

Pun Strategies and Hidden Meaning in Selected Posts of Four-eyed

Edo Boy on X

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Abstract: Studies on humor in Nigeria have explored humor from dimensions such as stand-up comedy, the 2015 presidential election, Akpos jokes and others. Academics have not examined the subject of puns in Nigeria. This gap necessitated the study, which, through the application of the Cooperative Principle, investigated pun strategies and hidden meaning in the posts of X Influencer Four-eyed Edo Boy, through the purview of conversational maxims discussed by H.P. Grice (1975). For analytical purposes, the study adopted a purposive data collection method in which twenty-eight posts were selected from the influencer's X page for analysis. The analysis disclosed that Four-eyed Edo Boy utilizes homophonic puns and the combination of homophonic puns and biblical allusion, idiomatic expression, and slang in his punning posts to create a comic effect on his readers and increase his popularity and followers on the social media platform. Also, the pun strategies employed by the writer were constructed through the deliberate flouting of the maxims of manner and quality.

Keywords: Pun, Humor, Four-eyed Edo Boy, Pun Strategies, Hidden Meaning, X, Cooperative Principle

Introduction

Social media is interactive and networked (Bechmann & Lomborg 2013, 765; Park et al. 2018, 93). Everyone is prompted to participate on social media in return for rewards such as knowledge, appreciation, financial support, and collective creation (Sipahi 2017, 354). Social media is marked by interaction among users and it has gained popularity across the world and in Nigeria since the beginning of the 21st century for its feature of connection among people from different walks of life (Erhiegeke et al. 2022, 15). The rise of social media platforms has given birth to individuals called social media influencers on different social media platforms. Influencers are popular social media users with lots of followers. Their vast number of followers

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enables them to reach many users via their posts. The ability is vital on social media as it attracts brands or organizations to the influencers by tasking them to promote the goods and services of the brands on social media.

On X, influencers seek to get huge followership through various means like banter, jokes, political commentary, and medical and legal information for fellow users among other means. X influencers with huge followers are Aproko Doctor, Motola, Daniel Regha, VeryDarkMan, Ruth, Pamilerin Adegoke, and Four-eyed Edo Boy. Alexander Oriaifo, aka Four-eyed Edo Boy, has six hundred and fifty-five thousand followers on X and got his huge followership through witty jokes and puns. The style made him a popular figure on the site, attracting many brands for promotion. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to explore the discursive strategies and motivations in the user's posts.

Different scholars have studied puns from different angles. Jasim (2018,1) explored puns' use in teaching students' new vocabulary. Zhang (2019, 1) analyzed the pragmatic functions of puns in English advertisements. Some pun studies, such as Mittal et al. (2022, 1734), and Yu et al. (2018, 1650 and 2020, 2870), have focused on homographic puns, wherein a word has two or more meanings. Similarly, there are other studies that have analyzed puns from the purview of homophones, wherein two words with the same pronunciation have different meanings (Luo et al. 2019, 3388; He et al. 2019, 1734). Kao et al. (2016, 1270) discussed the linguistic traits of puns, and the study divided these traits into two dimensions, ambiguity of meaning and distinctiveness of viewpoints. The study showed that ambiguity is useful in differentiating non-puns from puns, while distinctiveness is beneficial in identifying good and funny puns from bad or boring non-puns.

Thus, the researcher discovered from existing literature that scholars in Nigeria in their research on humor have concentrated on stand-up comedy (Filani 2015, 41 and 2018, 82), humor from the 2015 presidential election Oyeboade and Adegoju (2015, 643), and other topics such as Filani (2017, 193), and (2018, 1). Therefore, nothing has been done about puns in scholarships in Nigeria. Consequently, the present study is premised on investigating discursive strategies and motivations of posts by Four-eyed Edo Boy on X by anchoring the argument on the Cooperative Principle by H.P Grice (1975, 41). The theory is established on the four maxims or principles in conversational discourse. The maxims are quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The maxim of manner emphasizes attributes such as avoiding ambiguity, obscurity of expression, and being brief and orderly Grice (1975, 41).

In most cases, pun expressions violate the maxim of manner because of their obscurity and ambiguity. Therefore, with the use of puns, under the cooperative principle, the speaker envisages violating conversational maxims to stimulate the hearers' interest in the contextual side of meaning in the expression (Shao et al. 2012). Applying the cooperative principle in this study is crucial in exploring the discursive strategies and motivations of the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy on X. On this premise, this study aims to highlight the pun strategies in selected posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy on X and showcase the hidden meanings buried beneath the literal meaning of each post from the lens of the author of this analysis. Most of his posts are filled with puns; he uses them to amuse his readers and as a form of social commentary and sarcasm.

1. Existing Literature

Pun is an aspect of humor. Humor is a universal culture (Oring 2003). It symbolizes a major part of day-to-day conversations; humans partake in humorous speech and behavior (Schwarz 2010).

As a result, it has been researched in areas such as anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology (Dynel 2009, 1284). However, studies into puns in Nigerian scholarship are rare. Most of the studies conducted into humor studies in Nigeria have been stand-up comedy (Adetunji 2013, 1), Filani (2023), pragmatic analysis of humor (Filani 2022), and humor in movies (Sunday & Bamgbose 2021, 20), and others. So far, no study has examined puns as a tool of humor. Nevertheless, some studies globally have explored the use of puns in humor studies through advertisements, teaching the English language to students, and politics. These studies include Tsakona (2013, 101), Yan (2015, 602), Ali (2019, 176), Xinfu (2019) and others. These studies have analyzed puns from different perspectives.

Shao et al. (2012) undertook a contrastive study of English and Chinese rhetorical figure-pun. The study utilized cultural perspectives, semantics, pragmatics, forms, partial tones, meanings, and other metrics as tools of comparison between both languages. Consequentially, the study revealed similarities between both languages, such as similar format, similar formation elements, and similar classification. Also, the study disclosed differences between both languages, such as different forms of compositions, rhetorical functions, psychological motivations, cultural backgrounds and customs, and other cultural differences. Tsakona (2013, 101) took a different route to the study of pun from which is different to Shao et al. (2012). The study examined the socio-pragmatic functions of punning, which appears to be the most used form of humor adopted by Greek politicians in Parliament. The study disclosed that punning expressions are a means by which politicians show off their verbal skills by projecting themselves as eloquent orators capable of outperforming their counterparts in the Parliament. Parliamentarians adopt puns to criticize the ideologies and decisions of their opponents. Also, Chao and Xinghua (2013) studied the pragmatic aspect of ambiguity and puns in English humor.

Their study displayed the relationship between ambiguity and puns in pragmatic features such as deixis and presupposition and pragmatic theories like cooperative principle and relevance theories. Khanfar (2013) worked on the translation of puns; he tries to determine whether it is a semantic or pragmatic process between graduate and undergraduate English major students at An-Najah National University in Palestine. The study revealed that a pun is a rhetorical device of indirectness. Therefore, it is misleading because each pun utterance has multiple meanings. Additionally, Khanfar (2013) pointed out that puns are associated with confusion and incorrect translations, asserting that both graduate and undergraduate English department majors at the university face two challenges, context and culture in understanding puns.

Furthermore, Gan (2015, 1211) employed Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory to analyze how humor in pun is constructed. The study posited that in understanding a pun utterance, the audience decodes the meaning of the pun through an extra effort using their encyclopedia knowledge and linguistic and logical information. Once the pun in the statement is understood, the resultant effect on the listener or reader is humor. More so, Yan (2015, 602) approached pun by highlighting four types of puns used for communicative purposes in English advertisements. They are homophonic, semantic, grammatical, and idiomatic puns. The study finds out that pun advertisements are brief and avoid social taboos. It discussed how puns can successfully communicate in English-language advertisements. The study demonstrated that advertisers adopt puns as an ostensive stimulus to express the informative intention while customers use their cognitive ability to find the communicative intention. Giorgadze (2014, 1) examined puns as a category of wordplay and their presentation in one-liner jokes in English. The study's findings disclosed that puns are created based on syntactic, semantic, structural, and lexical ambiguity.

In addition, Jasim (2018, 1) attempted to reveal that puns can be beneficial in teaching students' new vocabulary. The study discussed the incorporation of puns in teaching English Language vocabulary in class to fascinate and get the attention of students, make classes more interesting, and reduce stress. The use of puns in teaching students makes them eager to know the meaning of puns used in the classroom, increasing their vocabulary repertoire. Ali (2019, 176–181) defined the socio-political impact of pun expressions in Iraqi jokes. The analysis was based on the socio-cultural specificity of the Iraqi community. The examination revealed that the influence of pun expressions by Iraqis is due to the fact that they reflect the country's socio-political situation through entertainment, with jokes being the principal means through homonyms.

Similarly, Xinfu (2019) investigated the use of puns in English advertisements. The study maintained that puns make advertising language full of humanistic artistry by conveying many meanings in simple sentences. Zheng (2019, 1) analyzed the pragmatic functions of puns in English advertisements by analyzing advertising instances against the tenets of cooperative principles. The study revealed that puns are adopted in English advertisements to engage audiences and stimulate consumption, effectively achieving the value of the products. Additionally, by adopting a unified framework to generate homographic and homophonic puns, Tian et al. (2022) proposed a novel pun generation approach that used three humor principles, ambiguity, the distinctiveness of viewpoints, and an additional metric called a surprise. The study argued that the element of surprise, which works by altering a word in a sentence with a similar word with the same pronunciation, invokes humor. Zhang (2019, 1) contributed to scholarly studies on pun by analyzing the pragmatic functions of puns in English advertisements by combining advertising occurrences and implementing the cooperative principle. The study

submitted that puns are popular among advertisers because of four significant effects, economic, emotional, novel, and memory. According to the studies discussed in this section, there is an obvious gap in the literature regarding puns as a tool of humor among Nigerians. Therefore, the study aims to fill the gap by discussing the discursive strategies and motivations of puns in the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy on X.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

There is no shortage of studies on humor among academics in Nigeria. However, studies on pun are rare among academic scholars in Nigeria. Scholars like and Adegoju and Oyeboode (2015, 643), Imo (2016, 1), Filani (2016, 193), and Ojaide (2020, 81) and others have worked on humor from different angles, such as stand-up comedy and the 2015 presidential election. However, little attention has been paid to humor in puns. Therefore, this study examines pun strategies and hidden meaning in selected posts of Four-Eyed Edo Boy's posts on X by deciphering the pun strategies and hidden meaning of his posts from the point of view of the research author. The hidden meanings of the posts serve as the punchline in the posts that induce laughter.

3. Aim and Objectives

The paper aims to show the pun strategies utilized by Four-Eyed Edo Boy and hidden meanings beneath the surface of his posts. The study seeks to achieve the following;

1. To discover the discursive strategies in the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy.
2. To discover how the punchline of a post activates the second meaning of a post.
3. To discover the motivations of punning expressions in the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy.

4. Theoretical Framework

The Cooperative Principle, proposed by H.P. Grice in 1975, explains how interlocutors communicate seamlessly with one another. He listed some principles (maxims) of conversations that interlocutors must observe. However, interlocutors do not observe the maxims at all times. The maxims' flouting creates conversation implications (Chen 2021, 118). The cooperative principle was built on the notion that interlocutors should communicate smoothly. It was established that interlocutors should follow some accepted principles to continue the communication. (Grice 1975, 41) asserted that the speaker and the hearer cooperate in conversation by sustaining discourse. As highlighted by Grice, the modes of sustenance of the discourse are quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The maxim of quantity posits that you should not say what you lack evidence for and believe to be false. It establishes that the speaker makes their contribution as informative as required. Also, it says not to make your contribution more informative than what is required.

Additionally, the maxim of quality posits that the speaker tries to make their contribution as one that is true. The maxim of relation says to be relevant, while the maxim of manner asserts that the speaker should be perspicuous, avoid ambiguity and obscurity, and be brief and orderly (Grice 1975, 41). Thus, the flouting of the quantity maxim inspires imagination, the flouting of the quality maxim is created by trope, and the relation maxim is viewed as the conversion of irrelevant information and the original focus. In contrast, the flouting of the manner maxim is communicated in the form of ambiguity. Ambiguity allows the receiver to think more and leave a deeper impression.

The study, employing CP to examine the pun strategies and motivations of Four-Eyed Edo Boy on X, aims to reveal how the user manipulates language to create humor and witty

expressions. In CP, punning expressions flout one or more maxims highlighted by (Grice 1975, 41), particularly the maxims of quality, quantity, and manner. When the maxims are flouted, the result is ambiguity, which triggers a humorous effect on the listener or reader. The maxim of quantity about puns deals with the provision of incomplete or over-explained information, which brings about ambiguity in the information. The maxim of quality regarding puns presents two meanings, one is a literal meaning, while the second is the symbolic meaning of information. If information is misleading, it can lead to humor through puns.

On the other hand, the maxim of relation is a punning expression from information that seems irrelevant at first look but gains relevance once the hidden meaning is decoded, leading to humor. The maxim of manner is disclosed about puns when the speaker or writer intentionally deploys ambiguity for humor. The speaker or writer intentionally presents two meanings in the information. One of the meanings is visible, while the second is hidden, requiring the hearer or reader to decode consciously. Once the second meaning becomes decoded, it brings about a humorous effect on the reader or hearer. On this premise, this study seeks to reveal the pun strategies deployed by Four-Eyed Edo Boy in his posts on X through the maxims of Cooperative Principles and to reveal the writer's motivations in the posts.

5. Methodology

The data for this study was derived from the posts of X user, Four-Eyed Edo Boy. The user's posts from October 2018 to December 2020 were screenshots from his X page. Thus, the study adopted a purposive data collection method. Twenty-nine posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy were taken on the site for analysis. Four-Eyed Edo Boy, unlike other influencers on X, uses punning expressions to pass across the information in his posts. The posts are usually in the form of long

or short stories in which he takes the readers on a journey by immersing them in a story with the view of introducing a twist at the end to achieve his aim regarding the post. The twist introduced at the end of the posts serves as the punchline of the posts, which triggers humor when decoded by the readers. The approach differs from the method adopted by other influencers who use impoliteness, banter, sports commentary, political commentary, and obscene jokes to gain popularity and followers on the platform.

The analysis of this research significantly benefits from the maxims of Cooperative Principles discussed by H.P (Grice 1975, 41). The theory is founded on the premise that there are principles (maxims) of conversations that the participants must observe while interacting. Nevertheless, it has been substantiated that the participants do not always observe the maxims at all times. The flouted maxims create conversation implications, which can be used to create punning expressions in interactions. The theory enables the study to highlight the pun strategies and motivation adopted by the user from the purview of maxims flouted, which gives the analysis a well-rounded examination of the topic.

6. Data Presentation

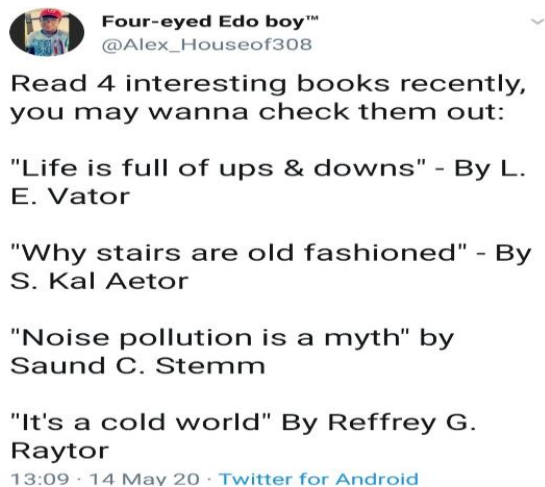
Four-eyed Edo Boy used the following pun strategies in the posts selected for this study, homophonic puns, biblical allusion, slang, and idiomatic expressions.

Homophonic Pun

According to Bergson (2005, 3), a pun is an utterance or sentence where "two different sets of ideas are expressed, and we are confronted with only one series of words." Homophonic pun or phonetic pun is a type of pun in which two meanings rely on similar or the same pronunciation

(Yu et al. 2020, 2872). Homophonic pun arises with the intentional use and abuse of similar-sounding words for the specific role of humor or rhetorical effect (Metevosyan & Alimyan 2024, 4). A homophonic pun is one of the most utilized pun strategies in the creation of punning expressions by the Four-eyed Edo Boy on X. Instances of the punning strategy are discussed in this section.

Data 1,



The writer in the post above played with the sounds of some letters and words and the meanings that arise from them. He shared the four books he read recently to achieve humor through pun via the interpretations of the names of the "authors" of the books. The first book is titled *Life is full of ups and downs* by L.E Vator. The first meaning here is in the author's name; one will be deceived by assuming that it is a real name and that the "author" is a motivational speaker who tries to encourage people to understand the uncertainties of this world. The hidden meaning of the post is revealed, and the "author's" name is an elevator, while the title of the book *Life is full*

of ups and downs refers to the function of an elevator, which is to take people and things up and down.

Similarly, the second book is titled *Why Stairs Are Old Fashioned* by S. Kal Aetor. This follows the pattern of the first "book." The initial meaning conveyed by this is that it is a book giving reasons why stairs in buildings are old fashioned suggesting that houses can utilize elevators to enable people move from one floor to another. Nevertheless, the hidden meaning of the post is that stairs are old fashioned because of escalators. The name of the author S. Kal Aetor is later understood as escalators.

Furthermore, the third example, titled *Noise pollution is a myth* by Saund C. Stemm. From this, the readers are firstly misguided that it is a real book which proves that concerns about noise pollution is a myth. However, on the second look, they discover that the name of the "author" of the book, Saund C. Stemm, refers to the sound system, an electronic audio and video player. This explains the title of the book which supports noise pollution.

Lastly, the fourth "book" is *It's a Cold World* by Reffrey G. Raytor. At first glance, this is a "book" about how horrible and heartless the world is. However, when readers understand that the author's name, Reffrey G. Raytor, stands for refrigerator, they unlock the hidden meaning that the writer is referring to the cold atmosphere provided by a refrigerator for food and drinks. Four-eyed Edo Boy adopted homophonic pun by playing on the pronunciation of words to construct fake names of authors to amuse his followers by flouting the maxim of quality in cooperative principle underlined by (Grice 1975, 41). The writer provided misleading information in the literal meaning of the posts. The flouting of the maxim of quality led the readers to the hidden meaning of the post which was constructed to amuse the readers.

Data 2,

The writer shared another instance of pun in this post by sharing the experience of two guys living in the same room. Pranks among two roommates in Nigeria are a common thing. From locking each other out of the room to locking each other in the bathroom, roommates play many pranks on each other. In the data presented above, the writer's roommates attempted to assert revenge on his roommate for the prank he (the user) played on him the week before. In his effort to assert revenge on his roommate, he decided to hide the writer's wallet under a newspaper in the room. As a result, the writer had a hard time finding the missing wallet. However, he discovered where it was hidden under a newspaper after twenty minutes of search. The writer ended the post by saying; *The mumu forgot that nothing can remain hidden under The Sun*. (The idiot forgot that nothing can stay hidden under the sun).

The first meaning of this post is clearly presented, he discovered that his friend stupidly hid his wallet under a newspaper, forgetting that nothing can stay hidden forever. At this point, the readers continue to think about the post and the second meaning, which the writer hid, is unlocked when they discover that the writer has used *the sun* as a homophonic pun. There is a newspaper in Nigeria called The Sun; the writer was referring to this newspaper by suggesting that he found the wallet that his roommate hid under The Sun newspaper. The writer subtly disclosed through the post that his roommate in a bid to assert his revenge on him did not get

creative by hiding his wallet in a difficult place. The action of his roommate did not cause him lots of trouble compared to what he did to him the previous week which was unspecified in the post but must have been grave because of his roommate's resolve to revenge. Therefore, the first meaning of the post deceives the readers at first, but upon discovering the hidden meaning of the post, they join the two meanings together, and the punchline of the post is realized which leads to comic effect. The writer use of ambiguity in the post violated the maxim of manner in CP (Grice 1975, 41) which triggered the humor and hidden meaning in the post.

Data 3,



In this data, the writer shared a story of a man who has horses and hates preparing their food with his son. Probably, his son is a young boy who has not mastered how to prepare the horses' food. Therefore, in a bid to prepare the food for the horses faster and without error, the man engages his son in another task, which is to polish his shoes to prevent the son from disturbing him while he prepares food for the horses.

The writer concluded the post by saying; *He makes hay while the son shines*. The first meaning presented here is that the man makes food for his horses while the son concentrates on polishing his father's shoes. However, after careful consideration of the post, the readers discover that the writer has played on words based on the pronunciation of *sun* and *son* among English

speakers in Nigeria, as both words are pronounced the same way. Therefore, the statement; *He makes hay while the son shines* is a subtle reference to the saying in English, "make hay while the sun shines," which is to make the most of a good situation while it lasts. In relation to the post, the line unlocks the hidden meaning of the post to be that the father makes sure that the son is busy doing something else in order to focus on making food for his horses and doing it effectively and efficiently. As it has been established in the previous excerpts, Four-eyed Edo Boy intentionally violated the maxim of manner stipulated by (Grice 1975, 41) in this excerpt. The violation of the maxim led to the deciphering of the punning expression embedded in the post to the amusement of the readers.

Data 4,



Four-eyed Edo boy™
@Alex_Houseof308

Rubbed maggi all over my body
before my job interview.

Needed my potential employers to
know I'm a seasoned professional

22:10 · 25 Jul 20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

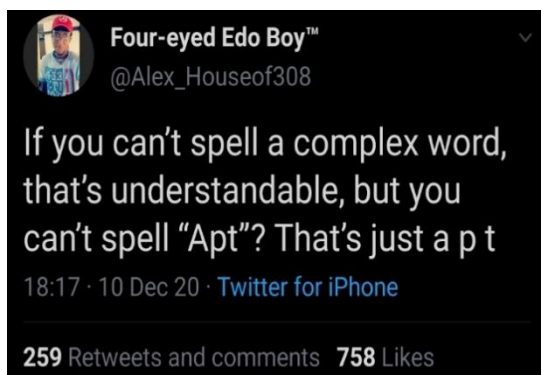
1,836 Retweets 7,416 Likes

Four-Eyed Edo Boy presented a situation known by tertiary institutions graduates and citizens of Nigeria, which is unemployment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), employment-to-population ratio in Nigeria as at the first quarter of 2024 is 73.2% while unemployment rate rose to 5.3% in the first quarter of the year. To be gainfully employed in Nigeria is a struggle, it goes beyond what is on one's curriculum vitae; job seekers have to demonstrate to their potential employers during the interview that they are qualified for the job. Consequently, Nigerians engage in things like prayers before interview sessions in order to gain

an edge on other job seekers. The writer's take on this is how he concluded the post by asserting that; *Needed my potential employers to know I'm a seasoned professional*. Thus, the first meaning accessible to the readers is a subtle attempt at making a cuisine joke by relating a body rubbed with a brand of seasoning cubes, *Maggi*, to prove to his interviewers that he was qualified for the job he applied for at the organization.

Afterwards, the readers have access to the second/hidden meaning of the post through the deliberate flouting of manner maxim by the X user. The second meaning hidden by the writer from the readers is a result of wordplay on the word "seasoned." The hidden meaning, he presented to the readers is that he is a veteran in his profession who is knowledgeable in the field. Therefore, he attempted to disclose to his readers that he took his time to prepare adequately before heading out for the interview in order to convince his interviewers that he was qualified for the job. The play on word brought about the ambiguity in the post which violated the maxim of manner which states that an interlocutor should avoid ambiguity in a conversation (Grice 1975, 41).

Data 5,



In the data presented above, Four-eyed Edo Boy presents a homophonic pun to achieve humor through the violation of the maxim of manner as stipulated in Cooperative Principle. In the post,

if you can't spell a complex word, that is understandable, but you can't spell "Apt"? That's just a p t. The user displayed his creativity using puns to amuse his followers and readers alike as he subtly criticized anyone who cannot spell the English word "apt." Although English is an official language in Nigeria, some Nigerians are not proficient in reading and writing it. Thus, the writer created a storyline around the lack of proficiency of people in writing words in English language in Nigeria.

Here, Four-eyed Edo Boy carefully presented a homophonic pun by posting that the spelling for “apt” is the combination of three letters in the English alphabet, which are *a p t*. Through this, he presented an accessible meaning for the readers by revealing that "apt" as a word should be easily spelt by anyone. However, he also created a gap in their minds, which, when solved, unlocked the second meaning of the post, which serves as a punchline for humor. The hidden meaning of the post is unlocked when the spelling of the word is read out in the letters of the English alphabet in Nigerian intonation, which changes the letters from *a p t* to form the phrase “a pity.” Hence, the hidden meaning revealed that it is a pity for anyone who cannot spell the word “apt.” It is a subtle mockery towards those who cannot spell words in the English vocabulary despite the fact that they are educated. The meaning of the post is embedded in the homophonic pun which lies in the pronunciation of the letters of the word “apt.” Homophonic pun is widely utilized in the construction of pun. This view aligns with the position of Yu et al., (2020, 2870) who established that homophonic pun is a type of pun in which two meanings rely on similar or the same pronunciation.

Biblical Allusion and Homophonic Pun

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an allusion as "a covert, implied, or indirect reference." On this premise, Irwin (2001, 287) defined it as "an indirect reference." Therefore, allusion involves reference to someone, something, or an idea outside of a text or what is being discussed. The literary device was employed by Four-eyed Edo Boy in some of his posts on X in punning expressions as he attempted to create a comic effect on the readers. The user utilized homophonic puns and biblical allusion in punning posts in this section. The instances are presented and discussed below.

Data 1,



The writer provided an instance of biblical allusion in this post. He posted that the chief executive officer of a construction company, Tayo Moses Alabi, upon discovering that the road to his company was always flooded, decided to work on it by making his workers build a bridge to separate the water and have a dry land where people can drive and walk on. Thus, the writer ended the post by saying; *Didn't surprise me. Just another Moses dividing a body of water with his staff*. From this, the literal meaning the writer presented for his followers is that there is another CEO of a company somewhere who has done a similar thing of constructing a bridge in

the locality by making use of his company staff. However, the hidden meaning of the post emerged as the readers reconciled the name of the CEO, Moses, with the biblical Moses, who freed the children of Israel from Egypt and parted the Red Sea for them to walk on dry land. Therefore, the last part of the post *Didn't surprise me. Just another Moses dividing a body of water with his staff* refers to the CEO of the company performing a miracle like the biblical Moses. However, this time around, with his staff at his construction site and not the wooden staff, the Biblical Moses made use of. The post was woven in ambiguity clearly violating the maxim of manner in the Cooperative Principle by (Grice 1975, 41).

Data 2,



The writer shared a story about his school days. It is a norm in primary schools in Nigeria to present a drama play on the birth of Jesus (the biblical Son of God) at the end of the first term before Christmas. Here, the writer shared a story of how his school decided to make a play about the crucifixion of Christ. He presented an open meaning in the post while hiding the second meaning, was left open for the readers to figure out. Traditional and conservative Nigerian parents are always against their children changing the color of their hair. In the story, the student who fitted into the role of Jesus Christ could not participate in the drama at first because of the

color of his hair. He was a blonde child. The common notion among Christians is that Jesus had black hair. This notion is based on movies made about him, where characters that played Jesus had black hair.

However, after persuading the boy's parents to allow their child to change his hair color, they allowed him to do so and *agreed to let their son dye for our scenes*. The first meaning the writer presented here is that the parents allowed their son to change the color of his hair for the drama they wanted to make. However, the second meaning becomes unlocked after the first meaning, which means the parents stand for God, who allowed his one and only son to die for the sins of the world, according to the Bible. Four-eyed Edo Boy violated the maxim of manner of (Grice 1975, 41) in creating the ambiguity in the post. He narrated the story in order to introduce the ambiguity which was hidden in the word *dye* in order to bring the punning expression to the forefront of the post.

Data 3,



In this data, the writer carefully narrated the story of how he was robbed by a thief named Jesus (the biblical name of the son of God, according to Christians). He started by saying he thought the thief came for his money, which was his most valuable possession in the house at the time. However, the story took a twist as the thief did not ask for his money, nor did he ask for other

belongings in the house, but the thief cart away a carton of Chivito fruit juice and a box of marble (floor or wall tiles) he planned on using in his generator house. At this point, he completed the post by asserting that; *He didn't come for the money; Jesus came for the juice and the gen tiles*. The first meaning of this post is that the thief (Jesus) came for his juice and generator tiles, which he intended to use to decorate the small room the writer used to house his backup generator and not for his money.

However, on the second look, as the readers search for the embedded meaning, they discover the punchline of the post when they realize that the writer had been clever in his choice of words by referring to the thief as Jesus Christ who during his lifetime did not come for money but came to save the Jews (believers in God) and the gentiles (unbelievers). The second aspect of this is achieved through homophonic puns. *Juice* and *Jews* are pronounced similarly by English speakers in Nigeria, while *gen tiles* and *gentiles* are pronounced the same way among Nigerians. This violates the maxim of manner by (Grice 1975, 41) by obscuring the meaning of the post through homophonic pun.

Idiomatic Expression

Puns are regarded as idiomatic expressions due to the fact that their use and meanings are completely local to a specific language and culture (Metevosyan & Alimyan 2024, 4). All languages have a collection of idiomatic expressions. Idioms are expressions with figurative meanings that are distinct from the literal meanings of the words. The native speakers of the language understand them. Idioms are particularly important in the establishment of rapport in communication (Jabbari 2016, 507).

Additionally, idiomatic expressions are a phenomenon of language in Nigerian societies. Akanmu (2016, 45) posited that new Yoruba idiomatic expressions are constructed in the language which are utilized in political discourse. Also, Opara et al. (2019, 100) domesticated English idiomatic phrases in Nigeria. These are pointers to the acceptability of idiomatic expressions across various languages and cultures in Nigeria. Hence, this section analyses the idiomatic expressions in punning expressions employed by Four-eyed Edo Boy on X.

Data 1,



Four-eyed Edo Boy shared a conversation-style pun in this post; he presented a courtroom situation where he is a lawyer for a man whose left testicle was removed by a woman. The post did not reveal if the woman is the man's wife or not or inform the readers about why the woman did what she did to the man. According to the user, the lawyer of the victim in the post disclosed that he would present the testicle that was removed by the woman to the judge in the court as an evidence to prove their case. After, the lawyer had done that, he concluded his argument by saying; *the ball is now in your court*.

From the data above, the writer shared the first meaning of the post with his readers through the meaning of the idiomatic expression, the *ball is now in your court*, which means it is

up to you to make the next move. However, the meaning presented by the writer unlocked the second meaning of the post. the second meaning of the post is captured in the literal meaning of the expression, The *ball is now in your court*, which in this context means the testicle (ball) is now in front of the judge in the court as evidence in order for the judge to make a ruling regarding the case. Four-eyed Edo Boy presented a punning expression by playing on the ambiguity that arose from the idiomatic expression in the context. Ball in the context stands for testicle and the idiomatic expression of having to make a decision. The strategy adopted by the writer is a clear violation of the maxim of manner discussed by (Grice 1975, 41) to come up with the ambiguity that led to the punning expression.

Data 2,



The writer gave an account of his experience in football with his elder brother in this post. He narrated how his brother had always relied on his goalkeeping prowess in football whenever they played together. He disclosed that his brother called on him to be his goalkeeper when they were in primary school, and he was his goalkeeper on the football team his brother coached in secondary school. Finally, the writer's brother made him a goalkeeper in the street club he started on their street despite his effort to play as a striker. From the above, the writer displayed how he has always been the goalkeeper in every team his brother has ever controlled. He posited, "All

my life, I've been my brother's keeper." The first meaning unlocked is that he has always played as a goalkeeper for his brother's football team. However, this unlocks the second meaning of the post to the readers, revealing that the writer has always been loyal and reliable to his brother. *Brother's Keeper*, when read literarily, gives the first meaning of the post, but when it is read in its idiomatic sense, it gives the hidden meaning of the post. The violation of the maxim of manner in Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle brought about the punning expression.

Homophonic Pun and Slang

Tetnah-Abah (2010), cited in (2016, 8), asserted that slang is a variety of English language that emanates from the speeches of people in criminal activities, banditry, or hooliganism. Furthermore, he stated that slang is the speech of people who employ it as an alternative vocabulary in order to encode their communal values. Additionally, according to the Advanced Learners Dictionary (2004), slang refers to very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language and are especially used by a particular group of people, such as youths, criminals, or work teams. Slangs are deployed among Nigerians of different age groups. They are employed to encode the values and thoughts of different groups in Nigerian societies. In this section, the user employed homophonic puns and slang in his posts, attempting to create a comic effect on the readers.

Data 1,

Four-eyed Edo Boy showcased another example of wordplay in this data by using homophonic puns and slang. He left his readers to reconcile two different interpretations in the analysis of this data. He postulated that, "After my knee accident, I had to buy a set of prosthetic knees here for easy walking, then I ordered another set for running from Japan. They're stronger because they're Japa knees." In the post above, he revealed that he bought prosthetic legs in Nigeria for walking after his accident, but he had to get stronger ones to run from Japan. On the surface, the first meaning revealed is that Nigeria does not make strong products. Thus, he needed to order the ones he would use for running from Japan after he got weak prosthetic knees from a manufacturer in Nigeria, which could only be used for walking. He achieved this by saying that the ordered one from Japan are because they are *japa knees*. This is an example of a homophonic pun, as *japa knees* can be erroneously pronounced as Japanese.

However, he did not stop there. He tasked the readers to understand the hidden meaning in the post by comparing it to the slang *japa* among Nigerians. *Japa* means to run away, especially from a dangerous situation. Also, the meaning of *japa* has been extended to mean relocating outside of the country. Therefore, by saying *japa knees*, he is simply saying that the prosthetic knees from Japan are designed specifically for running, which will help him escape from dangerous situations as the country is not safe. It is a hilarious reference to his attempt to

relocate from the country to another by running as fast as he can to another country which is different to the method adopted by his colleagues who relocate by going through the right channel. This was achieved by flouting the maxim of manner by (Grice 1975, 58).

Data 2,



Four-eyed Edo Boy adopted slang among Nigerians on X to achieve phonetic wordplay in this post. He shared a cheeky joke of what makes someone a patient at a psychiatry hospital. *Yabaleft* is the name of a popular psychiatric hospital called Yaba Hospital in Lagos state, Nigeria. The first meaning the writer presented to his readers in the post is that being mentally disturbed is the only reason one will be admitted into *Yabaleft*, the expression from the post; *Na dem require ment*, is translated as; "that is their requirement." The expression triggers the first meaning of the post by suggesting that the "requirement" of being admitted into the psychiatry hospital is being crazy.

Also, *Na dem require ment* triggers the hidden meaning of the post after the readers discover that it is written as *require ment* and not requirement. This is a clever homophonic pun as *ment* in Naija (Nigerian Pidgin) means madness. The hidden meaning presented by the writer is an emphasis on the first meaning that only people with mental sickness are to be admitted into the psychiatric institution. The meaning in the post was buried by the intentional flouting of the maxim of manner discussed by (Grice 1975, 58).

Findings

The study discovered how X Influencer Four-eyed Edo Boy hides the meaning of a post beneath the surface meaning. He creates two meanings, one easily discovered while the second is understood by tasking the brain to discover what is being implied. The study shows the strategies he implores while delivering the intended meaning of the post from the lens of the author of the study. The strategies are homophonic puns, biblical allusions, slang, and idiomatic expressions. These strategies are often mixed together in his posts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study was carried out to discover the strategies of puns and hidden meanings in the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy on X. The paper, analyzed from the lens of Cooperative Principle, demonstrates how the hidden meaning of his posts is accessed through the deliberate flouting of the maxims of manner and quantity as stipulated by H.P Grice (1975, 58) by the X user. The adoption of Cooperative Principle was necessitated for its suitability to expose the pun strategies utilized by the user and exposure of the hidden meaning of the posts which serves as the punchline that creates comic effect on the readers. The study discovered the pun strategies in the posts of Four-eyed Edo Boy as homophonic puns, biblical allusion, slang and idiomatic expressions and also discovered how the punchline of posts activates the hidden/second meaning of the posts. The user adopts punning expressions in his posts to amuse his users and gain followers on the platform in order to maintain his position as one of the biggest Nigerian influencers on X. Furthermore, it was well established in the literature review and the statement of the problem that puns have not been explored by academics in Nigeria as they ought to.

Therefore, the study calls for more studies into puns among academics in Nigeria from different angles, such as humor studies, literary devices, sarcasm and others.

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