hence, in 1967, Fishman introduced the concept that diglossia could be extended to situations found in many societies where forms of two genetically unrelated languages occupy the H and L niches. An interesting Example to illustrate this type of diglossia is that of Paraguay where Spanish and Guarani, two genetically unrelated languages are respectively considered as H and L.

Extended diglossia can be applied in the Algerian context, where French and AA, genetically unrelated languages have different statuses. French is highly valued and more prestigious than AA; it is used in written form and formal discourse. In contrast, AA is less valued and considered as the L variety due to the lack of these properties.

In parallel with the aforesaid sociolinguistic outcomes resulting from diglossia and the contact between Arabic and French, the inquisitiveness about Berber language is still ambiguous and confusing. Hence, the question that one is prompted to ask is: What is its status in Algeria?

### **2.2.8. Berber**

At first sight, the minority of Algerians speak Berber or Tamazight, although this language was conceived as indigenous, spoken by the first inhabitants of Algeria. Nowadays, the major Berber groups are the Kabyles of Kabylie mountains (east of Algiers) and the Chaouia of Aures (south of Constantine), and other small groups including Mzab and Touareg (south Algeria). These groups do not share a common Berber variety, since a blurred mutual intelligibility is

noticed among them. Despite this, Berber speakers often impose their social significance showing favorable reactions toward their language by attempting to standardize it. This fact reveals their solidarity which may lead to upgrade their own status and ethnicity. In effect, after a constitutional revision under the supervision of President A. Bouteflika, (Article 3bis<sup>31</sup>) who endorsed the promulgation of Berber as a national language in April 2002.

The brief description of the linguistic profile in Algeria provided above can be very helpful to the understanding of the languages at play in Algerian performance like stand-up comedy. Yet, it should not be missed that stand-up comedy in Algeria is the crux concern in this chapter. So in order to have a better elucidation of it, it seems important to provide a historical background of its emergence. But as stand-up comedy in Algeria is a new and recent genre of theatre, and due to the dearth of references about it, a historical glance of theatre in Algeria will be provided instead. To do so, it seems salient first to provide a brief definition of the term theatre.

### **2.3. Theatre Defined**

The term theatre refers to a collaborative genre of fine art<sup>32</sup> which employs live performers to display real or imaginative events in front of a live audience in a particular place, using gestures, speech, song, music or dance, and sometimes elements of stagecraft for the purpose

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<sup>31</sup> Art.3. bis (loi n°02-03)- Tamazight est également langue national. L'état œuvre à son développement dans toutes ses variétés linguistiques en usage sur le territoire national.

<sup>32</sup> Fine art is a visual art developed primarily for aesthetic purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness such as comics, theatre, mosaic, painting etc.

of boosting the physicality, presence and immediacy of the experience. It may also denote the building designed for the performance of plays, one man shows, opera, etc.

Theatre possesses different types like drama, musical theatre, comedy and tragedy. Drama for instance, is a genre of fiction displayed in performance. The term derives from Greek to denote 'action' as Francis Fergusson (1949:8) believes when saying that drama:

**Is not primarily a composition in the verbal medium [...] As Aristotle remarks, 'the poet, or "maker" should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates and what he imitates are actions'<sup>33</sup>.**

Musical theatre on the other hand, is a form of theatre that encompasses music, songs, spoken language and dance, while comedy uses humour in its performances. Finally, a tragedy is a variety of drama based on human suffering. It stirs in the audience a feeling of catharsis or pleasure in the viewing.

Such types were practiced in ancient theatre of Greece, Rome and other Western nations. The crucial elements that construct their theatre are mimesis, imitation and reproduction of human actions, sometimes accompanied with songs, dance, humour, or catharsis feelings. It was practiced in religious ceremonies, churches, or other worship settings. However, within Maghreb countries, principally before the coming of Islam, the terms drama, comedy and tragedy did not have equivalent lexico-semantic in Arabic for the reason that European works were unknown. Instead, there were players known as: the '**meddah**' (the

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (drama article): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama#cite\\_note-3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama#cite_note-3).

eulogist), the 'gawal' (the teller) or the 'muqalid' (the imitator) who created characters derived from real previous situations and put them into actions in public places of villages and tribes. These places were their locus to perform to an audience composed of peasants and town people. Such phenomenon persisted even after the introduction of Islam as will be seen in the the history of theatre in Algeria.

#### **2.4. A Historical Background of Theatre in Algeria**

If theatre by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked a stamp in the Maghreb cultural landscape, it soon after, ascended its artistic peak to institute the social legitimacy and illustrate the historical periods as major arts. Thus, it holds out a myriad of modes of artistic expression such as epics, comedy, documentary theatre, etc, which are drawn from real historical facts. This artistic sphere has also been practiced in Algeria, to reconstitute the historical memory by practitioners of this art as well as journalists or critics who delineate its emergence and evolution. In this regard, Hadj Miliani (2006:146) says:

**Le théâtre dans les pays arabo-musulmans se présente, plus que le cinéma ou la littérature, comme la forme de création artistique contemporaine qui manifeste dans son évolution comme dans ses réalisations, hésitations, incertitudes et questionnements autant éthiques qu'esthétique[...] espace d'expérimentation où**

vont se manifester tout à la fois les dominantes idéologiques nationales ou régionales (panarabisme, nationalisme, socialisme, etc.) et les tentatives de formulation d'une certaine originalité artistique et culturelle<sup>34</sup>

Algeria, as part of the Arab and Muslim world, undergoes this esthetic experimentation art, in which theatre enacts history and performs ideological evidence, merely during two significant periods: colonial era and post colonial phase. But what is intriguing to discover is how theatre entered Algeria, and how it is characterized during this last decade. Therefore, in order to have a better sight about the emergence, development and outcomes of theatre in Algeria, the next section will sketch its main historical milestone.

#### **2.4.1. Genesis of Theatre in Algeria**

The inquisitiveness concerning the beginning of theatre in Algeria is still raised among researchers, who almost all of them believe that Algeria, like other Muslim countries, prohibited figuration following the condemnation of it in Hadith. Thus, that was the reason behind the delayed onset

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<sup>34</sup> My Translation: Unlike cinema or literature, theatre in the Arabo-Muslim countries represents a contemporary artistic creation, manifested in its evolution, achievements, hesitations, uncertainties, and questions as much ethics as esthetics. such space of experimentation exhibits the prevailing national or regional ideologies (panarabism, nationalism, socialism, etc.) as well as all the attempts which formulate certain artistic and cultural originality.

of theatre in Arabo-Islamic nations. In fact, in all societies, there is transgression of norms consequently leading to the practice of theatre in roughly all Arabic nations including Algeria.

Yet, it should be pointed out that 'pre- theatre' practiced in Algeria was in the form of ritual manifestations including dissimilar forms theatricality such as recitation, narrations of the 'meddah', 'gawal', or 'fissawa', a folkloric religious genre that uses some gestures, rhythmic speech accompanied with 'tbel' (kind of drums) performed usually in 'zauja' (a religious locus). These ritual shows occur either in an outdoor place like public places, market, etc. or indoor place such as 'zauja'. The practitioner makes a circle called 'halqa' surrounded by the audience. In this respect, Haddad (1982: 32) claims

**Le conteur prend le théâtre sur son dos, sur la scène du quotidien. C'est lui qui allait sur la scène de la représentation, non le public. IL faisait de l'espace naturel son espace scénique<sup>35</sup>**

The tellers use the most eloquent form of speech in their tales, including mime, parole, onomatopoeias to

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<sup>35</sup> My translation: The storyteller takes theatre on his back, on everyday scenery. He used to go to the representation scene, not the audience. He made of his natural area his scenery space.

attract the audience. They usually start with 'once upon a time...' and conclude with a surprising or incongruent ending. The 'ŷissawa' groups often begin their story with songs and finish it with magical exhibitions.

However, during the Ottoman conquest in Algeria, there was a new form of entertainment called the 'garaguz' or the 'shadow theatre' as Bencheneb calls it, a type of puppetry of Turkish origin.

#### **2.4.2. Theatre During the French Colonization**

When the French colonists settled on the Algerian territories starting from 1830, the 'garaguz' games were still in play. It was used as as a defence to humiliate and make ridicule of the colonizer. Such fact led the invaders to forbid it as well as any other form of expression.

Yet, it should be emphasised that the French colonists at that era tried to alter the linguistic, cultural, and religious shape of Algeria, by suppressing them ruthlessly and imposing their own heritage. For example, they forbid the Algerians to pursue their education in 'madrasat' and 'zaujiat' in order to restrain their use of Arabic, eradicate Islam, and harm the learning of artistic disciplines. Instead, they forced them to learn the French language in schools, but only few did, for example, in 1839, only 95 Algerians attended French schools (Cheniki, 1993. Such refusal of French learning increased the rate of illiteracy. But the consciousness of that fact led Algerian families to send their children to French schools as Arnaud (1982:31) states "**Entre rien (l' cole musulmane asphyxi e) et l' cole**



française, les algériens réfèrent malgré tout cette dernière"<sup>36</sup>.

Moreover, the contact between the Algerians and the French resulted in a number of outcomes such as linguistic as well as cultural assimilations, for example, the theatre which was a historical heritage of the French colonists practised in some Algerian towns was adopted later on, although it seemed vague at the beginning. The main French theatrical scenery of 1920s that can be cited are: '*La Fontaine des Béni Ménad*' (the fountain of béni ménad), '*Marcienne*', '*La Kahéna of docteur Choisset*', '*La Fleur de Tlemcen*' (the flower of Tlemcen) and *L'Amour Africain* (African love). (Cheniki, 1993)

Such vaudeville and melodrama seduced some Algerian authors and students, who attempted the experience, as Marqem(1960: 6) cites:

**Des étudiants algériens, influencés par la culture française, se rassemblèrent pour faire du théâtre au sens classique du terme. Ils voyaient dans le théâtre, en l'absence de toute autre possibilité d'action, un moyen pour tirer les masses d'une certaine léthargie. Sans public, sans encouragements, ils échouèrent dans leur tentative.<sup>37</sup>**

Despite this, almost all Algerians refused the acculturation process and the naming of 'French Algeria'.

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<sup>36</sup>My translation: Between asphyxiated Muslim school and French school, the Algerians chose the second, despite of it.

<sup>37</sup> My translation: Algerian students influenced by the French culture, gathered to do theatre in the classic sense of the term. They saw in the theatre a way to get the masses of some lethargy. Without an audience, without encouragement, they failed in their attempts.

Consequently, during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Algeria formed dissimilar groups in opposition to the French rules such as the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Algerian Movement, which claim their rights, freedom, cultural revival, religious status, and avoid slavery. But as the colonists reacted negatively, the autochthons became aware of the need to exploit the colonists' culture, considering it as a stamp of modernity.

Hence, the 1920s were marked by literal and cultural flourishing. Journals, novels and books were published in French language as that of Fikri Abdelkader, who signed with Robert Randau his book '*les compagnons du jardin*' (Companions of the Garden). This engagement with French language does not mean Algerians' defeatism.

By and large, the Algerian nationalism and its cultural revival during 1910-1920 launched several forms of expression as seen above including theatre. Yet, it should be pointed out that Algerians, especially the elite, were more interested in theatre after the tour of '*elku:mi:dija elmasrija*' (the Egyptian comedy) displayed by AbdelQadir el Misri and Souleymane Qardahi in 1907-1908.

#### **2.4.2.1. Theatre From 1920 To 1954**

The Algerians became more attracted by theatre when the troop of George Abiad embarked Algeria in 1921 to present two dramatic shows of '*salah eddin el ajubi*:' (the Saladin) and '*thauratu elarab*' (Arab revolution) held in SA. Inspired from the shows, some elite members attempted to present theatre in SA. For example, in 1922, Mohamed Mensali displayed /*fi: sabi:l elwatan*/ (for the country), that tackles a political

subject, and 'futuḥ elandalus' (the conquest of Andalusia) a historical theme. Generally, these amateur theatrical shows disclose religious, political and historical themes as Stambouli (1976), an ancient author-comedian, confirms "**Les premières pièces données en arabe classique mettaient en scène des sujets historiques et des drames religieux.**"<sup>38</sup> But the use of SA in these shows did not attract a wide mass of viewers due to illiteracy. Hence, the authors ceased doing shows except few like Allalou, Dahmoune, Bachetarzi and Ksentini, who started performing comedic sketches inspired from earlier stories of le 'gawal and meddah' with major themes of marriage, betrayal, alcoholism, divorce, etc.

In 1926, Allalou produced his first sketch of 'dzeha' held in AA which gained great success. 'dzeha' is a comedic sketch which tackles social events described by legendary characters and situation inspired from Moliere's plays. It attracted a wide mass of audience although the play remained conventional. Roth (1967:25) thinks that this piece makes a boom in the artistic scenery of Algeria. She says in this respect:

**Après l'échec des tentatives théâtrales en langue arabe littéraire, deux comédiens, Allalou et Dahmoune, eurent l'idée de mettre en scène les facéties de Djeha. Ce fut une triple innovation: dans les genres, dans les thèmes, dans la langue. Les premières pièces jouées en arabe littéraire avaient développé des thèses sociales et développé de nobles sujets tels que le patriotisme. Djeha était**

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<sup>38</sup> My translation: The first plays were held in SA staged historical and religious themes.

**une grosse farce en arabe dialectal [...] elle remporta un vif succès.<sup>39</sup>**

In the years that followed, i.e., 1926-1932, Algeria knew a successful thriving of theatre, mainly in its comedic genre. The major figures of that time were Allalou, Dahmoune, Bachetarzi and Ksentin, genius authors-comedians who played in different sketches with the apparent aim of evoking laughter, as Allalou (1982:61) demonstrates "**Le théâtre comique nous convenait et nous l'aimions. C'était celui que préférait notre public<sup>40</sup>**". For example, Ksenteni's sole interest was to present on scene a comedic canvas inspired from everyday life, as '*L'eau de vie*' (water of life), '*La vieille et le fantome*' (the old and the ghost), etc.

Yet, it should be signaled that these comedians avoided political and ideological themes because they were under the supervision of the French colonists. They opted for topics derived from the Algerian society, thousand and one nights such as '*abu hassan elmorafel*' (the Buster Abou Hasssan) (Allalou and Kstentini), and popular legends such as marriage, culture, folklore, traditions, etc. Generally, these comedians' theatrical discourse is characterized by the use of puns, popular sayings and a moralizing attitude.

From 1932 to 1939, a period marked by its cultural and political upheaval, the Algerian theatre could not be insensitive toward such realities. Thus, without calling

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<sup>39</sup>My translation: After the failure of SA in theatre, two comedians, Allalou and Dahmoune, had the idea of staging the pranks Djeha, an innovation in genre, theme and language. The first pieces played in SA triggered social theses and developed noble topics such as patriotism. Djeha was the first show held in AA. It knew a big success.

<sup>40</sup>My Translation: The comic theatre suited us as well as the audience. It was our preference.

radically into question the colonial presence, some attempts were put to stage the real socio-political state of that time giving birth to a new theatrical genre. The preeminent example is that of Bachtarzi whose sketch 'fagp' (phage) was conceived as subversive and dangerous from the colonial part leading to its ban.

Subsequent to this, i.e., 1940-1950, a new wave of comedians infused theatre like Mohammed Touri, Mustapha Kateb and Abdelhalim Rais. They enriched the cultural scene and allowed the diversity of themes and styles by performing policing scenery such as 'eġ sar fi ħi:ġa' (what happened to ħi:ġa), or '*Le Justicier et Le Voleur de minuit*'. But comedy remains the most popular genre which attracted a wide mass of viewers who attend theatre to entertain and relax.

#### **2.4.2.2. Theatre of Armed Struggle**

The outburst of the struggle for national liberty in 1954-55 caused the demise of the Algerian Arabic theatre. In effect, it was unfeasible to practice theatre during such a critical period in which the fate of the nation was at stake. Hence, a number of comedians dispersed, and moved to France, but still staged some performances in which they advocated the Algerian socio-political situation, merely in dissimilar French towns like Saint-Denis, Barbès, Clignancourt, and Marseille. Determined that theatre turned to be a fighting art and arm, they engaged in the Nationalist movement (FLN) to become its spoken men. For instance, Mohamed Boudia and Zinet, proficient of artistic scenes, participated in activities of FLN in France to explain its objectives and positions, and enlivened meetings with immigrants to form new animators. Yet, the French

government prohibited any kind of artistic expression and disbanded the theatrical troops when being aware of this.

Despite this, the FLN movement recognized the importance of art in the liberation struggle. It called all Algerian artists, including comedians, singers, musicians, etc, to participate in the fight with the apparent aim of displaying the Algerian fight and tragedy with words, pictures and simple gestures, a real aesthetic battle. For example, there was a spread of hit style, slashed words and verbal abuse. The character worked as a catalyst of awareness to express the pain and suffering of the Algerian people. The performances were given in the camps, hospitals and bush borders. So, politics made its way into serious artistic representation, while the earlier comedic genres disappeared, and FLN leadership sought through this theatrical experience, to complete the political and ideological activists and fighters. The prominent theatrical scenery was conducted at that time, namely *Les Enfants de la Casbah (Casbah's children)*, *El Khalidoun (Immortals)*, and *vers la lumière (through the light)*.

### **2.4.3. Theatre After the Independence**

In a country ravaged by a terrible war and where wounds were not yet healed, marked by political turmoil due to the multiple battles of clans that figured after the revolution, doing theatre was not an easy thing. In effect, it should be signalled out that Algeria, after its triumph sunk in the political and ideological confrontations which, with great enthusiasm, wanted to change things and transform reality. In such a confused context, the leaders started to implement the first cultural buildings and take decisions concerning the theatre.

### 2.4.3.1. Theatre From 1962-1965

During the first years of independence, theatre divulged the preoccupations and the concerns of the population, in the so-called: 'popular theatre' written and performed in AA. Soon after, a document was drawn up calling for the nationalization of theatres using SA as the main language in use. This article triggers the government to institute 'the Algerian National Theatre' (ANT), which displayed either original or adapted products.

Yet, it should be born in mind that the people concerned in theatre during 1963 and 1965 sought for the right direction, the best root to take and the appropriate choice to make, particularly within a virgin ground. However, the deficiency of well-formed comedians, the imperfect mastery of SA, the absence of a team of actors and trained technicians greatly limited the local work, but did not prevent the realizations of interesting pieces. This glaring lack was solved through the use of translations and adaptations. Indeed, it was often remarked that Algerian authors altered place and characters names of foreign realization to give them an Algerianized representation, such as *Les Fusils de la mère Carrar* (Señora Carrar's Rifles) of Brecht, *Don Juan* of Molière, and 'assultan elha:ʔir' (the confused Sultan) of Tewfik el Hakim. So, a careful scrutiny of theatrical reality of that time shows diversity of playwritings and plurality of performances ranging from local, alien and adapted sceneries, with divergent themes derived from politics, society, history, etc, displayed usually in ANT as will be shown in the following examples:

### **2.4.3.2. Theatre From 1965 to The 70s**

During the presidency of Boumédiène, a scary silence marked the Algerian cultural spheres, preventing any possibility of expression. Such fact was illustrated by the exile of several intellectuals and artists. Thus, the stagecraft was forced to take a break, which consequently slowed the drama production.

In 1970, the Algerian government decided to recognize theatre by employing the decentralization process which granted an autonomous status to four regional theatres. This procedure involves the implementation of several drama projects and research areas, paving the way to the integration of various amateurs who illustrated the official political discourse and obscured the aesthetic and artistic consideration. Such decision threatened the professional actors and comedians as well as the audience. Consequently, the Algerian theatrical situation seriously worsened to the extent that the ANT produced one scenery piece each year.

In fact, it should be pointed out that government did not seem concerned with cultural affairs. Only some pioneer comedians like Alloula, Rouiched, Kateb Yacine and Slimane Benaïssa arrived to attract a wide audience and to provide quality entertainment. Indeed, some comedians decided to quit the state-theatre company and founded their own groups, as a reaction to such governmental act. That was the case of Omar Fetmouche, Hassan al-Hassani and Slimane Benaïssa who assisted their new private theatre to attract the audience.

Generally, the theatre of the 70s was deeply marked by political dimensions with a social footprint. The themes discussed were drawn from the official political discourse such as the agrarian revolution, socialist business management, free medicine, etc. Their main goal was to transmit governmental discourse which tries to educate the community and to explain the 'nation-building tasks'. Thus, AA was generally used as a means of expression. The



following table illustrates some examples of plays performed during that era:

#### **2.4.3.3. Theatre During the 80s And 90s**

The following decade was characterized by a deafening silence, in terms of theatre as well as other artistic production. This is due to the fact that Algerian leaders who opted for a neo-liberal policy marginalized any cultural structure, precisely in 1986. Despite this, some authors and directors continued their writings, which were with an outstanding quality such as *Lejouad Litham* and *Arlequin (Harlequin)*, *valet de deux maîtres (servant of two masters)*, staged by Alloula, etc. The languages used were AA and/or French. For example, some comedians like Slimane Bénéaissa staged spectacles in French language to play them in the French cultural institute in Algeria, or in France.

The nineties were marked by a calamity of events chocking and impeding theatre due to the death of major comedians like Mustapha Kateb and Yacine Kateb, Alloula and Medjoubi. Indeed, the unstable political situation of Algeria at that time prevented the practice of theatre. So many comedians left the country and settled in France where they continued to produce documents and to act in films, while other artists made constant back and forth between Paris and Algiers. Hence, Algerian theatre was increasingly voiceless, although some plays were from time to time staged to remind its existence. In order to have a sight at the main themes presented during these periods, the following table provides some examples of plays:

#### 2.4.3.4. Theatre during the Present Era

The current decade is characterized by the restoration of the ANT precisely in 2000, which witnessed its opening the presence of numerous Arabs and Algerian actors and artists. Such fact paves the way to succeeding theatrical events such as the organization of the spring theatre and a demonstration of Algeria organized in France, in 2003. Indeed, 2006 was marked by the organization of a number of theatrical groups and cultural festivals which are:

- National Festival of professional theater done in Algiers and chaired by artist Mhammed bin fetaf.
- International Festival of Algerian Theatre, done in Algiers and chaired by Dr Brahim Nawal for a period of 3 years. Nowadays, it is headed by Omar Aftmosh after being converted in 2011 in Bejaia.
- National Theatre of humour, (Medea), headed by Prof. Miloud Blhanih.
- The national festival of amateur theater, (Mostaganem), headed by the artist Jamal ben Saber.
- National Festival of Children's Theatre, (Khenchla).
- National Festival of Amazigh Theatre, (Batna).
- It was, recently, decreed the national festival of feminist, theatrical production (Annaba), chaired by the artist Sonia Macaio.<sup>41</sup>

The above festivals provided more dynamics to the Algerian theatrical movement, supplying it with support and innovation to facilitate its integration in different official competitions. In addition to this, Algeria witnessed a number of theatrical festival ranging from local to international, and that from the re-opening of its national theatre, among them: year of Algeria in France (2003), Algeria Capital of Arab culture (2007), Quds the internal Capital of Arab culture (2008), International

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<sup>41</sup> Cited in Khellef's web Article (July, 2012).

festival of theatre (Africa cycle) and Tlemcen, Capital of Islamic culture (2011).

Indeed, it should be pointed out that this period experienced the reproduction of previous works: the 'cut and stuck' method, such as, *vebrat lfhama*, *'fatma'*, etc. Moreover, an increasing interest is attested in a typical form of theatre which is stand up comedy. This latter becomes the mode of advocating social, political, economic and historical issues in a comedic and humorous way. Such humorous performance give it a high concern and significance which attracts a wide mass of audience and as Logan (2010) says **"since 2003, and particularly during 2009-2010, there has been an 'explosion' in stand up comedy, so much so that it has 'hit the stratosphere'"**. Yet, it should be born in mind that stand-up comedy was practised in Algeria years ago, with a number of comedians such as Hassane El Hassani, Mohamed fellag, etc, but has been prohibited for its eloquent expression. Nowadays, this theatrical comedic genre has bounced back stronger than ever thanks to the freedom of expression and democracy. But what characterize Algerian stand-up comedy?

## **2.5. A Snapshot of Stand-up Comedy in Algeria**

So far, it has been demonstrated that theatre has been an expressive refuge to various artists who attempt to index the Algerian living situation or state, and to criticise its social and political realities. Yet, the transmission of these real facts is delineated by the medium used (written or audio-visual), the chosen genre (dramatic, tragicomic or comedic), and the utilized language with the apparent aim of reaching a large mass of audience to build their loyalty and attain their desires. Hence, the delivered message can sometimes be expressed directly, clearly and explicitly,

while other times, it can be transmitted implicitly using humour as communicative device with the goal of advocating the vicissitudes of life in a pleasant manner.

By taking into consideration that humour is a natural humanistic behaviour which serves to implicitly correct the flaws of society in a pleasant and distractive way, some Algerian artists like the Inspector Tahar and his apprentice, Allalou, Rouiched, etc opted for comedic sketches which involves a group of comedians, or played in sitcoms, while others preferred comic monologues performed in the so-called stand-up comedy regarded as the most eloquent and expressive form of comic communication that addresses divergent issues delivered directly to the audience as Mintz confirms

**Stand-up comedy is arguably the oldest, most universal, basic, and deeply significant form of humorous expression. It is the purest public comic communication, performing essentially the same social and cultural roles in practically every known society, past and present.** <sup>42</sup>

After a prolonged web investigation, it has been found that few Algerian comedians did stand-up comedy during the French occupation of the Algerian territories. Only theatre with its divergent genres (comedy, tragedy, drama, etc) abounded, as previously mentioned. The slight examples that can be cited are that of Hassane El Hassani (an Algerian actor and comedian whose real name Hassane Benchikh, from

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<sup>42</sup> Cited in Walker, 1998:194.

Médeia) who performed his / ja el garmija/held in AA, as shown in YouTube<sup>43</sup>, or that of Rachid Ksenteni (his genuine name is Rachid Belekhdar, an Algerian actor, singer, humorist and playwright, from Constantine), the so-called 'Moliere of the Algerian theatre'<sup>44</sup>, whose inspiration of *commedia dell'Arte*, made him display some solo comic and humorous spectacles based on improvisation as done in stand-up comedy.

Yet, those examples are not totally sufficient to claim that **stand-up comedy** <sup>45</sup> existed during the Algerian colonial era. Indeed, the scarcity of information proves it. It was until 1986 that Fellag displayed his comedic monologue entitled '*les aventures de Tchop*' (the Adventures of Tchop) according to the only found information. In fact, it should be born in mind that this artist is regarded among the major famous figures in Algerian stand-up comedy during the 80s, thanks to his spontaneous and frank speech.

To put it very briefly, Mohamed Said Fellag (born in 1950) is an Algerian comedian, writer and humorist, originated from Kabylie, who studied theatre at the National School of Theatre in Algiers, and benefited from the Fratillini circus family to learn mime and clown attitudes. He performed various comedic sketches, for example, in 1989, he staged his *Cocktail Kharotov*, in which he advocates social crises and youth issues such as love, accommodation problems, silence or lack of communication that exists between siblings, parents and their kids, etc. such facts are drawn from real situations observed in the Algerian society and through his personal introspection.

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_qt7DPg-07Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qt7DPg-07Y)

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Thahar, 2000: 85.

<sup>45</sup> Other theatrical forms were found; see 'theatre during the French colonization'.

In 1990, he performed another comic monologue named 'SOS labes' (SOS good) as a reaction to the Islamist Movement at that time, and in 1991, he displayed his so-called '*babor l Australia*' (boat to Australia) with the apparent theme to divulge the lack of housing, by metaphorically claiming that a boat from Australia is coming to take the unemployed Algerians to provide them with all the living necessities such as job, houses, etc. In effect, people believed in this sketch and applied for an Australian visa. This credulity reveals the depth of distress.

In 1995, he displayed his famous show called '*Djurdjurassique Bled*', held in AA, Berber language and most dominantly French language to attract a French audience. In this sketch, Fellag attempts to disclose the wounded Algerian identity through a funny and absurd caricature, with the apparent aim to highlight the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Algeria to the future generations and young immigrants who are unaware of such peculiar Algerian atmosphere. In this respect, he said<sup>46</sup> (2000:114)

**Djurdjurassique Bled réconcilie les beurs avec l'image de leur pays [...] Il est essentiel de restaurer, dans leur esprit, l'image du pays d'où ils viennent.**<sup>47</sup>

In fact, it should be signaled that Fellag challenged other expressive forms through his spontaneous and truthful topics extracted from the Algerian realities by spotting the underside of politics, economy, obsessive and taboo themes, the nodes of society like jobless, youth frustrations, men and women's relationships, etc.

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<sup>46</sup> Cited in Boussahel's Article, 2009: 124.

<sup>47</sup> My Translation: *Djurdjurassique Bled* reconciles the beurs (North African immigrants) about their image of their native country. It is essential to restore, in their spirit, the picture of the country they come from.

He paved the way to other comedians to do so, especially nowadays, stand-up comedy has gained prominence in contemporary societies thanks to the freedom of speech and democracy. Hence a myriad of Algerian artists have started to perform this comedic genre, either in Algeria or abroad in different venues like theatres, comedy clubs, café-theatres, weddings, operas, etc. In addition to this, a number of comedians favour France to display their shows such as Biyouna, an Algerian singer, dancer, comedian and actress, who recently performed her solo comic monologue entitled '*Biyouna*' in the Martiny theatre of Paris in March 2012. This spectacle is a sum of sketches in which she sheds light on the salient instances of her life like her childhood, her shift toward celebrity, the difficulties she faced in obtaining the French Visa, etc, by illustrating in a funny and satirical way with examples taken from genuine Algerian and Maghreban situations<sup>48</sup>.

Other comedians from Algerian descent also tackle humorously divergent topics, in which they reveal the Algerian identity and its social issues, racism, ethnicity, etc, using French language as the matrice language embedded with a number of AA lexical items for different reasons. For example, Smain Fairouz, known as Smain, a French actor and humorist born in Constantine, possesses several solo comic shows tackling various themes:

- **1986 : A star is beur**
- **1988 : Prise de tête**
- **1989 : T'en veux?**
- **1992 : Zizi Rider**
- **1996 : Comme ça se prononce**
- **1998 : En attendant le soleil**

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<sup>48</sup> Cited in Hadji's Article, 2012.

- **2004 : Rebelote**
- **2013 : Mon dernier... avant le prochain**<sup>49</sup>

Also, Farid Bendjafar, known as Cartouche, is a French-Algerian humorist, who treats many topics in his spectacles:

- **Mis en scène par Kad et Olivier et chorégraphié par Marie-Claude Pietragalla**
- **Les femmes sont des hommes comme les autres, mis en scène par Marie-Claude Pietragalla, 2007-2008 au théâtre Trévis**
- **Nouveau spectacle mis en scène par Marie-Claude Pietragalla et Julien Derouault, à la Cigale en avril 2009, à l'Alhambra les 30 novembre, 1<sup>er</sup> décembre et 2 décembre 2009, et à l'Olympia le 28 avril 2010**
- **2011 : Soirée entre filles de Cartouche, Théâtre Le Temple**
- **2012: Soirée entre filles de Cartouche, Comédie des Boulevards**<sup>50</sup>.

Generally, countless comedians are thriving nowadays, whose interest is to do stand-up comedy, as an art, hobby and/or business. The preeminent example that must be mentioned is that of Abdelkader Secteur, who makes of his humour and wit his relished job as he claimed in *El Watan* newspaper "**Au début, je n'avais jamais pensé que le rire puisse faire l'objet d'un métier, d'un avenir**".<sup>51</sup> In fact, this

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<sup>49</sup> Cited in Wikipedia.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Wikipedia.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in Tazir's Article, (2010). My translation: in the beginning, I never thought that laughter could be a job, a future.



comedian's monologues are conceived as the crux data of this humble investigation. Therefore, a special concern to his autobiography should be devoted in the appendix. (See page: 166)

Moreover, the popularity of stand-up comedy in Algeria is presently encouraging a growing proportion of devotees to enter the art. Even some competitions are pushing this theatrical art to flourish, for example 'qahwæt əlgosto' (coffee taste) is amongst the competitions that seek for the talent of Algerians in comedy and humour to assist them in this comedic art. To describe it promptly, 'qahwæt əlgosto' is a comedic TV show displayed in the Algerian channel 'el ʒazairija', and presented by the animator Nabil Asli. Until now, there has been three seasons of this TV show, and each season possesses ten episodes with a number of contestants that do not exceed eight. In each show, the competitors present in a short time of 8-10 minutes funny and amusing stories inspired from social, personal, political, and ethnic issues in front of an audience and a number of three or four jury members who, as professionals in this domain, provide them with the necessary advice to boost their skills and aptitude, and the significant critics to better their performances. Although the committee of jury evaluates the competitors' performance by providing them a definitive mark, their professional destiny relies on the the public vote.

Likewise, Algerian stand-up comedians emerge; there are some basic features which characterise their performances. Hence, for a better elucidation, the following subsection is devoted to explain the noticeable features of Algerian stand-up comedy.

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### **2.5.1. Characteristics of Algerian Stand-up Comedy**

It is inevitably recognized that Algerian stand-up comedians' monologues are fundamentally a linguistic construct, through which they provoke humour and unveil hidden issues. This is due to the fact that their overall themes which they attempt to transmit in their message are inspired from reality via a language doped with CS and sophisticated by some figurative elements like wordplay, allusion, ambiguity. These characteristics are summarized as follow:

#### **a) Observational Comedy**

It is a type of humour mostly used in stand-up comedy, particularly with Algerian comedians to describe the commonplace and ordinary aspects of daily life, admitting that reality provokes laughter. For example, in a comedic monologue, a comedian draws his audience's laughter by describing the habitual dispute between the bride and her mother-in-law. Therefore, it can be said that observational comedy focuses on the premise that 'it's funny because it is true'.

#### **b) Self-Deprecating Humour**

In almost all monologues, comedians engage in self-deprecating humour by belittling themselves, their abilities, or undervaluing their culture or their country, etc, in order to avoid arrogance and haughtiness in front of their audience. According to Fellag, Algeria represents his self-deprecating humour, in which he derives his scripts, as

he said after an interview done with Caubet (2004:48) "**le pays des Algériens, c'est l'autodérision**"<sup>52</sup>

Although this method is based on the fact of diminishing the comedian's self-deprecator status by showing his/her flaws, it remains among the quickest ways to get the spectators' attention in order to trigger their laughter, because it works below their consciousness, on an emotional level. For instance, if the comedian describes his/her disadvantage personality such as telling his/her bad luck, the audience laughs because it feels superior to him/her. (A part of the superiority theory).

### **c) Figurative Language Used in Stand-ups' Monologue**

It has been noticed that figurative language constitutes the vehicle of comedic performances. In effect, almost all Algerian comedians use it as a basic strategy through which they express their aggressive or benevolent intentions in an implicit way. The figurative language can take multiple forms such as:

- **Hyperbole**

It implies an exaggeration in saying something. It is defined by Cuddon (1977:310) as "**a figure of speech which contains an exaggeration for emphasis**", for example, in a sketch, a comedian claimed 'je ne l'ai pas vue depuis des siècles' (I have not seen him for ages) is just a hyperbole showing long term absence, that the comedian misses his friend. Therefore, it can be stated that although hyperbole does not necessarily entail a literal wit, it is widely used within Algerian stand-up comedians in order to evoke strong feelings to the audience by rising the absurdity expressed in a joke via overstating the situation. By doing so, a

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<sup>52</sup> My translation: Algeria is itself self-depreciation.

comedian often starts telling a story then makes it increasingly funny by telling the overstated situations and occurrences which always result in vigorous laughter.

- **Puns**

a form of wordplay<sup>53</sup> which refers to use of words that sounds alike but possess different or double meaning (literal and metaphorical sense), for humorous or rhetorical effect. It involves an intentional use or an abuse of homographs (words with similar spellings but different meanings) or homophones (words with identical pronunciation but with different meanings) for bringing ambiguity leading to misunderstanding as Ross confirms **"an ambiguity or double meaning, which deliberately misleads the audience"**. (1998:7) for example, in a comedic monologue, an Algerian stand-up speaking about Rai music said 'ərraj li jtellef ərraj' to mean that Rai music distorts the morals; in this case the word /ərraj/ is used to denote two dissimilar meanings: the first refers to Rai music, while the second means morals. Hence, puns are among the widespread techniques of making jokes by using the different meanings of words in an amusing way. It has been defined by Koestler (1969:64/65) as **"the bisociation of a single phonetic form with two meanings - two strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot."**

- **Allusion**

It is another figure of speech used by various Algerian comedians to refer to a situation, a place, a person, etc without straightly saying it. In this respect, Freud (1905/1960:89) demonstrates that allusion means **"something is suggested that is not said straight out"**. By using this

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<sup>53</sup>Wordplay refers to verbal wit based on meanings and ambiguities of words.

technique, comedians are allowed to speak about socially sensitive and even taboo topics in an implicit way as Allen (1998:36) states **"many jokes involve more or less obvious point, but managing not to state the point directly"**. Such fact implies that there should be a mutual intelligibility between what is said and what is meant. Thus, allusion is part of the comedian and audience background knowledge. To put it another way, in alluding, Algerian comedians should presuppose that their audience makes connection between what is said and what is meant, i.e., it should have extra-linguistic knowledge which brings them the familiarity of what is mentioned. For example, when a comedian addresses his audience using 'ce tiers monde' (this third world), they should link it with African countries.

The aforementioned techniques are not the only forms of figurative language used by Algerian stand up comedians. There are other ways that comedians use in their humoristic discourse to express their implicit intentions like simile, sarcasm, metaphor, etc.

#### **d) CS as The Crux of Algerian Comedians' Monologues**

The figurative language is expressed not in a single language/code, but with two, or three languages (Arabic, French or Berber) depending on some factors such as the audience and the geographical background of the comedian. For example, within a kabyle audience, Fellag usually uses Berber language embedded with French language, but he addresses the Algerian community using AA and French. Thus, he uses the three languages (AA, French and Berber) as a vehicle of his monologues, as he claimed in Caubet's interview (2004:37)

**En exploitant ces trois langues, je peux me permettre de repousser les limites et de dire énormément de choses. Selon le public, je peux parler des problèmes qui les touchent plus particulièrement et je n'hésite pas à brocarder leurs travers, et de montrer aussi leur générosité.**<sup>54</sup>

Even Algerian comedians who address a francophone audience using French, they do not hesitate to introduce AA, or berber lexis into their matrix language, for example, Smain, Fellag, Biyouna and others introduce Arabic expressions like /wəllah/ or thankful words such as /ʃukran/(thank you), or /hamdu əllah/(thank Allah), or even, compassion terms like /məskina/ (poor girl). Thus, CS constitutes the crux of Algerian comedians' language, for some factors which will be explored in the empirical phase of the third chapter.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

From what has been exposed in this chapter, it can be inferred that historical, socio-cultural, political and ideological factors have all contributed to the making of the actual Algerian linguistic situation as well as its different modes of artistic expressions like theatre. This latter underwent major historical milestones to reach its present artistic peak and thus, to mark a footprint in the Algerian cultural landscape. Yet, the understanding of theatre with its divergent forms such as stand-up comedy requires first, the understanding of the languages at play in performances. That is why the above description of the linguistic profile in Algeria was salient. In fact, it is worth mentioning that because Algeria possesses an intricate

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<sup>54</sup> My translation: By exploiting these three languages, I can afford to push the boundaries and say a lot of things. Depending on the audience, I can talk about issues that affect them most, by radicalizing them, and showing their generosity.

linguistic situation, language is inextricably bound up with the Algerians' identity and a solid tool to express their intentions in different domains as Algerian stand-up comedians do in their humoristic monologues. This comedic genre is derived from the commonplace and ordinary aspects of daily life and transmitted implicitly using a number of figurative language forms.

### **3.1. Introduction**

Laughter which proliferates in stand-up comedy guarantees the audience's appreciation of the comedian's humoristic discourse, in which s/he attempts to transmit an implicit intentional message in a funny way. Such fact would be an intriguing topic of investigation, especially within the Algerian context where linguistic heterogeneity, culture, religion, and other sensitive topics are peculiarities of the country. Although scant research has been done on this subject matter, a deliberate attempt has been devoted in this research work to bring a novel insight into the study of stand-up comedy in Algeria, by taking into account the case of Abdelkader secteur's sketches, with the aim of analysing his verbal discourse. To make the topic trustworthy, a practical analysis will be drawn in this chapter by trying to shed light on the pursued methodology: - exhibiting the way data is collected; - presenting the sampling whose contribution in this work is beneficial to assess their laughter and inference of the comedian's humoristic discourse; - displaying the main research instruments used. This empirical part will proceed by attempting to analyse the data obtained and interpret the results.

### **3.2. Methodology**

That language is an intentional behaviour is nothing new. Everyone agrees that when people speak in different kinds of speech situations, they ostensibly attempt to attain their communicative target with an intended meaning behind it. Such linguistic intentional behaviour is also applied within humoristic discourse, although this latter is seen as trivial. Verbal humour as practiced in different types of speech events like stand-up comedy, functions not only to provoke laughter and amusement, but also to fulfil implicit meanings. In doing so, stand-up comedians use a disparity of communicative



strategies ranging from verbal, para-verbal and non verbal ways to attain a successful performance or show.

Within this research project, the focus of analysis, as previously mentioned, will be based on verbal performance of the humorist which functions humorously and fulfils intentional meaning. However, para-verbal and non verbal communication will be set aside.

Hence, the stand-up comedian's verbal humour will be approached from a linguistic perspective to analyze humorous texts by using the general theory of verbal humour in order to try to disclose the linguistic items that lead to laughter.

In addition to this, there will be a pragmatic/functional attempt to shed light on how the comedian's discourse possesses implicit messages. In other words, the pragmatic/functional perspective will help in understanding the functions of humoristic discourse held in stand-up comedy. Moreover, the humorist's verbal humour is basically a one side oral interaction characterized by a complex heterogeneity of codes, clearly noticed by the alternation of two languages (AA/French) or linguistic varieties (MSA /AA). Hence, in order to inspect such micro-linguistic variation, the study will take a sociolinguistic path to unveil the motives behind such linguistic behaviour, by applying some specialists' approaches.

It should be noted that the aforementioned approaches are drawn from what has been exposed in the literature review in the first chapter. They fundamentally fall squarely within the sociology of language framework with the apparent aim of considering its communicative and pragmatic aspect to attain a qualitative analysis. But the analysis requires a genuine corpus with reliable data, which are identified in the following:

### **3.2.1. Data Collection**

The most appropriate method to check the validity of the proposed hypotheses is to harvest authentic data. But as attending live performance is impossible and considered as the limitation of this project, another reliable way is used: the data of this study derives from the downloaded videos of the humorist's sketches, either in live stand-up comedy or other shows where the audience attendance is not shown. Only its laughter is heard.

Although the humorist's sketches are available in the commercially produced videotapes and digital video discs (DVD), we have chosen to extract the comedian's shows from YouTube's recordings using Real Player software, which contains a cutting tool that helps trim the video according to our needs.

The show's duration is about eleven to forty five minutes; it consists of a chunk of coherent jokes displayed by the artist, either in solo, or duo performances with another comedian. But in this research project, just five excerpts dating recently, i.e., 2011- 2012- 2013, and ranging from one to five minutes from his solo performances are taken into consideration to be transcribed and analysed.

Indeed, it should be borne in mind that the transcription of the five excerpts will focus only on the humorist's spoken language. Yet, it will be abstracted from paralinguistic features such as tone, pitch of the voice, pauses, emphasis, overlaps, breaths, etc, or nonverbal language like gestures, body language, or facial expressions although their holistic significance contributes to a better understanding and interpretation of messages. This is due to the fact that these features are not considered in this analysis. In order to have

a clear idea about the chosen excerpts of analysis, they will be recorded in a DVD as an element of the appendix.

In fact, the chosen excerpts are selected purposefully for the following reasons:

- First, for their opulent amusement that provokes laughter.
- Second, for the restricted nonverbal language they encompass.
- Third, for the tacit message they hold.
- Fourth, for the pervasive interjection of different codes.
- Five, for the limited taboo topics or expressions used.

Moreover, for the sake of further feedbacks for an accurate interpretation of the database, the selected excerpts will be given to a sample of population.

### **3.2.2. Sampling Presentation**

As the stand-up comedian performs his show in front of his audience, he has the potential to index its multiple reactions, such as unveiling his hidden messages through laughter. Therefore, the audience response plays a significant role in the ongoing show, and such response should not be missed within the analytical study of any stand-up comedy. But as attending live shows is impossible for some personal reasons, another way is done to highlight their significance.

The selected excerpts are given to a sample of forty participants to be watched then interpreted for the apparent aims to correspondingly, observe the punch line of the joke which provides an incongruous ending leading to participants' laughter, and to infer their interpretation and understanding of the hidden message by means of a questionnaire. The

research instruments used in this investigation will be highlighted below.

By and large, the participants that partake in this project are family members, some teachers and friends from Tlemcen. They are Algerians who possess mutual background knowledge of the norms and expectations concerning the use of language in the humorist's discourse. In fact, this background knowledge is governed by the Algerian cultural values, its religion and heritage, which consequently leads to a lucid understanding and interpretation of the humorist's sketches. Put differently, the participants in this research work possess both linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge to determine what the humorist means or attempts to convey.

As a matter of fact, it should be pointed out that the interpretation of humoristic discourse in general, varies according to different social factors such as audience's ethnicity, their age, education, cultural background, etc. In this research in particular, the social variables of age, gender and education are taken into consideration, though not in an exhaustive manner, because the comedian's verbal humour is the crux concern of this investigation.

In fact, ageing is essential in human experience. It refers to the physical, mental and social changes that normal individuals undergo during their span of life. In effect, it should be remembered that through time; individuals develop remarkable skills and capacities to encode, decode and interpret different kinds of messages thanks to their experience in this world, their communicative competence and their educational level. This latter is also salient in the comprehension of various communicative meanings; for example, an intellectual person who does a lot of readings can easily understand a radio conversation held between doctors, while an illiterate man cannot.

Hence, the participants in this practical study possess different educational levels and are from two major age

groups: adolescence that falls between sixteen and thirty, and adulthood which ranges from thirty-one to sixty. Such categorization of age groups is inspired from the lifespan of the person which delineates four phases: childhood (from six years to fifteen), adolescence, adulthood (as mentioned before), and old age (from sixty-one to seventy-five). As noticed, childhood and old age are not considered in this study for the following personal perspectives: children did not understand the selected excerpts given to them, while old people told us that they were not interested in watching stand-up comedy.

The other social variable on which the sampling is assigned is that of gender. In effect, it is universally agreed that gender is considered as a social construct overwhelmed by the gamut of biological, psychological and social differences between males and females. Such belief triggers an attention to include the social variable of gender in this investigation, within the restricted goal to spot males' and females' differences in the interpretation of the humorous discourse. Thus, twenty males and twenty females were considered as informants in this investigation.

However, a few participants whom we addressed refused to take part in the investigation, for their personal attitudes toward stand-up comedy or toward the humorist. Six women and two men refused to view the sketches because they were not attracted by this kind of comedy and did not make an effort to understand the humorist speech. The table below shows the participants involved in this study:

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Participants that partake in the survey and their educational level</b>		<b>Participants that were out of survey and their educational level</b>	
<b>16- 30</b>	<b>7 males</b>	<b>8 females</b>	<b>0 male</b>	<b>1 female</b>
	•2high school	•2 secondary		secondary

	level. • 5 university level.	level. • 6 university level.		level.
<b>31-60</b>	<b>11 males</b>	<b>6 females</b>	<b>2 males</b>	<b>5 females</b>
	• 2 secondary/high school level. • 9 university level.	• 4 secondary/high school level • 2 university level.	• 2 econdary /High school level.	• 4 secondary/high school level. • 1 university level.

**Table3.1: Sampling Presentation with educational level.**

The remaining thirty-two participants were required to (i) watch and listen to the selected sketches and (ii) fill in a questionnaire, for the aim to assess their perception and interpretation of the humoristic discourse, as already mentioned. This procedure is part of the research instruments used in this study which are as follows:

### **3.2.3. Research Instruments**

The empirical phase of this research entails the analysis of the humoristic discourse. Yet, this task necessitates handy tools among which video recording represents the core of this research, in addition to observation and the questionnaire which are also used as analytical devices. These research instruments are highlighted below.

#### **3.2.3.1. Video-Recordings**

It is previously admitted that the crux concern of this investigation relies on the humorist's performance, which are extracted from YouTube by means of RealPlayer downloader to be recorded. Such procedure lasted more than twenty days, during which a period of twelve days was limited only to watch, hear and select the sketches according to the aforesaid reasons; six days were restricted to downloading, while the five

remaining days were constrained with trimming the shows into excerpts.

In fact, this research instrument, i.e., video recording is a useful key in discourse analysis in general, and particularly within this investigation since it spots the humorist's genuine language in use by capturing his verbatim and the context of performance to be studied qualitatively. Stressing the importance of video recording in qualitative DA, McVelly, et al (2008:166) says:

**For some areas of qualitative research, it is hard to understand how the rigor of data collection and analysis could be maintained without audio or video recordings, such as the area of discourse analysis.**

### **3.2.3.2. Observation**

In addition to video recordings, there was a need for extensive use of ears and eyes. Such procedure is called observation which entails deep sight at the data involved. In this respect, Marguerite et.al (2010:114) state "**observation as a tool of research requires systematic and careful examination of the phenomena being studied**". Using this tool of research in this investigative part allows qualitative and quantitative results, which goes respectively with unveiling the reasons behind the humorist's code switching, and inspecting the time of laughter to depict the punch line of the joke after giving the excerpts to the sample to be watched. Indeed, it should be signalled that time inspection of participant's laughter is included in the questionnaire.

### **3.2.3.3. Questionnaire**

As mentioned, a questionnaire is given to the sample of participants in order to assess their interpretation concerning the data base of this research. The questionnaire

consists of twenty questions originally asked in Standard Arabic, split according to the number of the selected humorous excerpts, i.e., each video-sketch consists of three questions for the sake of qualitative and quantitative outcomes. It encompasses content questions to confirm the systematic examination of the listed objectives. Such questions were either structured, i.e., closed question with a predetermined set of responses given to the subjects in order to infer quantitative results, or open questions to give the participants an opportunity to express their opinion in a free-flowing manner. The analysis of questionnaire will be scheduled within the following practical part.

### **3.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

In order to check the proposed hypotheses, a penetrative analysis of the selected humorous excerpts is inevitable. Such procedure is reminiscent of what has been exposed in the first chapter with the auxiliary of the research instruments. Thus, successful interpretation is obtained if there is coordinate alignment between theoretical perspectives and concrete assistance as will be tried. The corollary of this attempt will be seen when examining the selected jokes.

#### **3.3.1. Linguistic Analysis of the Selected video-Excerpts**

Laughter is a distinctive feature in human behaviour instantiated from a wide range of stimuli like when being tickled, a hilarious gesture, sign, a drawing, or from verbal humour like humorous conversations, jokes, etc. Such form of human vocalization was accorded high significance and increasing attention from researchers in different disciplines with the apparent aim of explaining the ultimate origin and reasons behind laughter. Within the selected jokes, there will be an appeal to linguistic theories of verbal humour although



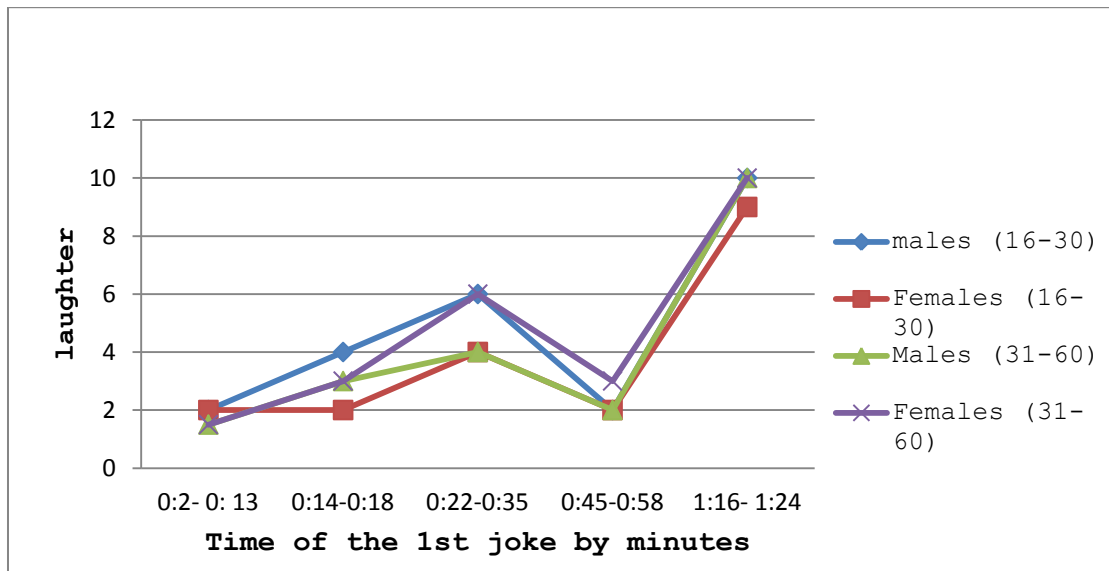
they are considered to lack the analysis of verbal interaction. To put it another way, linguistic theories of verbal humour have for privilege interest the analysis of the lexicon and the semantic of humorous discourse as Chabane stresses in his article "**l'analyse linguistique de l'humour verbal, conformément a l'épistémologie de la discipline, a souvent abordé l'énoncé humoristique comme un objet statique**<sup>55</sup>" (p 35). If it is so, the question that one is prompted to ask is: what is the adequate linguistic theory which can explain participants' reason for laughter in the selected joke? To answer this question, it seems preferable first, to propound participants' time of laughter when watching the video-recorded jokes of the stand-up comedian in order to spot when humour is generated, and thus, to facilitate the task of analysis. Such procedure has been part of idiosyncratic observation and confirmed by the first two questions provided in the questionnaire. The outcome of this inspection is as follows.

### **3.3.1.1. Findings**

- **Joke one**

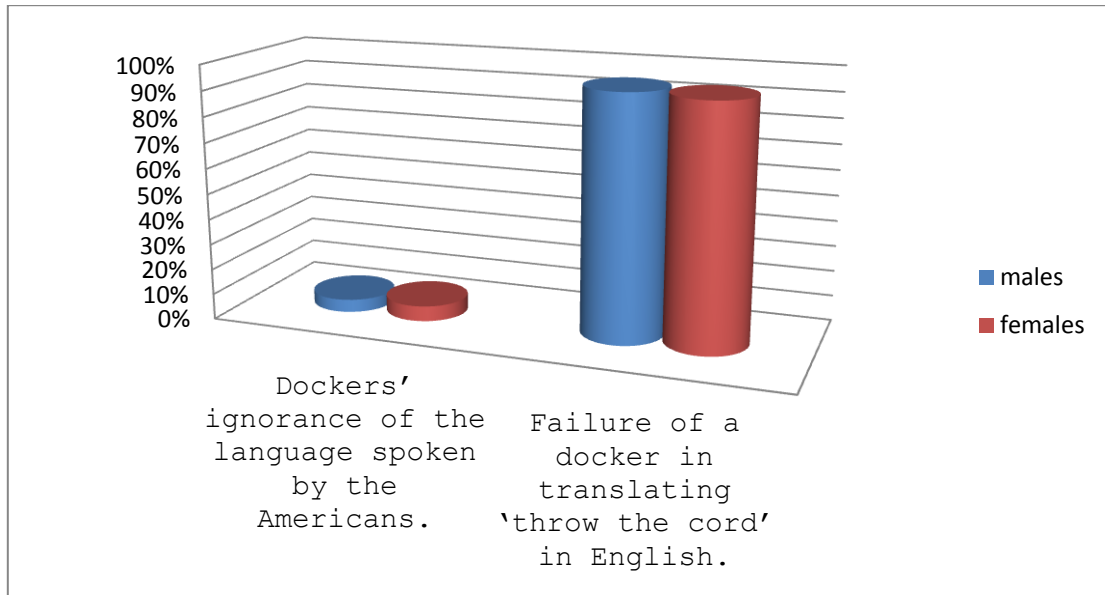
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<sup>55</sup> My translation: Linguistic analysis of verbal humour, according to the epistemology of the discipline, has often treated humorous discourse as a static phenomenon.



**Fig. 3.1: Participants' Laughter in the first Joke.**

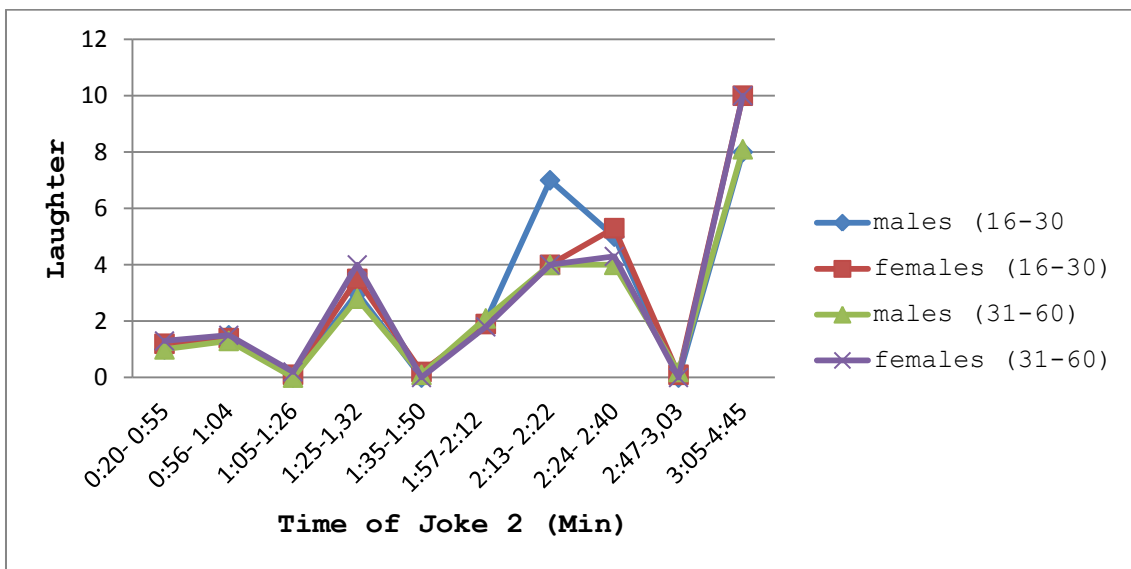
When switching on the video media player in this first joke to the participants, males and females, of different ages and from divergent educational levels, the first noticeable thing is that their smiles come into view, maybe because the comedian per se is the subject of humour, already known by the partakers, especially males from 16 to 60, and females from 16-30. Indeed, the inevitable reaction of all participants, when watching the joke is laughter, which largely emanates at the end of it (merely from 1:16 to 1:24 min). This view is confirmed after asking them the question: what mostly triggers your laughter in this joke? Their response is as follow:



**Fig. 3.2: Participants' Response of the Second Question of the First Joke.**

This chart proves that the end of the joke releases participants' laughter as shows the result of the two gender respondents (95% of males and 94% of females) of all ages and from dissimilar educational levels.

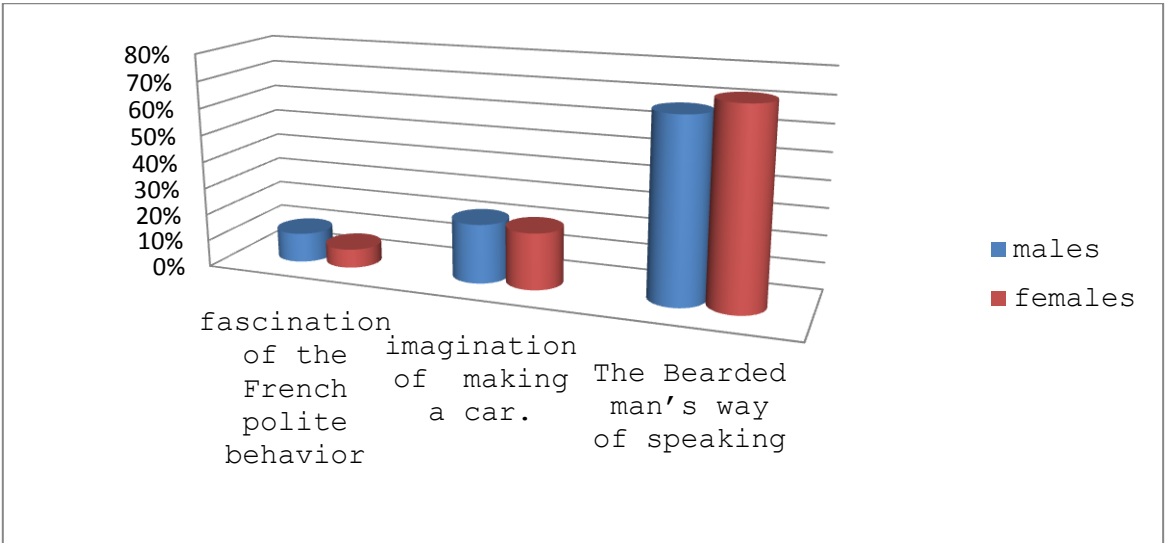
• **Joke Two**



**Fig. 3.3: Participants' Laughter in the Second Joke.**

In the same vein, almost all the sampling, whatever their gender, age, or educational level is, have been more attracted by the end of the joke (3:05- 4:45 Min) due to the fact that

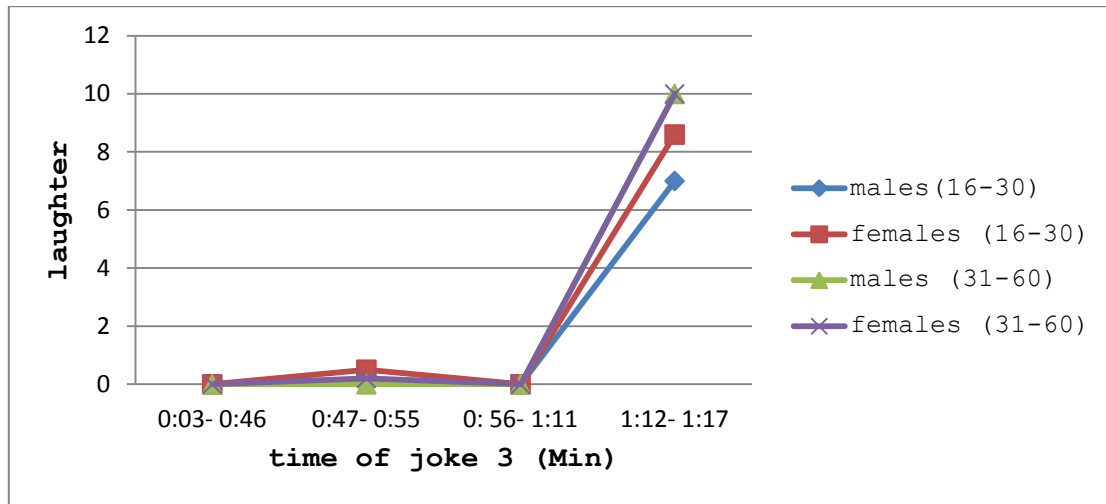
their guffaws is highly perceived at this moment. Besides, some chuckles were perceived at the set up (1:25-1:32) of the joke maybe because the humorists' way of wondering about the woman voice seems funny (listen to the second joke). And, at the middle of the joke (2:24-2:40) participants' laughter was noticeable maybe because this transition is warm up of a new idea. This finding is validated with the following chart, which demonstrates the answer to the question: what makes you laugh a lot in this joke? Among 32 participants, 1 female of 43 years old from secondary level and 2 men aged between (31-60) having university level responded that the humorist's fascination of the French polite behaviour and advancement is the subject of their laughter, 2 ladies aged between 31-60 and one of 26 years old, having different educational levels, and 4 males aged between 16-30 having university level replied that the humorist's imagination of Algerians or Moroccan making a car make them laugh, whereas the remaining 10 females and 12 men answered that they laugh from the humorist's description of the Bearded man's way of speaking, as shown in the following graph:



**Fig. 3.4: Sampling Response of the Second Question from the Second Joke.**

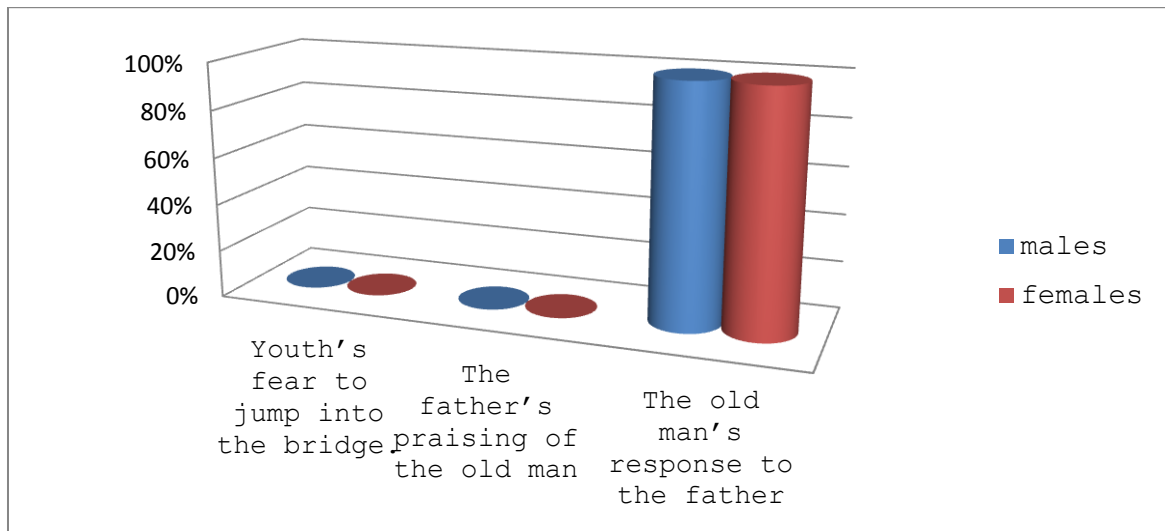
- **Joke three**

Once again, it seems important to display participants' time of laughter in response to the third joke, and see if their humour is largely stimulated at the end of the joke, as deduced in the above jokes.



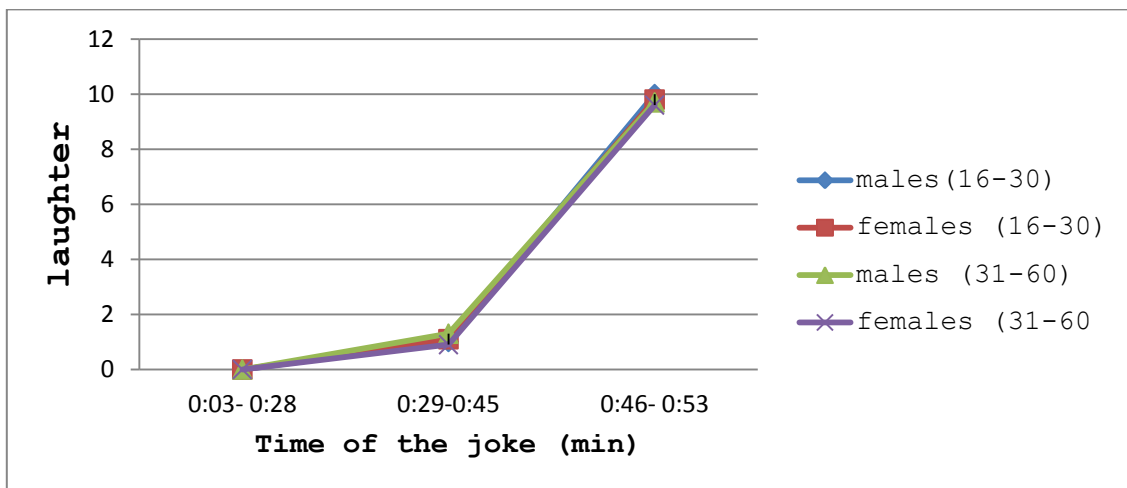
**Fig. 3.5: Participants' Laughter in the Third Joke.**

This graph points out that participants' laughter is detected at the end of the joke (1:12- 1:17 min) but at differing degrees. For instance, males and females aged between (31 to 60), from different educational levels have been largely amused by this joke, while the remaining categories of sampling were not as much attracted as adults, perhaps because the humorist was criticising the youth generation implicitly. Such finding was deduced from personal observation, but when the sampling was asked: what mostly generates your laughter in this joke? Their responses were: the old man's response to the father, as will be seen in the following chart:



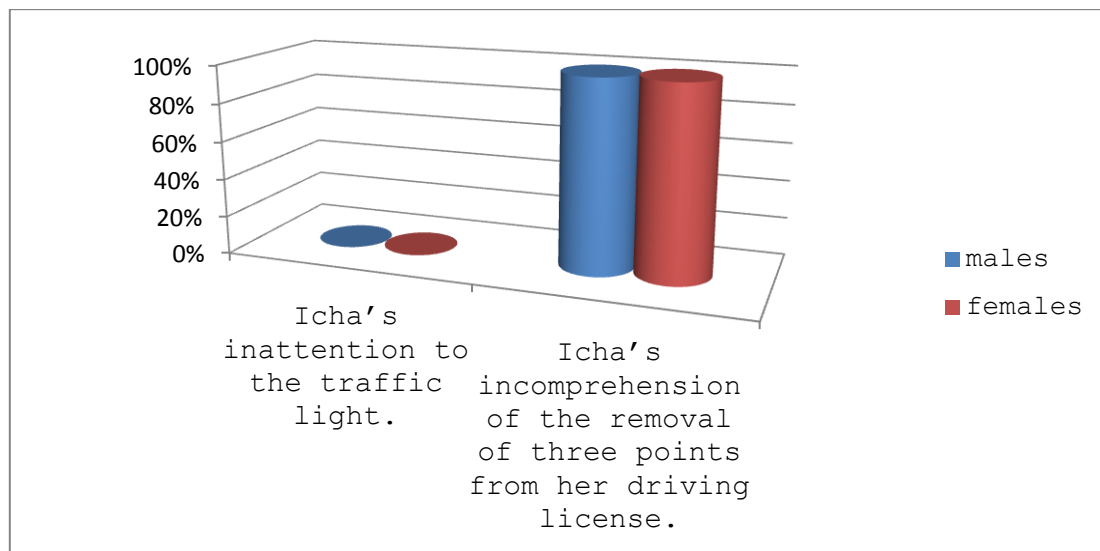
**Fig. 3.6: Sampling's Answer of the Second Question from the Third Joke.**

#### Joke 4



**Fig. 3.7: Participants' Laughter in the Fourth Joke.**

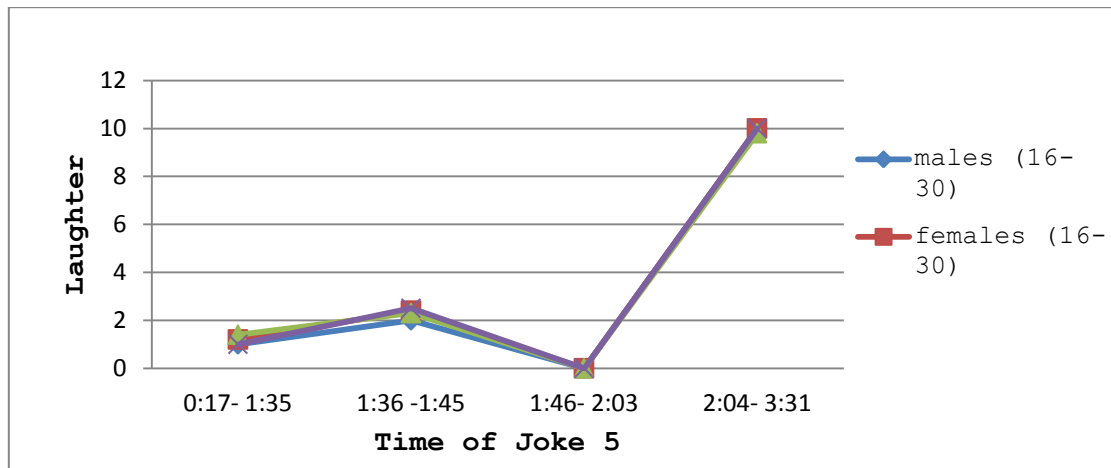
By the same token, participants express their high amusement toward the joke at the end of it (0:46-0:53 min), although some smiles were observed in the middle of the joke (0:29-0:45) certainly due to the humorists' facial gestures. This finding is confirmed in the chart below:



**Fig. 3.8: Sampling' Response to the Second Question from the Fourth Joke.**

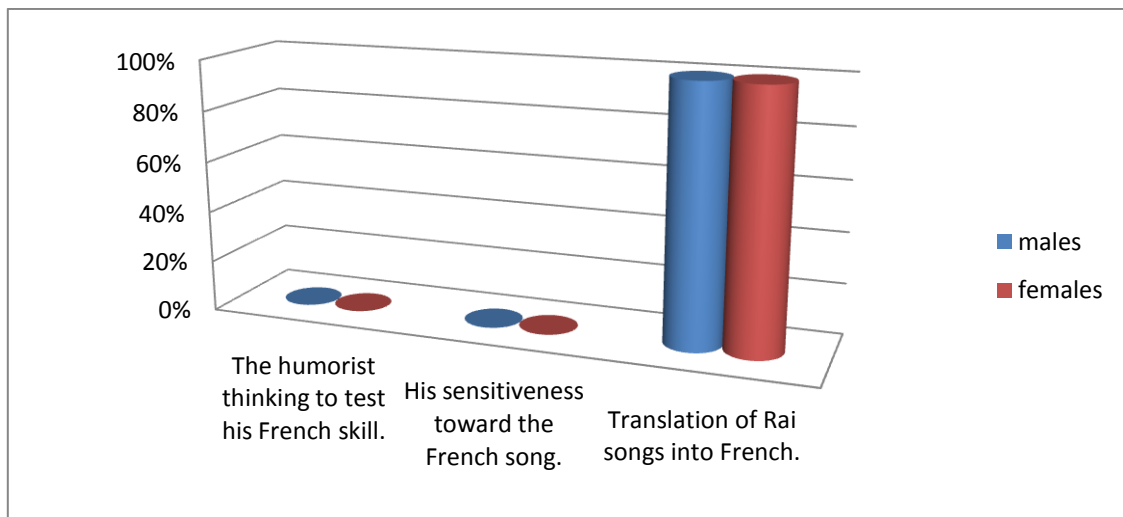
When asking the informants the question: what makes you laugh in this joke? The response were all the same since 100% of males and females from all ages and of different educational backgrounds answered that Icha's incomprehension of the removal of three points from her driving license was the trigger of their laughter and amusement.

**Joke 5**



**Fig. 3.9: Participants' Laughter in the Fifth Joke.**

According to this graph, the respondents' laughter was spotted at the end of the joke (2:04-3:31) and some smiles were noticed in the middle (1:35-1:45). Such finding is confirmed by the following chart, in which 100% of respondents of different gender, age, and educational levels, state that their laughter is generated when the humorist was translating Rai songs to the French woman, as will be illustrated:



**Fig. 3.10: Participants' Response of the Second Question from the Fifth Joke.**

It can be inferred from the above findings that laughter is generally stimulated at the end of the jokes, but there should be an explanation about this fact. Is it due to the



reason that some participants were grouped when giving them the selected video-jokes? This question is asked because grouping the participants makes them more attracted by the joke, and thus, their response is generally alike (laughter); but if it is so, why did the other participants who were given the jokes apart react in the same way? Therefore, it can be deduced that although the grouping of the audience plays a role in the generation of this noticeable humorous reaction, it is not merely responsible, and thus, there are other factors more significant to elucidate such response. As Goodwin (1986: 311) says **"an audience is shaped by the talk it is attending"**. So participants' reaction is tightly linked with the stand-up comedian's verbal performance, which is itself humorous in its kind. Such verbal production is a linguistic construct before all. It requires a linguistic scrutiny to explain why it is humorous and funny. The GTVH (General Theory of Verbal Humour) could be a good theory to explicate the selected jokes from a linguistic, discourse analysis and pragmatic perspectives and **"intends to incorporate aspects of conventional approaches as well"** (Walte, 2007:20) as will be explained in the following interpretation of results.

### **3.3.1.2. Interpretation of Findings**

The above findings are predictable given that the hubs of the jokes are their incongruous perception between two ideas, for instance:

- The first joke's main ideas are: (1) when a docker awakes his colleagues that the boat's workers are Americans and thus, they should ask them /rmi laħbəl/ (throw the rope) in English, and (2) when this docker starts talking with Americans in English and finished by asking; /rmi laħbəl/ in AA.

- The second joke is contingent with these two ideas which stem from (1) the comedian's description of the educated woman whose voice is recorded in the onboard computer of the car made by the French, especially when saying / *χalli:ni nəşşennet læ ttarbija*/ (let me listen to their education) and (2) his description of recorded speech of bearded man in the onboard computer of a car made by Maghrebans.
- The third joke merges the two ideas which derive from (1) father asking for voluntary youth to save his daughter and (2) the old man's response in which he asserts that he is not the deliberate saviour of the father's daughter, but someone else pushes him in the gully, as he said / *ce n'est pas la peine tzi:d, parce que wəllah naʔrəf əlli dmerni matefra*/ ( it is not worth adding any word because if I knew who pushed me in the gully, I would come into blows with him).
- The fourth joke is the corollary of the two thoughts: (1) the police admonition of Icha due to her inattention to the traffic light, and (2) Icha's incomprehension of the removal of three points from her driving license.
- In the fifth joke, there is a comparison between (1) French songs and (2) the senseless Rai songs.

This concept of incongruity can be better understood with the GTVH, a theory which attempts to bring a linear analysis of the joke, in terms of capturing its different phases of development and delivery. Yet, it shouldn't be missed that the comedian's jokes are primarily textualized before being articulated verbally. Hence, a linguistic analysis is to be anticipated especially because the notion of incongruity is conceptually semantic.

Hence, in the above jokes, the two aforementioned ideas are considered as the two opposite scripts bearing text. The

first script is the set up which precedes the opposite script: it is the beginning of the joke. This set up is easy to get to and matches well with the experience and knowledge of the hearer, thanks to his/her background knowledge. It is not funny because it is obvious and apparent in interpretation, although some smiles were perceived, due to extra-linguistic features such as the way the comedian reports the joke using gestures, facial expressions and intonation. The 'script - switch' is a continuing narration of the first script that causes the passing from the first script until the influx of the punch line provoking incongruous outcome leading to laughter. In this respect, Semino (1997:137) says that "**jokes commonly achieve their effect, by leading interpreters to achieve a particular script and then, forcing them to switch to another, often leading to absurdity**". Such process involves at the first stance, adequate discern of scripts which derive either lexically, sententially, or inferentially, as a by-product of common -sense reasoning, thanks to individuals' background knowledge; then, a shift to an opposite script, which possesses an incongruity. For a better elucidation of the script-opposition which leads to incongruity, the table below will evoke the set of ostensibly opposed scripts bearing text in each joke:

This table demonstrates that the above jokes are funny because their intrinsic texts are compatible with two or more opposite scripts. Such criteria correspond perfectly with the conditions of the semantic script- opposition. Yet, it should be pointed out that the above scripts are basically semantic grasped from the lexical handle or the chunk of lexemes of the text to be internalized within the cognitive structure of hearers, for instance, in the first joke, the lexical items '*port, babar marikani, dockers, costa, lhbəl*' denote the conceptual meaning of an American ship reaching the port, or in the fourth joke, the lexical words '*/tsog, la ville, bəlisi,*

sifla, siri, feu rouge, permis/ reflect the context of the story. But such meaning is insufficient if the interpretation relies only on the literal meaning of words, because genuine interpretation of jokes depends also on the communicative intention of the stand-up comedian. Hence, the understanding of the joke arises from a nuanced spectrum of semantic and pragmatic concerns, as will be seen in the pragmatic interpretation of the selected jokes. In this vein, the stream of GTVH proceeds by tackling the remaining knowledge recourses as previously explained in chapter one, i.e., the target, the situation, the narrative strategy and the language.

**a) The Target:** In order to infer the butt of the jokes, the question "who is the subject of laughter in this joke?" was given to the sampling deliberately without predetermined answers in order to check their understanding of each joke. Their responses are as follows:

- In Joke one, 83% of male participants aged between 16 to 60, almost all having university levels claimed that the dockers are the butt of the jokes. Such response is shared with 71% of women of 16-60 years old, who possess university and high school levels. The remaining answers were either education or linguistic competence.
- Among 18 males' participants, 11 adults with different educational levels, and 3 adolescents having university level said that the Algerians or Moroccans are the butt of the second joke, while the remaining males said that bearded man is the hub of the joke. As far as woman are concerned, 10 out of 14 having different ages and levels of education said that bearded man is the crux of humour, four other

females claimed that education is the butt of humour in this joke.

- The third joke answer is that 92% of females' adults and adolescents having different educational levels said that old men are the butt of the joke as claimed by 61 % of adults' males too. 8% of women assert that it is the father, the butt of this joke, and 5% of adolescent males claimed that it is behaviour.
- In the fourth joke, 95% of males and females from different educational backgrounds and age grading state that Icha is the victim of the joke; while 5% assert that the crux of humour is lack of concentration.
- The responses of participants to the above question concerned in the fifth joke are as follow: 85% of males and females said that Rai singers are the butt of the joke, while 15% claimed that it is music.

Although the question was straightforwardly obvious, insisting on 'Who' and not 'what', some answers were incompatible maybe for the reason that some participants did not understand the question. To remind it very briefly, the target is a modular element of the GTVH which considers the butt of the joke, including the persons, communities, groups or individuals with humorous stereotypes attached to them. Such fact takes into consideration the aggressive side of humour as done in the conventional superiority theory. In the selected jokes, the subjects of laughter are summarised in the following table according to the seemingly adequate answers:

jokes	Target of jokes
1	dockers
2	Algerians or Moroccans- beared man
3	Old men - father
4	Icha

**Table 3.3: Target of Each Joke.**

**b) The situation:** it refers to the people, objects, activities involved in the joke, as will be amply illustrated in the selected humorous excerpts:

jokes	People Involved	Objects	Activities
1	Dockers and the American sailor	The boat, The cord,	The joke is about throwing the rope.
2	The comedian, unknown character who drives him from the airport, the bearded man and audience.	Car with its board computer, door, radio, seat belt.	The joke is about making a car with an onboard computed in which the voice of the bearded man is recorded.
3	The father, his daughter, the youth spectator and the old man.	A bridge and the gully.	The joke is about asking for help.

4	The police man, Icha.	The car, the traffic light, the driving licence.	The joke is about removing three points from Icha's driving licence.
5	The comedian himself, the French woman, jean jack Goldman, Johnny Halliday, unknown Rai singers, the butcher,	Heart, cashew, wine, pill	The joke is about testing the comedian's oral competence in French language by speaking about music.

**Table 3.4: The knowledge Resource situation in Each Joke.**

**c) The Narrative Strategy:** refers to the genre of the joke, for example, all the jokes are narrative in origin, but a deep inspection reveals that there are instances of conversation held either between the characters of the humorous story as in the third joke, or between the comedian and some unknown character as occurs in the second joke. The first joke includes a mini-dialogue done by the characters of the story, whereas the fifth joke is a dialogue held by the humorist and a French lady. The third joke possesses question-answers sequences.

**d) The language:**

It is undeniably recognized that the stand-up comedian's humorous discourse is fundamentally a communicative event in which language plays a prominent role, although gestures and other theatrical devices like movements and miming amply

contribute to his performances. Yet, the message transformed in such performance is not just a concatenation of clauses; it forms a unified and coherent whole via the use of cohesive devices in order to allow the hearers to construct a coherent mental representation of scripts on the basis of their background knowledge, social interaction, context, setting, etc. On the basis of this view, the GTVH has promoted this modular knowledge recourse (Language) for a descriptive analysis of all the pertinent information of the verbalization of the jokes to easily specify the peculiarities of text at the cohesive level as will be illustrated, though not in an exhaustive manner.

It is extensively noticed that the humorist often makes use of reference devices in his humoristic discourse, in which he refers to a person, an object or a thing without directly mentioning it for abbreviation and to avoid repetitions. These references are marked through the use of linked pronouns (ضمير متصل) like /hum, ha, t,/ (them, her, me) when saying for instance, / əlmɔxəjjər fihum/ (the best of them) in the first joke to refer to the dockers by this pronoun, / ʔandha/ (she has) to refer to the girl in the third joke and /wəsəmha/ (her names) to refer to 'Icha' in the fourth joke, or /tlaʔt, rkəbt, tlagi:t, etc/ (I went, I set in, I met) as instantiated in the second and fifth joke, where the humorist speaks about himself.

The comedian also uses separate pronouns (ضمير منفصل) as /ntuma, nta, ana, huwa, hna etc / ( you, me, him, we) which occurs in his humoristic discourse to avoid repetition of the same nouns as in / siwa ntuma/ (except you) to refer to old men /ləkbar/ in the third joke, /nta tsoq/ (you drive) to denote the addressed hearer in the second joke, /ana kader? / (me, kader?) To refer to himself in the second joke or /hna nəxxədmu loto/ (we make a car) to refer to Algerians and Moroccans, / el qa:n:n



**hada howa/** (this is the law) to avoid repeating the term law /**el qanun/**. In the fifth joke, and as the comedian is conversing with the French lady in her mother tongue, he inserts French pronouns like (*je, vous, il, tu, laquelle, etc*), for example, he uses '*vous et tu*' (you) to refer to his French addressee, '*je*' to speak about himself, and '*laquelle*' to refer to a song.

Moreover, demonstrative pronouns are also applied in his discourse like /**hada, hadi, hadu, haduk, etc/** ( this, that, those) as in /**haduk les dockers/** (those dockers) that occurs in the first joke, or / **hadi l'ordinateur de bord/** ( this is the on board computer, etc.

Another ostensible cohesive tie which has the connotation of relating adjacent discourse segments is conjunctions. This latter is amply used by the humorist and by any speaker in a communicative event. It refers to "words such as 'and', 'however', 'finally' and 'in conclusion' that join phrases, clauses or sections of a text in such a way that they express the 'logical-semantic' relationship between them" (Prian Paltridge, 2006: 139). Thus, the selected jokes possess masses of conjunctions ranging from coordinate like /**mais/**(but) , additive /**wə/** and /**aussi/** (also), to subordinate conjunctions, such as /**parce que- ʕala ɣater/**(because), /**hatta/** (until), etc.

In addition to the use of above cohesive connectors which are basically grammatical- driven, the comedian attains his compact text through extra cohesive devices like lexical cohesion. This latter is "**resulting from the selective use of vocabulary**" (Donnelly, 1994:97) by inferring to the same item by other wording in order to avoid redundancy. This task is achieved either by the accretion of synonyms, generalization or bringing lexical items belonging to the same semantic areas, for example:

In the first joke, the dockers called the American man by /bnadəm/ (Adam's son), a term which is usually used when the calling an unknown person, whereas the supposedly intellectual docker calls him using "sir". In this case, the two lexical items fall squarely within the category of 'human being' hyponym<sup>56</sup>. It is also noticed that in this joke, the humorist refers to the dockers using the term /msa:kən/ (poor), a homonym with two meanings: either to show their financial poverty (literal meaning) or their deficient linguistic knowledge (metaphorical meaning), and thus it can be considered as a pun for its humorous effect.

In the second joke, the humorist also uses a hyponym when addressing the audience using /χuti/ (siblings), or when using the terms 'radio' and 'poste' to refer to electronic device designated to receive electric-radio waves. But for the sake of exaggeration (hyperbole), the comedian reports the bearded man's speech in which he refers to the driver by the insult word/tnah/ (imbecile).

In the third joke, he employs the terms /χuti, les jeunes/ (siblings, youth) to refer to /rafi/, the mass of youth viewers who attend the accident (hyponyms). He also uses a number of synonyms to avoid repeating the term old man. Such synonyms are spotted in /un view, sibani, əlhaz, kbar/, they are considered as hyperbole to overstress the significance of old people.

The naming 'Icha' could be used as a hyponym to refer to Arabic women in the fourth joke. It is also used as a pun, i.e., عيشى and عيسى /ʕi:ʕa/ and /ʕi:ssa/ (a hyponym in Arabic) to have a humorous effect.

In the fifth joke, he uses the homonym / rohi/ not to denote his spirit, but to refer to his linguistic capacities

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<sup>56</sup>Hyponym is a word or a phrase whose semantic field is included within that of another word.

(a pun). He also labels the French lady by the terms "une française et madame". Indeed, he refers to the term crying using synonyms as /nəbki, nōwah, nŋajet et pleure/ for hyperbole.

Furthermore, it is largely perceived that the comedian makes use of some discourse markers as noticed in the second joke, in which he employs swearing expressions like /ʔuqsim billæ:h, wəllah/ when addressing his audience to have a humorous effect through the use of hyperbole, as stated /lgani fəl You Tube- ʔuqsim billæ:h/ ( he found me in You Tube- I swear), or /wəllah ja xuti/ ( I swear my brothers). Such swearing words are also included as part of the characters' speech as spotted in the third joke, in which the old man says / wəllah naŋref əlli: dmərni matəfra/ (I swear if I knew who pushes me, I would come into blows with him) to insist on the gravity of the situation. Another discourse marker is perceived in the second joke which is /nŋallah/ to have a humorous effect on the audience. Such markers are parcel of the comedian's religious status and his socio-cultural milieu.

An extra feature characterising the verbalization of the stand-up comedian's humoristic discourse is the use of repetition. Although the jokes are originally textual and scripted, they are transmitted orally by the humorist, and repetition is a common feature of any spoken discourse. For example, in the second joke, the humorist repeated the term /mzija/ (fortunately) twice, while in the fourth joke, he repeated the expression / el qanun hada hōwa/ (this is the law).

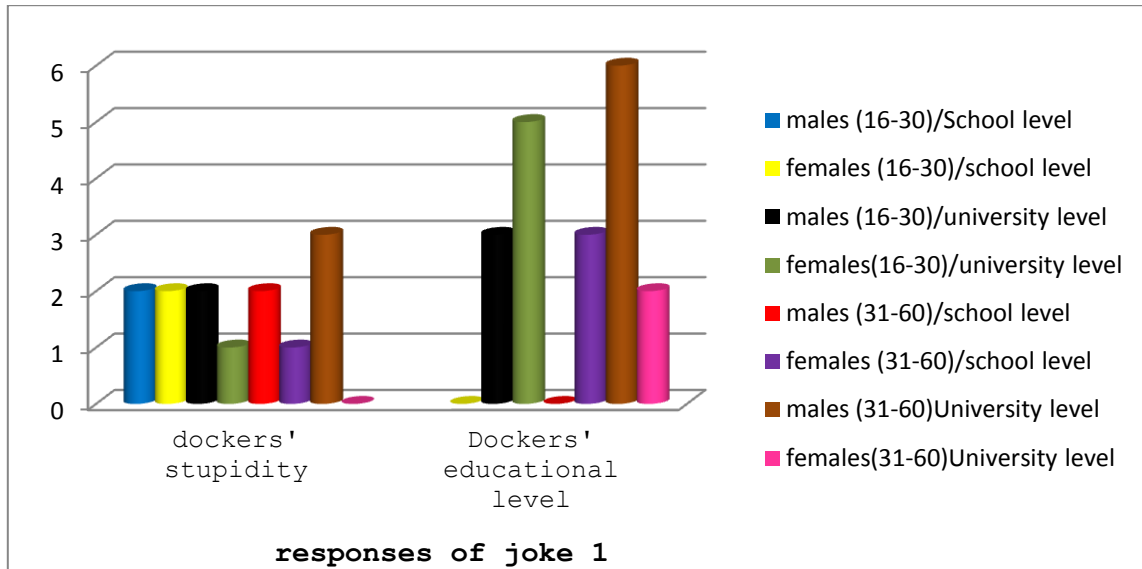
### **3.3.2. Functional/Pragmatic Analysis of the Selected Excerpts**

Though residing the selected jokes within a fixed theory operating at the five knowledge resources, the ultimate

analysis of the stand-up comedian's humoristic discourse is not yet attained. This is due to the fact that the above DA involves extensive semantic and syntactic examinations, while scant scrutiny is devoted to the inferences of jokes. But the analysis will not reach its peak if a functional scrutiny is missed. Assumably, the interpretation of jokes seems to fit well within the frame of pragmatics, in addition to syntax and semantic analysis. In effect, humorous discourse of all kinds, and particularly within this database, requires the inference of the speaker's intention. In other words, the analysis should find out what the hidden message is behind the selected jokes. In order to attempt to answer this question, an appeal to the participants was necessary in order to detect their inferences of each joke, and thus, to deduce the stand-up comedian's implicit message he tries to convey humorously. Such task entails giving a closed question re-worded differently in each joke (see Appendix, questions 3 in each joke) to the participants, with the general aim to grasp the hidden message behind the comedian's humoristic discourse. Participants' responses are as follows:

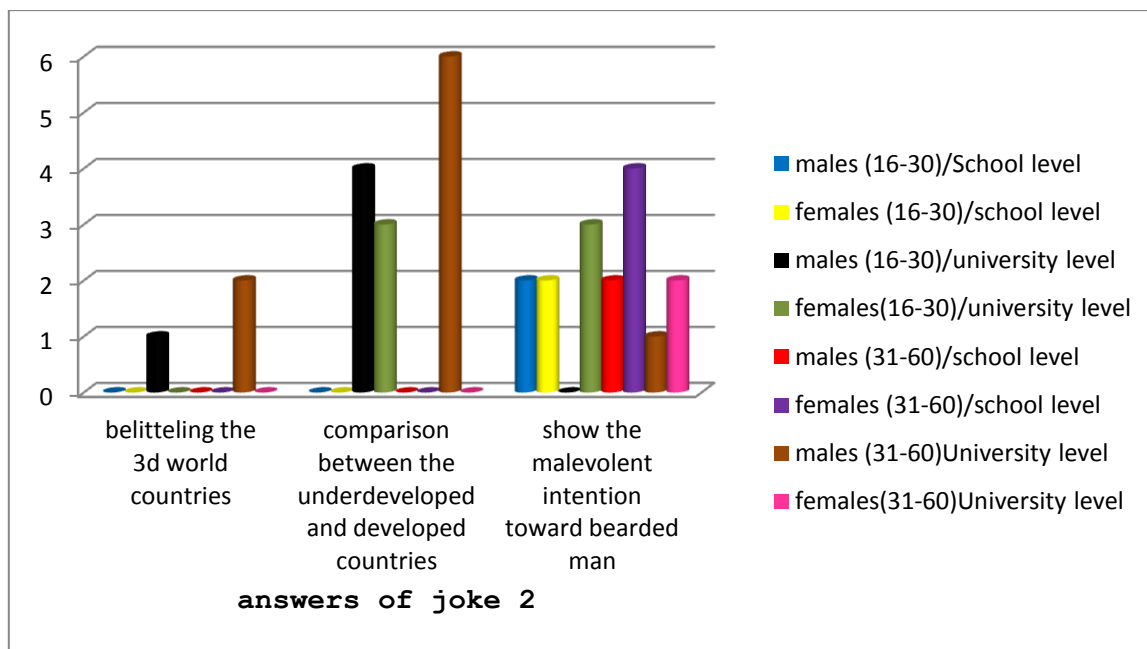
### **3.3.2.1. Findings**

In the first joke, participants were asked: What is the intention behind this joke? Their responses were quite different according to age, gender and educational level as shown in the following chart:



**Fig. 3.11: Participants' Response of the Third Question from the First Joke.**

The question that was addressed to participants in the second joke is: what is the message of this joke? The answers are as follows:



**Fig. 3.12: Participants' Answer of the Third Question of the Second Joke.**

The question: what is the intention behind this joke? was given to participants in order to figure out their interpretation of the third joke. Their responses are displayed in the chart below:

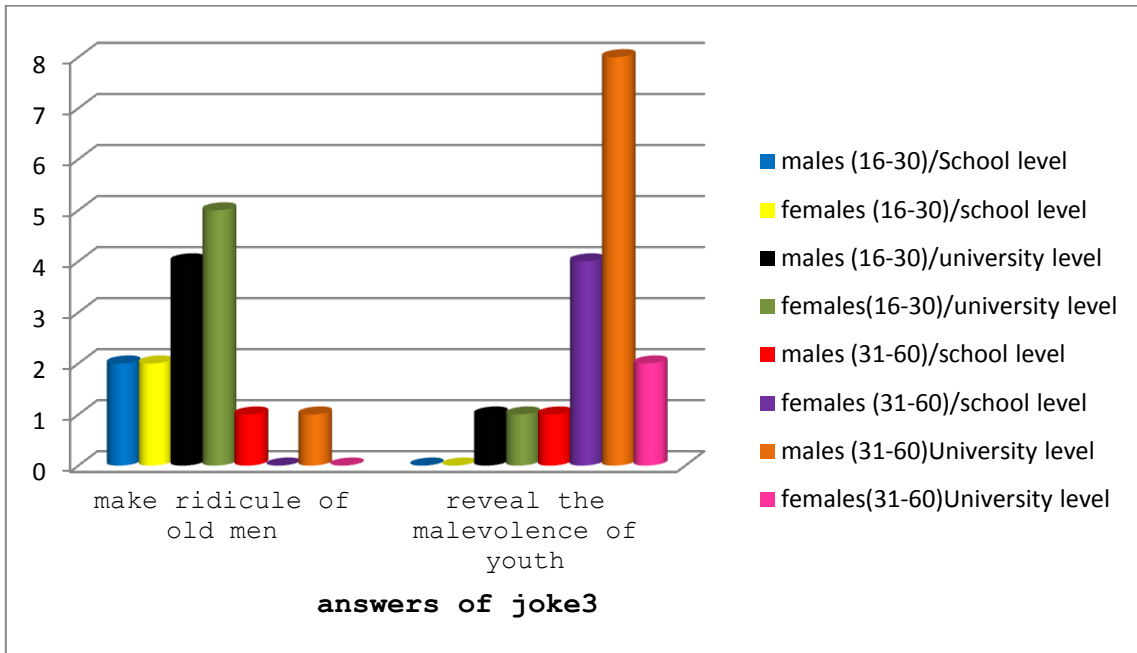


Fig.3. 13: Participants' Response of the Third Question of the Third Joke.

In the fourth joke, the sampling was asked: what is the target of the joke? Their answers are as follows:

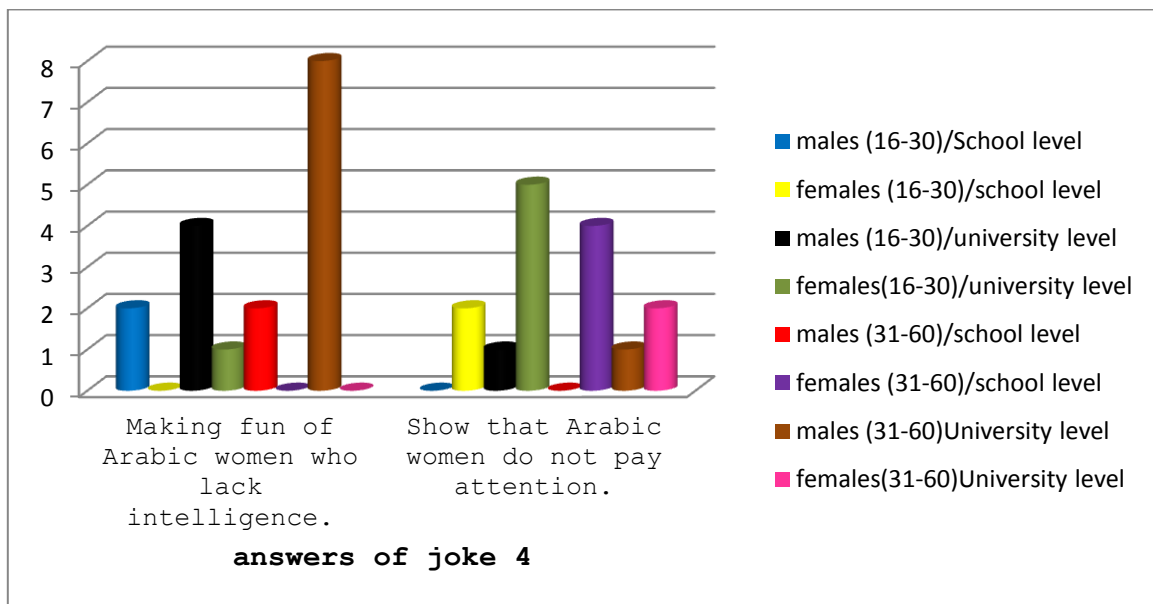


Fig. 3. 14: Participants' Response to the Third Question of the Fourth Joke.

In this last joke, the question that was given to participants is: what is the hidden message behind this joke? Their answers are shown in the chart below:

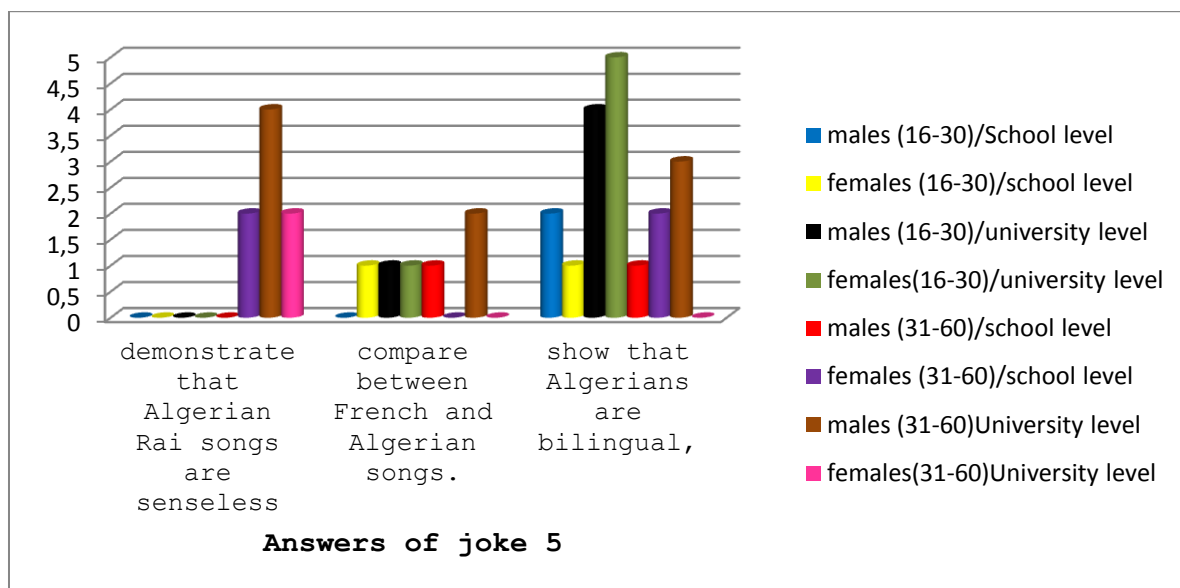


Fig. 3.15: Participants' Answers of the Third Question from the Fifth Joke.

### 3.3.2.2. Interpretation of Results

The findings evoke that the selected jokes are potent carriers of significant connotations, inferred only if expressed to right hearers and in an appropriate society as Bergson (1900:12) says:

**Pour comprendre le rire, il faut le replacer dans son milieu naturel, qui est la société ; il faut surtout en déterminer la fonction utile, qui est une fonction sociale. [...]. Le rire doit répondre à certaines exigences de la vie en commun. Le rire doit avoir une signification sociale<sup>57</sup>.**

Assumingly, this kind of jokes which occurs in stand-up comedy, have the burden to trigger audience's sensitiveness toward real facts derived from commonplace life in order to awake them through the use of words transmitted in a humorous manner. Such fact has been prompted by wondering what the humorist does with his words, or what he is attempting to

<sup>57</sup> My Translation: To understand laughter, it must be placed in its natural environment, which is society, by determining social function. Laughter must respond to certain requirements of common life. Laughter must have a social meaning.

disclose in each joke. The previous results help in the interpretation of his humoristic discourse since in the first joke, for instance, 60% of the sampling males and females, with the majority exceeding the age of 30 and having more or less university levels replied that the humorist's intention is to reveal the dockers' educational level, perhaps for the reason that their age and level of education lead them to such inference, especially after paying attention to the humorist's utterance in which he says /ləmɣəjjər fiħəm, ʕandv̩ sana θaliθa ibtida:ʔi/ (the best of them has 3<sup>rd</sup> year primary level). This comedian's speech act is descriptive and auxiliary in the allusion of the above message, which expounds that this joke plays the role of a social corrective, with the effort of awakening people not to break up learning, and thus, not to be the target of mockery. However, the remaining participants from both genders who were almost adolescents, having different educational levels think that the comedian's intention is to show dockers' stupidity may be due to their unconsciousness about the relevance of learning. The interpretation of such result could be drawn from the wording of the comedian's performative utterance, in which the 'supposed intelligent' docker says to his colleagues / mais nsitu, hada marikani, jehdar l'anglais, majaʕraf waf̩ hija rmi lahbel/ ( but you forget, this is an American, he does not know what 'throw the cord' means). Therefore, participants may believe that this intention is directed to dockers as a kind of scorn to make ridicule of them. If it is so, the joke is used in an aggressive way as it reveals the humorist's malevolent intention that aims at generating laughter from the humiliation of others (as explained in the superiority theory).

The second joke has a threefold interpretation: first, 50% of participants, generally females with different educational levels and ages, claimed that the target behind this joke is to exhibit the humorist's intention toward bearded men, as



they instantiated it from the character's illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, through which he orders in a rugged way the driver to shut the door, and put the seatbelt, and the driver's response to those orders. The interpretation of such result could be confined with females' guffaw maybe because they may show disapproving attitudes toward bearded men's behaviour. In fact, the comedian deliberately chooses this character (bearded man) because he is aware of his strict actions which impose trepidation on hearers leading them to listen and apply the sent message as dictators do. In this respect, the humorist says /*raʒel bəllahja fi:h/* *deux options: /təsməf wətxa:f/* (bearded man has two options: you listen and be afraid). It is worth retrieving that the humorist's reference to bearded men is vividly inspired from actual social structures, in which the spread of this category of people is obviously noticed, triggering self-stereotypes from the part of others social classes for their tough linguistic and repute behaviour, which should be totally the opposite, i.e., polite and symbolic of the religion of Islam. Hence, the stand-up comedian has used in this joke "observational comedy" as a form of humour. But his exaggeration in describing the character's actions is undue and too generalized, leading some people to view the target character in a hostile way, even in daily life, although they are not all the same. Hence, humour in this joke may be aggressive, or it may have an implicit meaning which tries to correct persons with similar physical appearance to remind them that this behaviour is not that of Islam.

Second, 40% of the sampling, generally males (10) all having university level and from different ages replied that the implicit message of this joke is to compare between developed and underdeveloped countries, as they draw it from the contextual meaning of the joke. The measure of this deduction accessibility lies in the fact that perhaps males

paid a deep attention to the whole sketch, where their background knowledge forcefully dominates. Effectively, this inference is reminiscent to the premise that developed and undeveloped countries always contrast in a myriad of ways. But particularly within this joke, the humorist attempts to advocate a few of these differences, namely, education, civilization and economy which are spotted from the holistic discourse. But some of his illocutionary acts confirm his analogies and intentional meaning such as /*χelini nesanat lə tarbija*/ (let me listen to education), in which he refers implicitly to the civilized and educated behaviour found in developed countries like France. In parallel, he displays the reverse action of the well-conducted woman whose speech is polite, when describing the bearded man's linguistic behaviour as a token of uncivilized and vulgar person. Moreover, his economic analogy between the two nations is towed from his verbal discourse like when saying /*imaginez hna nəχχədmu loto, zəzərijin wella mʔarba...xi matguluʃ 'oui' ʔla χater muhal*/ ( imagine that we make a car, Algerians or Moroccans, don't say 'yes', because it is impossible!). Once again, the comedian grasps these ideas from general reality using observational comedy, and scorns the underdeveloped countries by making fun of their cultural, religious and economical status, although he is quite aware that such themes are highly sensitive. Maybe the aim is to arouse people to better improvements by advocating them humorously. Notwithstanding the aforesaid implicit message, 10% of the remaining sampling (males of different ages but having same educational level) state that the target of the joke is to belittle the third world countries indirectly, perhaps because they share the same view. If it is so, the comedian in this case has used self-deprecating humour to under evaluate his country, but always with the hidden target to use humour as a social, religious and economic corrector.

By the same token, the third video excerpt holds double interpretations: first, 53% of respondents roughly adults, from both genders and having different educational levels claimed that the humorist's intention in this joke is to reveal the malevolence of youth generation, maybe for the reason that their maturity propels them to such analysis, which can be drawn from the entrenched picture of youngsters' malice in actual life, and underpinned largely from the characters' speech in the joke. For example, the father stresses the negligible nature of youth when punctuating his speech with the metaphoric proverb /ja lha:3, li maʃandu kbir maʃandu tedbir/ (handling is absent without aged people) through which he sheds light on the significance of aged people to implicitly make an analogy between adults and youngsters. His analogy proceeds when informing the elderly man that no younger responds to his request as stated /həd/ les jeunes, /hadu ʃjir fihum, makanʃ wahəd masəlləkli:ʃ lbənt/ (no younger saved my daughter's life). Moreover, the interpretation hangs also upon the Old man's illocutionary act through which he recommends the father to stop praising his action, because his jump into the gully was the cause of youngsters as inferred from his performative utterance / sməʃ/, ce n'est pas la peine /tzi:d/, parce que, /wəllah naʃrəf li dmərni matəfra/ (it is not worth to add a word, because if I knew who pushes me, I would come into blows with him). This hidden target could be inextricably bound up with the humorist's attention of youth's carelessness in the ubiquitous period, by using observational comedy and allusion as salient tools to transmit his view. In this case, humour is used as a social corrector with the purpose of urging youth generation in assisting cooperative acts. Despite this, the implicit meaning has not been totally conveyed, since 47% of adolescent males and females with different educational levels think that the comedian's intent is just scorning aged people,

with the apparent aim to amuse the audience, especially when describing the old man being in the gully as the following/ *ərrəz mɛfɔrtət, laʃbaja tɛdɛdɛd/* (his hat and cloths awere bathing). This interpretation may reveal the comedian's hostile intention which provokes laughter by humiliating others.

In the forth joke, 53% of males, adults and adolescents, possessing different educational levels believe that the message of this joke is to make fun of Arabic women who lack intelligence, may be for the reason that their masculinity drives them to this inference which could be drawn from their superiority, strength and power. Yet, the inference can also be ascribed from the scripts of the joke with its figurative lexis as already shown, but intensely from Icha's statement " *mais non, /ra:ni nzəggi/ parce que /ana wəssəmni ʃi:ʃa wki təgləfli/ trois points, /ɣadi jwəliw jʃajttuli ʃi:ssa/* (she thinks that the police will draw out three points from her name) which may unfurl the hostile side of the joke. It is noteworthy that the nature of human beings is to show off their superiority in opposition to others' shortcomings leading to laughter.

Perhaps on the basis of such premise, the humorist deliberately chooses an Arabic female character to make ridicule of Arabic females in general with the aim of implicitly making a comparison between males and females, especially as the police character of the joke is a male. Such view seems inappropriate from females' perspective since all of them (47% of remaining participants) said that the hidden message of the joke is to show that women are inattentive. This could be drawn from Icha's declarative statement/ *maʃəftuʃ/* (I didn't see the traffic light). The depth of this interpretation may lie in the humorist's notice of such fact.

Finally, the fifth joke holds a threefold interpretation: first, 56% of the informants from different ages, sex and educational levels claimed that the implicit message of this joke is to show that Algerians are bilingual. This is inspired from the humorist's locutionary act/ *bvɛit ntəsti ləfransawija djali/* (I want to test my French language), but also from the whole script in which the comedian speaks two languages, i.e., AA and French. The use of the two codes is reminiscent of the

Algerian linguistic, cultural and historical heritage which is conveyed by this joke. Hence, the humorist uses observational comedy in his humoristic discourse. Second, 25% of the informants roughly adults claimed that the indirect message of the joke is to demonstrate that Rai songs are senseless, maybe because they do not show much interest to this kind of songs. But what is certain is that they surely underpinned from the comedian's performative acts in which he translates some Rai songs to the French lady. In effect, it should be pointed out that Rai songs are part of the Algerian culture the comedian is attempting to belittle when using self-deprecating humour as a means to provoke laughter. In addition to this, he tries to compare them with French songs as the 19% of participants believe. Such comparison is mostly spotted from his holistic discourse, precisely from some speech acts, like when requesting the French lady to translate a song of Pierre Bachelet and when the humorist translates some Rai songs. By and large, this joke is used as a social corrective to indirectly awake people consciousness about Rai songs which should be meaningful.

From the above interpretations, it could be inferred that thoughts are faithfully transmitted through words and thus; the comedian does things with his words, by transmitting hidden messages humoursly. Yet, when a discourse is uttered, it can be understood differently by different persons, from different genders, ages, educational levels, etc. Even more; the discourse can be conceived differently by one person in different contexts, offering then an array of thought none of which is the right one. Hence, the speaker's role is to orchestrate the hearer's intervention toward what he intends to transmit. In return, the hearer has to reset the constituents of the speaker's thought from the available set of premises that the sentences constituents offer. What matters is that speaker and hearer reach mutual understanding

through the use of a common code. As noticed in the selected video excerpt, the comedian often switches between the codes, merely AA, French, English, Spanish, but for what reasons? That is what the following analysis will attempt to expose.

### **3.3.3. Analysing the Functions of CS in Abdel-Kader Secteur's sketches**

That verbal communication is replete with CS is nothing new. Everyone agrees that there is no single code speaker in the firm sense of possessing a sole code. Each individual, either monolingual or bilingual is faced with choosing the appropriate code from his/her linguistic repertoire to achieve a communicative goal. Such code choice is relevant upon speakers' degree of awareness and adequate use of "communically recognized norms" (Meyer Scotton, 1983a: 123), which structures their speech according to different intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Therefore, CS is not a merely idiosyncratic behaviour but is governed by components of speech events like topic, setting, and participants in order to assign specific functions and pragmatic meanings.

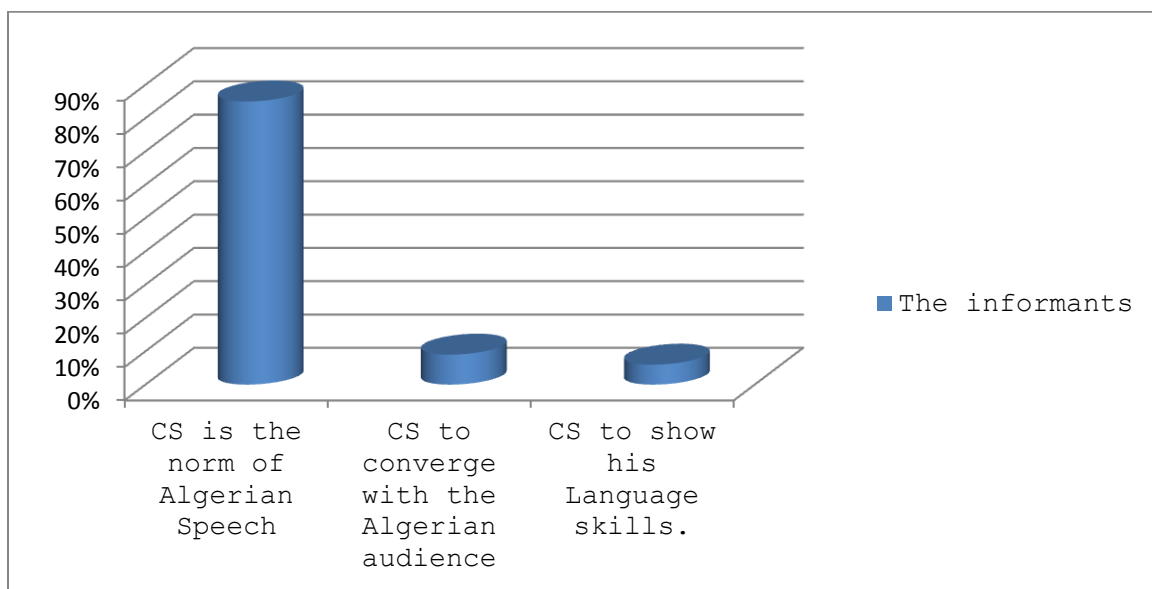
This linguistic phenomenon characterizes to a large extent the stand-up comedian's monologue under study here as inferred from our systematic observation, i.e., the dominant language of his discourse is in essence AA in which French, SA, Spanish or English are embedded. Such mixture of languages which frames the scripts of his humoristic discourse does not occur haphazardly; it is rather prepared thoughtfully in accordance with the audience which is linguistically heterogeneous, and depending on a number of factors. According to Billiez<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Il est certain que, dans ces conditions de production des discours où les textes sont d'abord écrits, les choix de langues et des alternances réalisés sur l'espace de la scène publique ne peuvent pas être envisagés comme échappant au contrôle de leurs créateurs ou provoqués par des lacunes dans le code dominant. Reposant sur cette activité d'écriture et la connaissance de leur public amateur, les

(1998:127), CS in the public sphere, is basically written. Hence, it is not done beyond the control of their creators, or caused by deficiencies in the dominant code. It is rather thoughtful and deliberately displayed as a marker of identity due to the orator's awareness of his/her audience's language.

In an attempt to disclose the comedian's motivation behind his switching between the available codes, the open question: why does the stand-up comedian switch between different languages in his sketches? was given to the sampling of participants at the end of the questionnaire, in order to spot their views concerning the reasons behind the humorist's CS. Among 32 Participants, regardless their age, gender or educational level, 27 said that the comedian switches between the languages because CS is the norm of Algerian speech, 3 claimed that he switches to converge with his Algerian audience, and 2 asserted that CS is used to show his language competence in foreign languages, especially French. These answers are displayed in the graph below:



**Fig. 3. 16: Participants' View about the Humorist's CS.**

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alternances de langues peuvent être alors considérées comme totalement réfléchies et délibérément affichées. Il s'agit donc bien de choix qui fonctionnent comme des marqueurs d'identités ''revendiquées''.

Such participants' view is general due to the broad question given to them. However, a strict analysis of the comedian's CS is not yet full-fledged. In an attempt to do so, we will focus on the pragmatic functions of CS in each joke, which occurs inside or outside sentences, but not within morphemes boundaries, because the analysis is abstracted from grammatical/syntactic scrutiny, borrowed items or any kind of possible interference from other linguistic systems. The examples are substantiated from the humorist's interaction with his audience (extra-textual interaction) and the characters incarnated in his discourse (intra-textual interaction).

### **3.3.3.1. Analysing the Comedian's CS**

A deep scrutiny at the five video-excerpts is worth recalling that the humorist's discourse functions in response to his audience, i.e., the chosen codes prefigure the spectators' linguistic identity, which is in essence heterogeneous, to attain a maximum perception and interpretation of his discourse. As previously noted, none of his shows is conducted within a single code. The humorist is often involved in switching between the codes (AA, SA, FRENCH, Spanish, and English) in his discourse in a strategic way under some socio-pragmatic factors.

With the intention of determining the factors which trigger the humorist's codes alternation, a deep attention will be given to each video excerpt to pick up the embedded codes and attempt to analyse them in the light of various theories, often with a reference to the markedness model which seems the most rational approach that attempts to reveal the real socio-psychological motivation behind CS. To put it very briefly, Myers Scotton (1993a) assumes that speakers are aware about the RO set as components of their communicative



competence when acquired intuitively. Thus, they know which languages are unmarked or marked choices in a community. (see chapter 1: 44). Generally, the unmarked choice is a marker of a speaker's social identity determined by his use of the matrix language which signals his/her in-group membership. In the four video-excerpts, the humorist uses AA as the matrix language, recognized by his audience for the obvious aims to (i) converge with an Algerian audience, (ii) demonstrate his solidarity with them and (iii) reveal his Algerian identity. Hence, AA is the unmarked means of the humorist's discourse, in which CS per se is commonly expected, especially switches between Arabic and French due to the the country historical background. This is why it seems obvious to hear French words in the humorist's video- excerpts as in */Mais, nsirtv? [...] jehdar l'anglais/* (first joke), */ana normalement kader, ngulek quarante secondes, gultlu imaginez, la voix teḥ mra parce que hram, fiḥ deux options, il faut, beb wə ça y est, vérifiez, les nerfs, la radio, poste/* (second joke), */le pont, trente mètres de hauteur, parce que/* (third joke), */loto, la ville, mais non, parce que, trois points/* (Forth joke). Such unmarked choice is reinforced by 27 of participants who believe that CS in the comedian's sketches reflects the norm of the Algerian speech.

However, if switching between Arabic and French in his humoristic discourse is regarded as unmarked, then, the question that one is prompted to ask is: what codes might be regarded as marked, and for what reason? Does the humorist mix between marked and unmarked codes in his jokes? This issue seems very interesting, and in order to find out the answer, one should recall that CS is a purposeful activity, in the sense that it expresses several functions within a discourse to achieve a communicative intent, although it is structured by external factors such as situation, participants, norms of

the community, topic, etc. Hence, a speaker selects an appropriate choice with the expectation that his addressee will recognize that this choice is a potent carrier of a particular intention. On the basis of such premise, Meyers-Scotton (1998 :19) writes **"the MM, [...] assume that speakers are rational in the sense that, at some level of consciousness, they are making choices that do not simply reflect their social group membership or the type of speech event in which they are participating"**<sup>59</sup>. Hence, the humorist's CS is not always conceived as unmarked but could be regarded as marked depending on his intentions and the functions of his switches.

Indeed, it should be pointed out that in many instances, there are some switches in the selected jokes which arouse from extra-linguistic factors affected by change of the social situation which involves a change in the setting, interlocutors, and the context. Such switching is claimed to be of the situational type according to Gumperz (1982). Another switch referred to as metaphorical CS is triggered by change of the topic involving the alternation between the codes in the same discourse. One must note that although the interference of these social factors, the functions of CS remain several, since each switch constitutes an eclectic combination of functions. Thus, **"pinpointing the purpose of each code switch is a task as fraught with difficulty as imputing the reasons for a monolingual's choice of one synonym over another, and no complete accounting may ever be possible"** (Zentella, 1997:99)

For example, switches where the setting is the cause of linguistic alternation is substantiated from the following examples: in the first joke, the humorist says / *marikani dɣəl ləl port, costa hakda, whaduk les dockers....*/. This example entails a shift from the use of AA ( the base language) to French

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<sup>59</sup> Italic in original.

terms (port, dockers) and Spanish terms (costa), may be for the reason that these lexical items are regarded as technical words used particularly in the port (a jargon). Hence the setting of the joke provokes such switching. Another possibility which has led the humorist to such lexical insertion is the lack of their exact equivalent in AA, perhaps due to the humorist's higher frequency of exposure to these items, as he belongs to a coastal town (Ghazaouet), linguistically characterized by a great amount of Spanish words due to the town's historical background, for example, the term 'costa' is borrowed from the Spanish word 'acostar'. In such cases, CS is unmarked.

In the fourth joke, the situation (the city) triggers the characters' switching (unmarked choice since the terms are commonly used). It is spotted first, in the policeman switches from AA to French, with the aim of clarifying to prevent misunderstanding (unmarked choice). Despite this, the message is not attained by Icha, and hence, such terms have a humorous impact (maybe they are used as a marked choice for humorous effect).

Indeed, change of participants also plays a great role in code choice. For instance, the comedian uses English expressions in the first joke illustrated in the docker's conversation with the American sailor, while he used AA with his colleagues. Hence, switching in this case is triggered by change of interlocutors, in which the docker attunes his speech in response to the American man in order to converse with him (speech accommodation theory, Giles and Coupland) and thus, achieve the function of displaying his language skills in English (unmarked choice). This switching may also have a phatic function because the humorist does it purposefully to change the tone of the joke creating a humorous effect; especially as it is done in the second script which holds the punch line (marked choice).

Another vivid example in which the interlocutor is the subject of the humorist's switching is found in the fifth joke, in which the comedian accommodates his speech in response to his French addressee to make it more intelligible and converge with her (speech accommodation theory), but also to demonstrate his language skills in the French language. Indeed, he could do it deliberately because he knows that he is addressing a bilingual audience who understands French (unmarked choice).

The topic of conversation has a large impact on the humorist's code selection with various functions; for example, the second joke holds switches from AA to French lexis spotted at the following words like: *l'ordinateur de bord, la ceinture de sécurité, le volant, la radio, poste*, obviously for the reason that the humorist is familiar with them, and thus are unmarked words. In the fifth joke, in which French could be considered as the base language, because the comedian is reporting his conversation with the French lady, the switching into AA is considered as marked, especially if it is done for a humorous effect (phatic function). Yet, switching in this case does not serve this sole function, since the humorist is using AA to accommodate with his Algerian audience in order to re-iterate for clarification or translation. In such case, CS is unmarked choice.

The dichotomy marked/unmarked is also spotted in the second joke, in which switching between AA, SA or AA and French are obviously noticed. For example, when addressing his audience, the humorist says some expressions like "اقسم بالله, إن شاء الله, بالله". Such expressions are considered as a reference to his religion, in order to accommodate with his Arabic-Islamic audience; in this case, switching between these SA terms and AA is unmarked. But such SA insertion may have alternative function marked by its humorous effect, thus, such switch could be seen as marked.

Even the fifth question of the second joke elucidates that the French term 'asphyxié' is used in a similar way with other French terms which pervade AA to become the norm of Algerian speech. In this case, CS is unmarked, but it could be a marked choice if the comedian does it deliberately to change the tone of speech for a humorous effect (phatic function), while he could have used the term /mʒəjjəf/ instead of 'Asphixié'.

Moreover, switching between AA and French lexis transcends the above functions, it is used sometimes to report other speeches like quoting the female's recorded speech of the onboard computer /*Porte arrière droite, mal fermée*/, or when reporting the man's utterance /*après vous*/ (second joke).

### 3.4. Conclusion

When according a linguistic, pragmatic/functional and sociolinguistic analysis of the foregoing selected video excerpts of Abdel-kader Secteur through an aid of the sampling partaking, the answer of the principle captivating issues of this research work has been fairly identified. In effect, the analysis, carried out in this practical part is reminiscent of some theories which lead primarily to the corollaries that the stand-up comedian's discourse is funny because the crux of his jokes is their incongruous perception between two ideas (scripts). This incongruity is conceptually semantics; it involves basically adequate discern of scripts which derive from the literal meaning of words. Such semantic inference is, in fact, deficient, if hearers do use other cues in order to successfully infer the target message. So by dint of their cultural sensitive character, by-product of common -sense reasoning and background knowledge, hearers could ultimately understand not only the humorous joke, but also the implicit meaning of the comedian. This latter uses stand-up comedy as a milieu, where topical boundaries fall, since he advocates a myriad of topics inspired from commonplace life to re-narrate

them humorously by the use of hyperbole, allusion, wordplay, metaphors and other figurative language, with the implicit aim to awaken people to correct their attitudes, actions and behaviours. The common way to deliver his humoristic discourse is to address the audience in an ostensible and lucid code understood by them, obviously spotted at the use of AA as his dominant language, for the apparent aims to converge and demonstrate his solidarity with them as well as to reveal his Algerian identity. But as Abdel-kader Secteur knows that his audience is linguistically heterogeneous, he often switches between AA and other codes merely spotted in French lexis, some standard forms of Arabic and Spanish words or English ones. Yet, such switches (merely AA and French) are most of the time considered as the common and prevalent means of communication in the Algerian society, including his humoristic discourse, in which they are governed by external factors like the setting of the story, its topic or depending on the participants incarnated in the joke. Despite this, his code selection still remains a deliberate activity in the sense that it expresses several functions such as quoting, reiterating for emphasis, or purposefully to have a humorous impact.

## General Conclusion

Humour is an intrinsic feature of human kind, expressed in different ways with the ostensible aim of generating laughter. In fact, this distinctive trait sometimes transcends its predictable response, i.e., laughter, since it could be used to anticipate various effects such as being a social corrector. Such salient element in once life is found in our talks, conversations, dialogues, discourse, behaviours. Some people even make it their refuge of living by displaying their wit and sense of humour to an audience for bringing shared laughter and/or revealing sensitive topics, as do stand-up comedians on their podiums.

To put it very quickly, stand-up comedy is a theatrical genre and setting devoted to the delivery of a set of consecutive humorous stories and short jokes called 'bits' held by a comedian in front of a live audience for the holistic intention of entertainment and amusement, but also for rhetorical purposes. Such comedic locus could be an intriguing frame of investigation from divergent facets, particularly because it is thriving nowadays.

On the basis of such premise, this humble research puts its pillars, through promoting the analysis of verbal humour in Algerian stand-up comedy, and more peculiarly, by taking the case of Abdelkader secteur's sketches as the hub of investigation. Such task is circumscribed with five video-jokes selected from the comedian's sketches, with the auxiliary of the sampling, whose partaking contributes a significant aid in the analysis. Yet, it should not be missed that a penetrating scrutiny initially entails eminent theories, ranging from theories of humour, some pragmatic insights and sociolinguistic approaches in order to answer the principle captivating issues of this research work.

After exhausting and arduous work, the findings were finally interpreted leading to the corollaries that the stand-up comedian's discourse is funny because the crux of his jokes is their incongruous perception between two ideas (scripts). This incongruity is conceptually semantics, it involves basically adequate discern of scripts which derive from the literal meaning of words. Such semantic inference is, in fact, deficient, if hearers do use other cues in order to successfully infer the target message. So by dint of their cultural sensitive character, by-product of common -sense reasoning and background knowledge, hearers could ultimately understand not only the humorous joke, but also the implicit meaning of the comedian. This latter uses stand-up comedy as a milieu, where topical boundaries fall, since he advocates myriad topics inspired from commonplace life to reveal the Algerian identity and its socio-cultural realities through re-narrating them humorously by the use of hyperbole, allusion, wordplay, metaphors and other figurative language, with the implicit aim of awakening people to correct their attitudes, actions and behaviours.

The common way to deliver his humoristic discourse is to address the audience in an ostensible code understood by them. As Abdel-kader secteur knows that his audience is linguistically heterogeneous, he uses AA, a noticeable amount of French, few Spanish words, and to a less extent English. Yet, the use of these codes, especially when he switches between AA and French is most of the time unmarked, pursuing the norms of the Algerian linguistic environment in which CS per se is an expected mode of communication as most participants believe. Such code selection is constrained by a number of social factors that motivate the stand-up comedian to switch, such as the topic discussed, the interlocutor involved in the story or the setting of the joke. Despite this, CS still remains a purposeful activity, in the sense



that it expresses several functions within a discourse to achieve a communicative intent. This empirical study reveals that the humorist's CS functions to fill in lexical needs, converge with his audience, show his language skills or to quote. Indeed, it is noticed that sometimes the comedian deliberately switches between the codes especially SA, French or English for humorous effect. In this case, CS is regarded as a marked choice unknown by the audience. This finding supplements the third proposed hypothesis.

Ultimately, it should be signalled that this dissertation is just suggestive, but not conclusive since it allows further analysis in future research, which has not been tackled in this work, mainly, para-verbal, and non-verbal scrutiny. This is due to the fact that the success of stand-up comedy which is spotted from audience's laughter spawns from the comedian's use of intermeshed communicative strategies confined in his/her verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal language. Therefore, such cues are very salient in a better interpretation of the causes of laughter in stand-up comedy. In addition to this, a special concern should be devoted to the stand-up comedian's origin by shedding light on the prominent linguistic features of his/her accent, which has not been taken into consideration in this work for avoiding macro-analysis.

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## **A Snapshot of Abd-el-Kader Secteur's Biography**

Abd-el-Kader secteur is an Algerian humorist and comedian born in Ghazaouet. His real name is Abd-el-Kader Arahman. He is married and has children.

Previously, he worked as a parking keeper. And during that period, he attracted a wide mass of friends thanks to his witty character to tell them funny stories and make them laugh.

Once, a friend of him invited him to perform his humorous stories in his wedding, and thus, Abd-el-Kader received the appreciation and the admiration of the whole wedding guest. Such wedding had paved the way for him to successive success in the Ghazaouet community, and later at a larger scale, i.e., in whole Algeria. But he did not reach the international platform until he participated with Jamel Debouzze in Jamel Debouzze's comedy club.

He started to perform his sketches in cafeterias, and record them in the form of discs able to be watched on LCDs and DVDs. His audience also helped him to broaden his sketches when they filmed his performances and broadcasted them in different website like You Tube and Dailymotion, and on mobile phones. Thus, his shows permeated various areas.

Nowadays, Abd-el-Kader secteur transcends his solo-performances to play with other humorists, especially from morocco like Hassan. He also participates in different comedic Moroccan series such as 'kolna djiran' and 'ediwania' which were in play during Ramadan 2012. In Juin 2012, he partook in the international festival of laughter in Marrakech (Morocco) with the most popular and famous Maghrebian and French artists. But due to a dearth of information concerning Abd-el-Kader secteur's private and his career life, little has been exposed.

By and large, the stand-up comedian discusses various social topics in a humorous manner such as a comparison between the Algerian and foreign cultures, immigration, etc.

## The Questionnaire

**Name:**

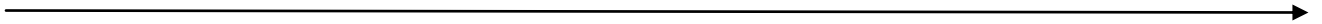
**Age:**

**Educational level:**

---

### Video-Excerpt 1

- I.** Listen to the joke and mark the time of your laughter in the following arrow:



- II.** Answer the following questions

1. Who is the subject of laughter in this joke?

2. What mostly triggers your laughter in this joke?

a) Dockers' ignorance of the language spoken  
by the Americans.

b) Failure of a docker in translating 'throw the cord' in  
English, although he thinks that he is educationally  
superior than his colleagues.

3. What is the intention behind this joke?

a) Reveal the dockers' stupidity.

b) Unveil the educational level of dockers.

### Video-Excerpt 2

- I.** Listen to the joke and mark the time of your laughter in the following arrow:



- II.** Answer the 1st question and cross the appropriate answer :

1. Who are the subjects of humour in this joke?

2. What greatly makes you laugh in this joke?

a) The humorist's fascination of the French polite behaviour and advancement.

b) The humorist's imagination of Algerians or Moroccan making a car.

c) The Bearded man's way of speaking.

3. What is the message of this joke?

a) To belittle the Third world countries.

b) To compare between the underdeveloped and developed countries.

c) To show the malevolent intention toward bearded man.

### **Video-Excerpt 3**

I. Listen to the joke and mark the time of your laughter in the following arrow:



II. Answer the 1st question and cross the appropriate answer :

1. Who are the subjects of humour in this joke?

2. What triggers your laughter in this joke?

a) Youth's fear to jump into the bridge.

b) The father's praising of the old man who saved his daughter.

c) The old man's response to the father.

3. What is the intention behind this joke?

a) To make ridicule of aged people.

b) To reveal the malevolence of youth.

### **Video-Excerpt 4**

I. Listen to the joke and mark the time of your laughter in the following arrow:



**II.** Answer the 1st question and cross the appropriate answer :

1. What is the matter of laughter?

2. What makes you laugh in this joke?

a) Icha's inattention to the traffic light.

b) Icha's incomprehension of the removal of three points from her driving license.

3. What is the target of the joke?

a) Making fun of Arabic women who lack intelligence.

b) Show that Arabic women do not pay attention.

### **Video-Excerpt 5**

**I.** Listen to the joke and mark the time of your laughter in the following arrow:

---

**II.** Answer the 1st question and cross the appropriate answer :

1. What is the matter of joke?

2. What mostly triggers your laughter?

a) The humorist thinking to test his French skill.

b) His sensitiveness toward the French song.

c) When he was translating some of the Rai songs to the French woman.

3. What is the hidden message behind the joke?

a) To demonstrate that Algerian Rai songs are senseless.

b) To compare between French and Algerian songs.

c) To show that Algerians are bilingual, capable of speaking French language even with native speakers.

## قائمة الاستقصاء

الاسم :

العمر:

المستوى التعليمي:

### النكتة 1

I. استمع إلى النكتة وحدد وقت ضحكك بوضع علامة على السهم التالي:

I.I. اجب على الأسئلة التالية

1. من هم سبب الضحك في هذه النكتة؟

2. ما الذي أضحكك كثيرا في هذه النكتة؟

أ) جهل عمال الموانئ 'من اللغة التي يتحدث بها لأمريكيون.

ب) فشل عامل في حوض السفن في ترجمة 'رمي الحبل " إلى اللغة الإنجليزية، على الرغم من انه يظن نفسه انه متفوقة تعليميا من زملائه.

3. ما هو الغرض من هذه النكتة؟

أ- السخرية من عمالي الميناء.

ب- توضيح مستوى التعليمي لعمالي الميناء.

### النكتة 2

I. استمع إلى النكتة وحدد وقت ضحكك بوضع علامة على السهم التالي:

I.I. اجب على الأسئلة التالية

1. من هم سبب الضحك في هذه النكتة؟

2. ما الذي أضحكك كثيرا في هذه النكتة؟

أ) انبهار الفكاهي للتقدم وسلوك الفرنسيين المهذب.

ب) تخيل الفكاهي ان الجزائريين أو المغاربة يصنعون سيارة.

3. طريقة تحدث الرجل الملتحي.

4. ما المقصود من هذه النكتة؟

أ) التقليل من شان دول العالم الثالث.

ب) المقارنة بين البلدان المتخلفة والمتقدمة.

ت) لإظهار نية الحاقدة تجاه رجال الملتحية.



### النكتة 3

I. استمع إلى النكتة وحدد وقت ضحكك بوضع علامة على السهم التالي:

I. اجب على الأسئلة التالية

1. من هم سبب الضحك في هذه النكتة؟
2. ما الذي أضحكك كثيرا في هذه النكتة؟  
(أ) خوف الشباب للقفز إلى الجسر.  
(ب) مدح الوالد للرجل العجوز الذي أنقذ ابنته.  
(ت) اجابة الرجل العجوز إلى الأب.
3. ما المغزى من هذه النكتة؟  
(أ) السخرية من كبار السن.  
(ب) إظهار حقيقة الشباب.

### النكتة 4

I. استمع إلى النكتة وحدد وقت ضحكك بوضع علامة على السهم التالي:

I. اجب على الأسئلة التالية

1. من هم سبب الضحك في هذه النكتة؟
2. ما الذي أضحكك كثيرا في هذه النكتة؟  
(أ) غفلة عيشة لإشارة المرور.  
(ب) عدم الفهم عيشة لإزالة ثلاث نقاط من رخصة القيادة لها.
3. ما هو الهدف من النكتة؟  
(أ) يسخر من المرأة العربية الذين يفتقرون إلى الذكاء.  
(ب) لتبين أن النساء العربيات لا يكثرثن.

### النكتة 5

I. استمع إلى النكتة وحدد وقت ضحكك بوضع علامة على السهم التالي:

I. اجب على الأسئلة التالية

1. من هم سبب الضحك في هذه النكتة؟  
2. ما الذي أضحكك كثيرا في هذه النكتة؟

أ) اختبار الفكاهي لمهارته الفرنسية.

ب) حساسيته تجاه الأغاني الفرنسية.

ت) عندما ترجم بعض الأغاني الراي للمرأة الفرنسية.

3. ما هي الرسالة الخفية وراء نكتة؟

أ) اثبات أن أغاني الراي ليس لها معنى .

ب) المقارنة بين الأغاني الفرنسية والجزائرية.

ت) إظهار أن الجزائريين هم ثنائي اللغة، قادرون على التحدث باللغة الفرنسية.

شكرا

## Appendices

### Joke one

marika:ni dəxəl ləl *port, costa* hakda, whaduk *les dockers,* msa:ken, ləmχəjər fihəm, magarjenʃ, ləmχəjər fihəm, fi bali fanbu sana θaliθa btida:ʔi:. *bon,* humən jərmiwlhəm xi ʃəkara, χədmethəm hakda. *Costa* əlbabər, wəlbabər marikani, *c'est des Americans.* bədəw jəgulu lhadek lmarikani 'rmi laħbəl' « rmi laħbəl, rmi laħbəl, laħbəl... »?a bnaðəm, rmi laħbəl.

- ħatta za wahəd, galhəm : malkəm, malkəm ?
- galələ : rana nguləlhəm rmi laħbəl, wə maraʃ jəfhəm wəlla maraʃ jəsmaʃ.
- gel : *mais* nsitu hada marikani, jəhder *l'anglais,* majaʃrəfʃ weʃ hi ja rmi laħbəl.
- galəlhəm : ja baʃdu, baʃed, wəxər lhəh, wəxər.
- za hada wgalu : *hello sir.*
- za lmarikani galu : *hello.*
- hada wgalu : *how are you?*
- marikani: *fine thanks and you?*
- laxər galu : *very well, thank you.*
- galu : *you speak English?*
- marikani galu : *yes, I speak English.*
- galu: əja rmi laħbəl

ʃandu ʔə *debut* də *l'anglais.*

## English translation

Once, an American boat sets an Algerian port, and the dockers working in that port all have primary school. These dockers asked the American sailor to throw the cord in AA several time, until one docker comes and reminds them that the sailor is American, speaking English, he does not understand what the others are asking him. Thinking that he is more intelligent,

- He says "Hello sir,"
- The American replies "hello",
- The docker: " how are you?"
- The American: "fine, thanks and you?"
- The docker : "very well, thank you. You speak English?"
- The American " yes, I speak English"
- The docker says "throw the cord" in his mother tongue.

He has just the beginning of English.

## **Joke Two**

Salem flikum, kirakom dajrin, wəllah jla hada nhar kbir fə mərrakəf əʃən hōwa, Jamel makdebʃ fəlikum, lgani fəl You Tube - ?əqssim billəh. flabalək, Jamel ʃəkani min ʃəjətli, wmin tlaʃt lə Paris, wəllah jə xuti, manaʃrəf hətta wahəd, hətta lgani wahəd, galli 'KADER'. Ana Kader???, ana normalement AbdelKader gədlhak, rədni xi 'Kader', wrəkəbni fə loto, wgalli 'après vous'. rəkəbt. Demarrena, ngulək 40 Secondes, hətta sməʃt 'bm bm, porte arrière droite mal-fermée', wə la voix təʃ mra. gəltlu 'rana wahadna?' gəlli 'wah', gəltlu 'ʃkun haddi?', gəlli 'hadi l'ordinateur de bord' gəlli, 'wəʃ ma jesra fə loto hija təguli' gəlli 'nzəl blef ləbəb', gəltlu ' lla, xlini nəʃənət lə tarbija'

Geltlu 'imaginez hna naxədmu loto, mɣarba wəla zazairijn jəxədmu loto, nfallah, nfallah, ɣimatguluɣ 'oui' fləxətar muhəl. ija wəndiru l'ordinateur de bord, déjà, jbəli mandiruf fiha la voix tef mra, parce que hram, ndiru la voix tef razel, razel wə belahja, parce que razel belahja fih 2 options: tsməf wə təxəf'.

ija, tərəkəb, tbeləf lbeb, dir la ceinture, trəgli le volant, eja wə démarrer, wətɣeli lbeb məhlula. jəgulek 'bm, bm, porte arrière droite mal fermée?' wəllah ja hbibi matesmaɣha. jəbda jəgullek 'ɣəsməf, ah, oh, oh, oh,' nta tɣəg, 'lbeb, lbeb, lbeb,' hətta jəgullek 'belləf əlbeb ja tnah, hətta jəbda jəgullek 'ɣankəm beb fə darkəm, ɣankəm?', 'ɣankəm beb, wella dajrin ɣə ləhəb? wənta beɣ jesket, il faut tbeləf elbeb' sinon, wəllah marah sakət. tənzel, wəmajgulekɣmin hiya beb, bebe wə ɣa y est. Jəbda jəgullek vérifier ɣəwalhək, wətebda tvérifié nta lbiban bə les nerfs, terkeb, tbeləf lbeb, tnewed hakda, hətta jəggulek 'dir la ceinture de sécurité' nta beɣ matesmaɣɣ, tzid la radio, hətta jəgullek 'nəqəɣ ləl poste, ɣəllini nəhdər, hətta jbeddi jəgullek, mədirɣla ceinture, ah?, la, la, gulli məndirheɣ', wnta bə les nerfs, təgul 'məndirheɣ', hətta jəxərəzlek wəjəziɣfək, wəjgullek 'wəllah hətta dirha' wənta mnarwi ktər mennu təgullu 'ɣəqsim billəh marani dajərha'

wəllah ja ɣuti, wəɣ nəgulkəm, mzija, mzija maɣdmneɣ loto, mmə tmət asphyxié fə lototek.

### English Translation

This is the story of the humorist who went to Paris, after being called by Jamal (a famous Moroccan humorist). When he reached the town, a man (the driver) called him 'kader' although he did not know anyone. They got in the car, and then, he heard a woman's voice

saying 'bm, bm, the back right door is not closed'. He asked the driver if they were alone, and who was that woman? He replied that this voice is that of the onboard computer, and asked him to shut the door. Yet, the humorist refused so that to 'listen to education'.

He told the driver to suppose that Algerians or Moroccans make a car within an onboard computer in which a bearded man's voice is recorded. The choice behind this category of people lies under two reasons: first, women's voice are prohibited. Second, bearded men have two options: you listen to them and apply by fear. Therefore, if you get in a car, forgetting to close a door, the bearded man would not inquire you genteelly to shut it, but rather in a rigid and tough way, making you angry so that you would raise the radio sound in order not to hear him. Despite this, the bearded man would get out of the onboard computer to throttle you. Finally, the humorist shows his optimism toward Algerians and Moroccans for not making a car, because if they did so, they would die asphyxiated in their cars.

### Joke three

wəhd ləbnija fəndha 3 ans, [ahat mən un pont fəlwed, wəl pont wəl wed kəjən 30 mètres de hauteur, wəl raʃi ʃəkda jətferʒu, wəhija ltəht, wəbbaha jaʃjeʃ ' ja ɣuti selkuli lbent, ana manafrefʃ nʃum', gallu ' ja ɣuja nəʃarfu nʃumu, mais wafər bəʃ teplongé nta hna mən pont ʃla 30 mètres fə wed, hada wed maʃI pəhar, maħneʃ ʃarfin wəʃ fih ldəxəl, mannʒmuʃ' wkaʃd jehder məʃahum hakda, wə un view mənle coin təʃ le pont yəplongé. ərrez, mferʃəʃ, laʃbaja tfeʃfed, wəxərəʒ fəl bənt, ʃəd lbənt wdaha lbuħa.

'jəl haʒ, lli maʃandʊ kbir, maʃandʊ tedbir, ja ʃahbi, siwa ntuma, siwa ntuma, jla ruhtuħna li kbar wəʃ jebqalna' gallu 'hadu les jeunes ʃəjit fihum, makenʃ wahəd maslekliʃ lbənt' wə hədek ʃibani gallu ' sməʃ, ce n'est pas la pène tzid, parce que, wəllah naʃref lli dmerni ma təfra'.

### English Translation

Once, a girl falls in a gully high from a bridge with a distance of 30 meters. A crowd of youth was watching and the father asks them to help his daughter because he does not know swimming. They refuse, for supposedly being afraid to jump into that gully. Suddenly, an old man jumps and saves his daughter. The father thanks him very much and praises him with words, until the old man stops him by saying ' if I knew who pushes me, I would go into blows with him'.

### joke Four

waḥda wəsamha ůi:ša, whadi ůi:ša kanət tšəg, fə la ville hakda, ḥəgət lə feu rouge, bolici siffla ůliha : siri, sirat ůi:ša, galetlu: wəš kajən?

- galha : ůlabelek bəli ḥəregti lə feu rouge?
- galetlu : mašeftuš, wəš ůadi di:r
- galha : nəglaůlək trois points məl permis.
- galetlu : waůləš təglaůli trois points ůləš taḥgəni
- galha : elqanun hada ḥəwa, nəglaůlək trois points, parce que ḥəgət feu rouge.
- bda:t tšəgi, galha : wəůləš raki tšəgi ? elqanun jgul haka, trois points, c'est trois points.
- galetlu : mais non, rani nəgəgi parce que ana wessemni ůi:ša, w kitəglaůli trois points, jwəliw jšajtəli ůi:sa.

### English Translation:

A lady called Icha was driving in the city, she burns the traffic light, so the police man whistled her to drop three points from her driving licence, but she doesn't understand his order thinking that he will drop the points from her name, so that she will be called ůi:sa (a boy name).

### **Joke Five**

wəhdəl ḫaṯra, təlagit une française, wə bəit nətesté lə fransaouija təůi avant manruḥ lə fransa. kəlt jla šet rəhi bien, c'est bon, šet rəhi šajən, manruḥš. tlagit had la française,

- gulltelha ' bonjour madame',
- galletli 'bonjour monsieur, qu'est-ce que vous voulez?'
- gulltelha ' madame, je veux te poser une question',
- galletli ' oui, vas-y'.
- gulltelha ' es ce que vous avez des chanteurs célèbre en France?'
- galletli ' il y en a beaucoup, par exemple, il y a Pierre Bachelet, il y a Johnny Halliday, il y a aussi, Jean Jack Goldman'.
- Gulltelha ' madame, Pierre Bachelet je l'adore, es ce que tu peux m'expliquer une chanson de Pierre Bachelet?'
- Galletli 'laquelle?'
- Gulltelha ' Pierre Bachelet, il a une chanson sentimentale. Le titre de la chanson c'est écrit moi' wəbdət tɟulli la chanson. mabdətʃ tʃrahli, jaʃni bdat tɟull ʁi wəʃ jɟull Pierre Bachelet.
- Gatlli 'il dit, écrit moi si tu as le courage' wna nebki, ' écrit moi comme un dernier message' wna nuwəh, ' écrit moi et dit moi que ce n'est pas vrai', wana nəʃajet.
- Gatlli 'mais pourquoi tu pleures monsieur?'
- Qulltelha ' madame, je pleure parce que cette chanson sentimentale, elle m'a touchée.
- Gulletlli ' mais pourquoi tu m'as demandé ça?'
- Qulltelha 'Madame, je t'es demandé ça parce que je vais t'expliquer une chanson du Rai.'
- Gulletlli 'J'aimerais bien'
- Qulltelha 'Madame, il y a un chanteur, il a dit : mon cœur et ton cœur chez le boucher accrocher'.
- galletli 'mais arrête, j'ai rien compris'
- Gulltelha 'même nous madame, même nous on a rien compris, l'essentiel, kəʒə wəhd chanteur gal, galbi wə galbek ʃand lə



boucher məʃalgin, Gulltelha, il y a un autre chanteur, une autre chanteuse, elle a dit un cajou pousse un cajou jusqu'au matin.

- Galletli ' mais j'ai rien compris monsieur, que ce que vous dite?'
- Gulltelha 'madame, meme nous on a rien compris, mais l'essentiel, il y a une chanteuse, elle a dit, kezu jədmer kezu hatta ləsbah.
- Galletli ' monsieur j'ai rien compris, Gulltelha 'même nous, même nous. Gulltelha 'il y a un autre chanteur, il a dit le vin je le bois, les comprimés je les mangent,
- Galletli: mais arrête monsieur, j'ai rien compris, même nous madame, l'essentiel kəjən wəhd chanteur gal, ʃrab nəʃərbah, lə kaʃi nakləh.
- Galletli: mais monsieur, j'ai rien compris, madame, meme nous, wəjla ʃəftina nərgso fəl ʃras, a madame, maʃi belferha, wəja marana fahmin fiha walu.

### **English Translaion**

Once, the humorist met a French lady and tried to talk with her in order to check his oral skill in French. He asked her to translate a French song, but the woman just says it and it was lucid. After that, he translates some Rai songs into French, and the woman could not understand the meaning behind those songs, even the humorist himself could not. He told her that Algerians dance in weddings because because they do not understand a word from those Rai songs.

## Glossary

- Wit: the ability to say or write things that are both clever and amusing.
- Sarcasm: harsh or bitter derision or irony.
- Simile: a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared, as in "she is like a rose."
- Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance.

## **: الملخص**

إن الكوميديا الارتجالية ، محل الفكاهة، تشهد انتشارا واسعا في عصرنا هذا، مما أدت إلى لفت انتباه العديد من المختصين في مختلف المجالات . على هذا الأساس، يهدف العمل البحثي الحالي على تحليل النكتة اللفظية بالكوميديا الارتجالية في الجزائر، من خلال دراسة بعض المشاهد المسرحية الهزلية للفكاهي عبد القادر السكتور، حيث الغرض من التحقيق سيركز على الخطاب اللفظي له الذي يجلب الضحك ويوضح معاني مخفية. تتم هذه القضية في إطار تحليل الخطاب، من خلال استعمال بعض النظريات اللغوية للفكاهة اللفظية، إتباع منهجية وظيفية لاستنتاج رسالة الفكاهي، و نهج اجتماعي لغوي لدراسة دوافعه في التغيير اللغوي، مع الإعانة بعينة من الناس، اللاتي مشاركتهم ساعدت في التحليل و استخلاص النتائج.

## **:الكلمات الاستفتاحية**

الفكاهة اللفظية، الكوميديا، تحليل الخطاب، البرنامج النصي، التبديل اللغوي.

## **Résumé :**

Stand-up comedy, un lieu crucial de l'humour, est vivement prolifère actuellement, il devient le cadre de diverses enquêtes dans différents domaines. Sur la base d'un tel site, le présent travail de recherche vise à analyser l'humour verbal du stand-up comedy en Algérie, en prenant le cas des sketches d'Abdelkader Secteur, dont le but de l'enquête se concentrera sur son discours verbal qui provoque l'humour et adresse des messages implicites. Cela ce fait dans le cadre de l'analyse du discours, ou il y aura un appel aux théories linguistiques de l'humour verbal, une analyse pragmatique/fonctionnelle des messages intentionnelle de l'humoriste, et une approche sociolinguistique qui explique ses motivations dans l'alternance de code, avec l'auxiliaire de quelque participants, dont leurs contribution à aider l'analyse.

## **Les mots clés :**

Humour verbale, stand-up comedy, analyse du discours, les scripts, alternation codique.

## **Abstract :**

As stand-up comedy, the crux locus of humour, is vividly proliferating in the present days, it becomes the frame of various investigations in different domains. On the basis of such site, the present research work aims at analyzing verbal humour in Algerian stand-up comedy, by taking the case of Abdelkader secteur's sketches, where the purpose of inquiry will focus on his verbal discourse which functions humorously and fulfils intentional meanings. Within the frame of discourse analysis; there will be an appeal to linguistic theories of verbal humour, a pragmatic/functional analysis of the humorist's intentional message, and a sociolinguistic approach to account for his motivations in code switching, with the relative auxiliary of a sampling, whose partaking contributes an aid in the analysis.

## **Key-words :**

Verbal Humour, stand-up comedy, discourse analysis, scripts, code switching.

Summary

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## **1. Abstract**

Regarding its undeniable and crucial locus in humans' lives, verbal humour has ultimately been a recognized area of research in dissimilar disciplines. Such matter of study is basically a linguistic construct which takes place in different social arenas, and permeates several forms of entertainment such as stand-up comedy. This latter is a theatrical genre and setting devoted to the delivery of a set of consecutive humorous stories and short jokes called 'bits' held by a comedian in front of a live audience for the holistic intention of entertainment and amusement, but also for rhetorical purposes. On the basis of such comedic milieu, this present paper aims to provide a novel insight to the analysis of verbal humour in Algerian stand-up comedy, by taking the case of Abdelkader secteur's sketches as the crux of investigation. The choice of this topic lies in the actual thriving of stand-up comedy, and for the omnipresent popularity of the humorist. Therefore, the subject of analysis will focus on performance data of the humorist's language in use, through which he triggers humour, unveils the Algerian identity and conveys socio-cultural issues. In other words, the objective the dissertation is an attempt to examine the orator -comedian's language variation which functions humorously and fulfils implicit meanings. In order to make this topic trustworthy, an empirical study is necessary. It is circumscribed with five video-jokes trimmed from the comedian's sketches using Real Player software. Such procedure substitutes the attendance of the comedian's live performance where the humorist's show and audience's response are vivid. But for

the sake of further feedbacks for an accurate interpretation of the database, the selected excerpts will be given to a sample of forty participants to be watched. In order to assess the contestants' perception and interpretation of the given excerpts, they will be given a set of open and closed questions in the form of a questionnaire. The corollary of findings confirms the proposed hypotheses and expounds that this work is best suggestive, but not conclusive since it allows further analysis of para-verbal and non-verbal humour which are also salient in the interpretation of the causes of laughter in stand-up comedy, but were out of consideration in this dissertation.

## **2. Summary**

The creative and artful use of language can be spotted in individuals' ability to produce verbal humour. Being a universal trait and an intriguing parcel of human language behaviour, verbal humour insinuates itself into each aspect of everyone's life. For instance, it has become a widespread feature in many types of interaction and discourse with myriad functions, and it has pervaded in several forms of entertainments such as television shows, comic strips, sitcoms and stand up comedy.

This latter refers to a spontaneous performance held by a comedian in which s/he presents a humorous discourse in front of a live audience. Stand up comedy has become a popular form of entertainment all around the world during the last few decades, and thus, it intrigues large masses of viewers. It also transcends such level since it becomes the fieldwork of study among scholars in different disciplines with divergent aims.

### **2.1. Research Objectives:**

On the basis of such discursive site i.e. stand up comedy; this present paper aims to provide a novel insight to the analysis of verbal humour of an Algerian stand up comedian, who is considered as a new figure in the globe of Algerian stand up comedy called Abdelkader Secteur. Thus, the subject of analysis will focus on performance data of the humorist's language in use, through which he triggers humour, unveils the Algerian identity and conveys socio-cultural issues.

Such matters are drawn from the correlation between language and society. Sociolinguistically speaking, language is a complex dynamic phenomenon, strongly associated with the socio-cultural structure of society. It can serve as an instrument of cultural and social transmission, and it can also be a means of negotiating meaning. Indeed, it is undoubtedly recognized that language exhibits systematic variation within any speech community and in individual's speech behaviour. Taking into account such view, the objective of the dissertation is an attempt to analyse the orator -comedian's language in use which construct his discourse to function humorously and fulfil intentional meanings. Thus, to make the topic reliable, some relevant questions are put forward as principal issues that can be raised as:

## **2.2. Research Questions:**

- What makes the stand- up comedian's discourse funny and humorous?
- What is the purpose behind the comedian's humoristic discourse?
- Why are the motivations behind the comedian's code switching?

## **2.3. Research Hypotheses:**

The above questions lead to the assumption of the hypotheses which try to suggest that the comedian uses a figurative language embodied in a chunk of opposite scripts which mark his performance. Indeed, the comedian unveils the Algerian identity as well as its socio-cultural realities in his monologue. Moreover, code choice in his humoristic discourse is sometimes unmarked pursuing the norms of the Algerian community he belongs to, and other time, it is used to reiterate, clarify an idea and to quote.

#### **2.4. Summary of Chapters:**

The proposed hypotheses may lead to an authentic analysis of verbal humour by utilizing discourse as its frameworks. Therefore, for a better understanding of such analysis, this work is divided into three chapters. The first one is merely theoretical, concerned with exposing what had been done on the subject matter i.e. verbal humour, in terms of attempting to bring light on the concept of humour and expose some conventional and linguistic theories of humour. Indeed, a glance at stand-up comedy will be provided. But as the subject matter is a kind of discourse (humoristic discourse), the background for designing research study should be devoted to try highlighting the scopes of discourse analysis by defining the term discourse, and identifying some preliminaries related disciplines. In addition to this, the first chapter strives to propose some approaches which explain the factors which lead to code choice since this latter is a prominent feature of almost all naturally verbal communication including verbal humour

For an appropriate awareness of the fieldwork in which the analysis takes place, the second chapter will provide an overview of stand up comedy in Algeria. Yet, it should be



noted that Algeria has been a land of confluence between culturally diverse communities since Antiquity. Its geographical situation at the crossroad of Africa, Europe and the Middle East has influenced it for centuries in different fields. A preeminent example is its sociolinguistic situation which straightforwardly impacts on its divergent layers of cultural spheres like literature, cinema, theatre, stand -up comedy, etc.

In effect, it is undeniable that the issue of 'language' in Algeria has always been controversial, and the debate about which language should be used is still relevant mainly among authors, journalists, playwrights, comedians, etc. This is due to the fact that Algeria possesses a number of competing codes which are: Arabic (Classical Arabic (hereafter CA), Standard Arabic (hereafter SA), and Algerian Arabic (hereafter AA), French and Berber languages as a consequence of diverse historical events, political issues and socio-cultural factors. Algeria labels itself as part of the Arab and Muslim world. According to its constitution (2011), SA is enshrined as the national and the official language, Berber language is considered as the national language, while French language is regarded as a foreign language. But, large -scale sociolinguistic analysis of the actual situation in Algeria reveals its linguistic diversity as well as a peculiar linguistics dynamic, forming intricate multilingual, diglossic situations consequent in the noticeable use of code switching, code mixing and borrowing.

This intricate linguistic situation can be captured in the humoristic discourse of almost all Algerian stand-up comedians who make use of the different existing codes in an esthetical manner. But before advocating this latter matter, it seems significant to attempt starting with a panoramic view concerning the emergence of stand-up comedy in Algeria.

Such task seems difficult to attain and glean due to the dearth of data and references about the subject matter. Instead, the second chapter is devoted to sketch a historical background of theatre in Algeria with its major expressed themes due to regarding stand-up comedy as a genre of theatre. In addition to this, there will be an endeavour to bring light on some significant features characterizing Algerian stand-up comedy.

In effect, this chapter is a pathway to engage in the empirical work with the goal of harvesting and interpreting data. Therefore, the third chapter will try to shed light on the pursued methodology, in terms of exhibiting the way data is collected, presenting the sampling whose contribution in this humble work is beneficial to assess their laughter and inference of the comedian's humoristic discourse, and displaying the main research instruments used. This empirical part will proceed by attempting to analyse the data obtained and interpret the results.

### **2.5. Methodology:**

As attending live performance is impossible and considered as the limitation of this project, another reliable way is put forwards. Hence, the data of this study derives from the downloaded videos of the humorist's sketches, either in live stand-up comedy or other shows where the audience attendance is not shown. Only its laughter is heard.

Although the humorist's sketches are also available in the commercially produced videotapes and digital video discs (DVD), they are not taken into consideration, for the reason that the chosen ways to extract the comedian shows originate from YouTube's recordings using Real Player software, which

contains a cutting tool that helps trim the video according to the needs of the user.

Usually, the show's duration is about eleven to forty five minutes; it consists of a chunk of coherent jokes displayed by the artist, either in solo, or duo performances with another comedian. But in this research project, just five excerpts dating recently i.e. 2011- 2012 - 2013, and ranging from one to eight minutes from his solo performances are taken into consideration to be transcribed and analysed.

Yet, it should be born in mind that the transcription of the five excerpts will focus only on the humorist's spoken language to be written out in parallel within the analysis. However, the transcription will be abstracted from paralinguistic features such as tone, pitch of the voice, pauses, emphasis, overlaps, breaths, etc, or nonverbal language like gestures, body language, or facial expressions although their holistic significance contribute to a better understanding and interpretation of messages. This is due to the fact that these features are out of emphasis in this analysis. But in order to have a clear idea about the chosen excerpts of analysis, they will be recorded in a DVD as an element of the appendix.

In fact, the chosen excerpts are done purposefully for the following reasons:

- First, for their opulent amusement that provokes laughter.
- Second, for the restricted nonverbal language they encompass.
- Third, for the tacit message they hold.
- Fourth, for the pervasive interjection of different codes. And,

- Five, for the limited taboo topics or expressions used.

Moreover, for the sake of further feedbacks for an accurate interpretation of these the database, the selected excerpts will be given to a sample of population which is as follow:

### **2.5.1. Sampling Presentation:**

As the stand-up comedian performs his show within the collaboration of his audience, he has the potential to index its multiple reactions, such as unveiling his hidden messages through laughter. Therefore, the audience response plays a significant role in the ongoing show. And such response should not be missed within the analytical study of any stand-up comedy. But as attending live shows is impossible for some personal reasons, another way is done to highlight their significance.

The selected excerpts are given to a sample of forty participants to be watched then interpreted for the apparent aims to correspondingly, observe the punch line of the joke which provides an incongruous ending leading to participants' laughter, and to infer their interpretation and understanding of the hidden message by means of questionnaire.

By and large, the participants that partake in this project are family numbers, some teachers and friends from Tlemcen. They are purely Algerians who possess mutual background knowledge concerning the norms and expectations concerning the use of language in the humorist's discourse. In fact, this background knowledge is governed by the Algerian cultural values, its religion and heritage, which consequently leads to a lucid understanding and interpretation of the humorist's sketches. Put differently,

participants of this humble dissertation possess both linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge to determine what the humorist means or attempts to convey.

However, it should be marked out that the interpretation of humoristic discourse in general, varies according to different social factors such as audience's ethnicity, their age, education, cultural background, etc. But within this research in particular, the social variables of age, gender and education are taken into consideration, though not in an exhaustive manner, because the comedian's verbal humour is the crux concern of this investigation.

In effect, it should be noted that few of the participants to whom we have been addressed to refused to take part in the investigation, for their personal attitudes toward stand-up comedy or toward the humorist. Hence, six women and two men rejected to view the sketches because they were neither attracted by this kind of comedy nor doing an effort to understand the humorist speech. The following table demonstrates the participants involved in this study:

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Participants that partake in the survey and their educational level</b>		<b>Participants that were out of survey and their educational level</b>	
<b>16-30</b>	<b>7 males:</b>	<b>8 females</b>	<b>0 male</b>	<b>1 female:</b>
	•2 have high school level. • 5have university level.	•2 have secondary level. • 6 have university level.		have secondary level.
<b>31-60</b>	<b>11 males:</b>	<b>6 females</b>	<b>2 males:</b>	<b>5 females:</b>
	•2 have secondary/	• 4 have secondary/	•2 have secondary	•4 have secondary/

	high school level. • 9 have university level.	high school level • 2 have university level.	/ High school level.	high school level. • 1 has university level.
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Anyway, the remaining thirty two participants with whom this investigation goes along were required to (i) watch and listen to the selected sketches and (ii) fulfil a questionnaire, for the aim to assess their perception and interpretation of the humoristic discourse, as aforementioned. This procedure is part of the research instruments used in this study, and which are as follow:

### **2.5.2. Research Instruments:**

The empirical phase of this research entails the analysis of the humoristic discourse. Yet, this task necessitates handy tools among which video recording represents the core this research, in addition to observation and the questionnaire which are also used as analytical devices. These research instruments are highlighted as follow:

#### **2.5.2.1. Video-Recordings:**

It is previously admitted that the crux concern of this investigation relies on the humorist's performance, which are extracted from YouTube by means of RealPlayer downloader to be recorded. Such procedure lasted more than twenty days, during which awhile of twelve days was limited only to watch, hear and select the sketches according to the aforesaid reasons, other days (six days) were restricted to

download them, while the remaining days (five days) were constrained with trimming the shows into excerpts.

In fact, this research instrument i.e. video recording is a useful key in discourse analysis in general, and particularly within this investigation since it spots the humorist's genuine language in use by capturing his verbatim and the context of performance to be studied qualitatively. Stressing the importance of video recordings in qualitative DA, Keith R. McVelly et al.<sup>60</sup> (2008:166) says

**For some areas of qualitative research, it is hard to understand how the rigor of data collection and analysis could be maintained without audio or video recordings, such as the area of discourse analysis.**

#### **2.5.2.2. Observation:**

In addition to video recordings, there was a need to extensive use of ears and eyes. Such procedure is called observation which entails deep sight at the data involved. In this respect, Marguerite et al state "**observation as a tool of research requires systematic and careful examination of the phenomena being studied**". Using this tool of research within this investigative part allows qualitative and quantitative results, which goes respectively with unveiling the reasons behind the humorist's code switching, and inspecting the time of laughter to depict the punch line of the joke after giving the excerpts to the sample to be watched. Indeed, it should be signalled out that time inspection was done through note taking.

#### **2.5.2.3. Questionnaire:**

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<sup>60</sup> stated in the book "international review of research in mental redatrdation page

As aforesaid, a questionnaire is given to the sample of participants in order to assess their interpretation concerning the data base of this research. The questionnaire consists of twenty three questions originally asked in Standard Arabic, split according to the number of the selected humorous excerpts i.e. each video-sketch consists of four or five repeated questions the for the sake of qualitative and quantitative outcomes. It encompasses content questions to confirm the systematic examination of the listed objectives. Such questions were either structured i.e. closed question with a predetermined set of responses given to the subjects in order to infer quantitative results, or open questions to give the participants an opportunity to express their opinion in a free-flowing manner. The analysis of questionnaire will be scheduled within the following practical part.

## **2.6. Conclusion:**

When according a linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis of the foregoing selected video excerpts of Abdel-kader secteur through an aid of the sampling partaking, the answer of the principle captivating issues of this humble research work has been fairly identified. In effect, the analysis, carried out in this practical part is reminiscent of some theories which lead primary to the corollaries that the stand-up comedian's discourse is funny because the crux of his jokes is their incongruous perception between two ideas (scripts). This incongruity is conceptually semantics, it involves basically adequate discern of scripts which derive from the literal meaning of words. Such semantic inference is, in fact, deficient, if hearers do use other cues in order to successfully infer the target message. So by dint of their



culture sensitive character, by-product of common -sense reasoning and background knowledge, hearers could ultimately understand not only the humorous joke, but also the implicit meaning of the comedian. This latter uses stand-up comedy as a milieu, where topical boundaries fall, since he advocates myriad topics inspired from commonplace life to re-narrate them humorously by the use of hyperbole, allusion, wordplay, metaphors and other figurative language, with the implicit aim to awake people to correct their attitudes, actions and behaviours. The common way to deliver his humoristic discourse is to address the audience in an ostensible code understood by them. As Abdel-kader secteur knows that his audience is linguistically heterogeneous, he uses AA, a noticeable amount of French, few Spanish words, and to a less extent English. Yet, the use of these codes, especially when he switches between AA and French is most of the time unmarked, pursuing the norms of the Algerian linguistic environment, with the functions of filling lexical needs, and/or converging with audience, while other times switching into French or English is predetermined by some social factors merely the interlocutor or the topic to show his language skills or to quote. Indeed, it should be marked out that in some instances; the comedian deliberately switches between the codes especially SA, French or English for phatic and humorous functions.

Ultimately, it should be marked out that this dissertation is just suggestive, but not conclusive since it allows further analysis, which has not been tackled in this work, mainly, para-verbal, and non-verbal scrutiny. This is due to the fact that the success of stand-up comedy which is spotted from audience's laughter spawns from the comedian's use of intermeshed communicative strategies confined in his/her verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal language.

Therefore, such cues are very salient in a better interpretation of the causes of laughter in stand-up comedy. In addition to this, a special concern should be devoted to the stand-up comedian's origin by shedding light on the prominent linguistic features of his accent, which has not been taken into consideration in this work for avoiding macro-analysis.