

Humor and Grice's Cooperative Principle: A Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Comedy Skits by Nigerian Comic Layi Wasabi

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Abstract

This study investigates the pragmatic dimensions of humor in selected Layi Wasabi's comedy skits relying on H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle. Using data from selected Layi Wasabi's skits, this study examines how humor arises through deliberate flouting of the maxims of quantity, quality, manner, and relation, each contributing uniquely to both comedic effect and socio-cultural critique. The study integrates Raskin and Attardo's humor theories to demonstrate how Grice's framework intersects with humor as a mode of social commentary, positioning Layi Wasabi's skits as both entertaining and reflective of societal complexities. The findings reveal that the maxim of quantity is the most frequently flouted, often through exaggerated verbosity or strategic omission. The maxim of relation is the least flouted, serving to introduce unexpected relevance disruptions. These linguistic strategies not only enhance the humor in Layi Wasabi's skits but also act as a medium for satire, highlighting issues within Nigeria's legal and socio-economic institutions. The specific aim of this study is to analyze the pragmatic dimensions of humor in selected comedy skits by Layi Wasabi, focusing on how the flouting of Grice's Cooperative Principle and the generation of conversational implicatures contribute to both humor creation and social commentary on Nigerian societal issues.

Keywords: Pragmatic Theories of Humor, H.P Grice's cooperative principle, Layi Wasabi and Nigerian Social Media Comedy

Introduction

Humor is a complex phenomenon that engages and connects individuals across various cultures, societies, and language groups. The *Cambridge English Dictionary* describes humor as the capacity to find things amusing. The Merriam Webster Dictionary also defines it as "the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly

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incongruous: the ability to be funny or to be amused by things that are funny.” Written or oral humor essentially involves the elements in a text or an oral performance which are capable of evoking laughter in a target audience.

Since the days of Plato and Aristotle, scholars have attempted to analyze the workings of humor from multiple perspectives and disciplines. Plato believed that ridicule directed at others provoked both pleasure and envy (Ferrar 1992), but concluded that laughter showed a lack of self-control, was not conducive to social well-being, and was unbecoming in a philosopher. Aristotle’s thesis on humor was never found, but he considered comedy to be inferior to tragedy and, like Plato, thought humor derived from ridiculing others whom one thought inferior to oneself. Both Plato and Aristotle are considered to be the earliest proponents of the superiority theory of humor, but Hobbes was instrumental in explaining the workings of this theory. The incongruity theory, credited initially to Immanuel Kant and reframed by later theoreticians, defines humor as a “phenomenon of the mind that stems from incongruity between expected and actual reality” (Raskin 1985, 13). In his 1928 essay “Humour,” Sigmund Freud (1928) argue that humor serves as a psychic release or coping mechanism that allows individuals to deal with repressed emotions and anxieties. Within the context of sociology, humor is often seen as a way to both reinforce and challenge societal norms (Kuipers, 2008). These theories suggest that humor goes beyond simple amusement and can be used to affirm or to cross-examine social norms, or to allow individuals to process various emotions and ideas.

The three dominant theories that have attempted to explain humor have thus been the superiority theory, the psychic release theory and the incongruity theory. The superiority theory highlights the potential maliciousness and hubris of humor, since one laughs at someone one considers inferior to oneself. The relief theory emphasizes laughter as a medium of relief from psychological tension. The incongruity theory maintains that humor is the result of an unexpected, or incongruous ending or punch line.

1. Linguistic Approaches to Humor and Grice’s Cooperative Principle

In the field of linguistics, humor is often regarded as a phenomenon that involves the strategic use of language, context, and expectations to create surprising moments that elicit laughter or amusement (Attardo, 1994). Raskin’s (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) and Attardo’s (2001) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) emphasize that context, language and shared knowledge all have a role to play in the construction of humor. These theorists suggest that humor is highly context-dependent, requiring audiences to recognize the inferred

meanings and shared cultural knowledge that underpin humorous expressions. Pragmatics -- a branch of linguistics concerned with language use in context, proffers relevant insights into humor through the concept of implicature—that is, the recognition that a speaker’s implied meaning goes beyond literal interpretation. This is closely linked to the theories of philosopher H.P. Grice, particularly his Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature. Grice (1975) opines that effective communication is conveyed by a collective effort between speakers and listeners to uphold certain “maxims” or guidelines. Grice’s Cooperative Principle conjoins a speaker to: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975, 45).

Several scholars have examined the utilization of Grice’s Cooperative Principle beyond its original application to everyday conversation, extending it into fields such as pragmatics, linguistics, and discourse analysis. Levinson (1983) applies Grice’s maxims to various discourse genres, exemplifying how they operate to structure meaningful communication. Thomas (1995) further examines how speakers sometimes deliberately violate or “flout” these maxims to generate specific communicative imports, resulting in what Grice describes as “conversational implicature,” which is an implied meaning that goes beyond the exact exegesis of an utterance. This flouting is particularly significant in humor where ambiguity is often employed to enhance the comedic effect.

In humor studies, conversational implicature has been instrumental in unpacking how speakers manipulate language to generate humorous, often satirical, effects. Attardo (1994) underscores that humor frequently emerges from the calculated manipulation of conversational maxims, creating incongruities between surface-level statements and underlying meanings. Such manipulations not only entertain but also invite audiences to participate in decoding hidden messages, fostering a unique interpretative engagement. For Nigerian comedians such as Layi Wasabi, these implicatures become a powerful tool for indirectly addressing sensitive societal issues, such as political corruption or economic hardship, through humor that resonates culturally

2. Humor and Nigerian Digital Comedy

Regional, national and ethnic humor has profound socio-cultural and historical roots, springing from conventional practices such as storytelling, folktales, and satire. Nigerian humor is particularly dependent on these roots and practices. These various expressions of humor have historically served as a medium for entertainment as well as tools for social

commentary. With the emergence of digital electronic platforms, the creation and consumption of humor in Nigeria have exploded. In the 2000s, comedians have shifted to digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (now referred to as X), to reach wider audiences. This shift gave birth to digital comedy skits in Nigeria, which merge humor with elements of Nigerian culture, local idioms, and social issues. Okon (2018) notes also that these skits are now popular outside of Nigeria as well. Okon (2018) points out that part of the global appeal of these skits resides in the fact that they convey a uniquely Nigerian comic identity (45). Layi Wasabi, a comedian known for his creative use of Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English, typifies this trend by appealing to audiences' appreciation for a type of humor that resonates with the audience's socio-cultural milieu.

Despite the popularity and cultural relevance of Nigerian digital humor, there is a limited body of research that assesses the pragmatic dimensions employed in Nigerian social media comedy. While existing studies on Nigerian comedy have primarily focused on themes, representations, and sociolinguistic aspects of this regional humor, there is a need for in-depth analysis of the pragmatic mechanisms—such as conversational implicature and maxims flouting which underpin the humor in these skits. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial not only to appreciate the linguistic creativity of Nigerian comedians but also to unpack the social messages infused in their humor. Given the potential influence that humor has on public perception and discourse, this study addresses a relevant gap in acknowledging how language in Nigerian digital comedy serves as a critique of social norms.

Part of the difficulty in advancing this type of study has to do with the fact that, precisely because humor can serve as an effective vehicle of social critique, its study requires someone with the cultural and linguistic understanding or shared social values of a particular culture and history to decipher the implicit meaning in the humor. Layi Wasabi's comedy skits employ a mix of Nigerian Pidgin, English, and cultural references, and so are especially layered. The use of language in these skits not only elicits humor but also initiates a connection with the audience by showcasing shared experiences and values. A close examination of how humor in Wasabi's skits interacts with the Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature can provide a deeper understanding into the role of that language plays in Nigerian humor. What follows is an attempt to fill in the critical gap in studies of contemporary Nigerian humor.

3. Layi Wasabi and Nigerian Social Media Humor

Isaac Olayiwola, also known by the stage name Layi Wasabi, is a Nigerian comedian and actor. He earned a bachelor's degree in legal studies at Bowen University, but soon afterwards emerged as a prominent figure in Nigeria's entertainment scene, captivating audiences with his unique blend of language play and humor. In 2020, the comedian embarked on a new chapter of his career by venturing into skit-making. Leveraging social media platforms such as TikTok, he showcases his comedic talents through amusing online comic videos. What sets Layi Wasabi apart among his contemporaries is his ability to seamlessly blend humor with insightful commentary on social issues which reveal an awareness of the daily challenges faced by ordinary Nigerians. Whether portraying the role of a lawyer, a financial coach, or a taxi driver, Layi Wasabi's facial expressions and comic use of language captivate audiences, earning him the admiration of his fans. In Layi Wasabi's skits, intentional maxim-flouting is employed as a strategy for engaging audiences on topics ranging from everyday social issues to larger political challenges. By flouting the Maxim of Relation, for example, Layi Wasabi can introduce seemingly irrelevant statements that, upon closer analysis, underscore the absurdity of certain social practices or institutional failings. Similarly, by exaggerating or distorting truth claims (violations of the Maxim of Quality), he draws attention to issues like socioeconomic disparity, allowing the humor to serve as a critique without overtly challenging authority.

Furthermore, Layi Wasabi's use of Nigerian English and culturally specific expressions adds a layer of localized meaning to the implicatures, aligning with Grice's assertion that conversational implicature is inherently context-dependent. Nigerian audiences, familiar with the linguistic nuances and societal references embedded in Layi Wasabi's skits, can readily interpret the implied meanings, making the humor both accessible and resonant. This localizing of humor, facilitated by Grice's theoretical constructs, underscores how implicature in Nigerian comedy operates not only as a linguistic device but as a vehicle for shared cultural critique.

4. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate how comedy skit makers, such as Layi Wasabi, evoke laughter in their audience by flouting the conversational maxims highlighted by H.P Grice. The data used for this study were collected from the TikTok page of the skit maker, Layi Wasabi. The choice of this particular social media platform was its popularity amongst contemporary youths. It is also relevant to note that the algorithm of the app makes it possible for engagements on posts, such as likes, comments, and reposts to be

easily accessible and identified. In this study, four (4) downloaded video clips titled 'Financial Independence', 'Poverty Alleviation Program', 'State of the Economy', and 'Atheist' from Layi Wasabi's TikTok page were transcribed and examined, using Grice's Cooperative Principle. Instances of flouting of the maxims were identified and accounted for, in addition to explaining the communicative import in the discourse.

The sampled videos for this study were purposively selected. The selection was limited to the posts with the most engagements in terms of likes, comments, and reposts as this is usually an indication that the target audience found (and perhaps still find) the content amusing. Relevant excerpts were presented and subjected to pragmatic analysis, with particular recourse to Grice's Cooperative Principle. Excerpts in Naija were translated to English.

5. Analysis: Tracking Humor through Maxim Violations in Layi Wasabi's Videos

This section focuses on the analysis of the sampled excerpts from the selected videos, followed by explanations as to how they violate Grice's mentioned maxims.

Video Title: Financial Independence

Excerpt 1

Background: A conversation between Mr Richard, a businessman, Wisdom, a shop owner, and Wisdom's client, a woman.

Mr Richard: Wisdom, how far now?

Wisdom: Ahh, oga, fine. (I am fine, boss)

Mr Richard: Where Lukman? (Where is Lukman?)

Wisdom: No mind am jo, him go look people wey Dey fight for the other side. (Don't mind him, he has gone to watch those fighting over there)

Mr Richard: How typical!

Wisdom: Ehen madam as I was saying, Wetin (what) happen between you and that your bobo (boyfriend)?

Woman: Abeg! That one no get job now, I don leave am tey tey. Na today? (Excuse me, that fellow is jobless, I have left him long ago)

Wisdom: Hmm, eeyah.

Mr Richard (interjects): I tell people every time, any ex that did not meet our expectations is an experiment.

Woman to Mr Richard: Good afternoon sir.

Mr Richard: Good afternoon madam. You see, when you're broke and heartbroken, take it as an avenue for breakthrough, not a breakdown. My name is Mr Richard, CEO GNCC Masterclass. What we do in our class is that we uplift people from a state of financial breakdown to a state of financial breakthrough. I tell people that it is important as a woman that you have your own economic power. Be independent and not in dependence of another man. I normally emphasize the economic power of a woman because any matrimony without money is a maltreatment.

Wisdom and client in unison: Wow! Warisi! Ahh!

Woman: Excuse me, sir, are you a man of God?

Wisdom: Don't you know this man?

Mr Richard: Madam, let me ask you a question, what is it that you do for a living?

Woman: I'm a makeup artist.

Mr Richard: Makeup artist, I will need you to make up your mind this very instant.

Woman: Hmmm! Wisdom!

Wisdom: Yes, madam?

Woman: No, not you.

Mr Richard: Madam, are you ready to join GNCC Masterclass? What we do is 15,000 naira regular and for women seeking economic power, we're doing 5,000 naira and in four days, I will make you a millionaire.

Woman: Yes, yes, I'm ready. Please give me your account number quick quick.

Mr Richard: 0066... No, do bitcoin.

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhG6GNG2/>

The exchange between Wisdom, Mr. Richard, and Wisdom's client—a woman—is a perfect example of how Grice's conversational maxims are purposefully broken to produce humor and subliminal meanings. Through their casual introductions, Mr. Richard and Wisdom gently develop their familiarity, creating a laid-back and lighthearted environment that supports complex and multi-layered discussion. In the first conversation, Wisdom answers Mr. Richard's query, "*Where Lukman?*" (where is Lukman?) with more details than are required, demonstrating a violation of the quantity maxim. Wisdom breaks the conversational principle of giving just enough information by adding too many details in his statement, "*No mind am jo, e go look people wey dey fight for the other side.*" (Don't mind him, he has gone to watch those fighting over there). His answer suggests a history regarding Lukman that Mr. Richard might already know, enhancing the humor by inviting the listener to infer additional

context. This is also in line with Raskin and Attardo's humor theory as an incongruity-based phenomenon. It presents a situation where the meaning of what is said goes beyond what has been said, and as such the implied meaning requires contexts for it to be understood.

In response, Mr. Richard's remark, "*How typical!*" operates on a dual level. First, it plays on the word "*look*" in Lukman's name, suggesting that it is natural for "*Look-man*" to be observing others given the association of his name with "*looking*." This pun subtly adds to the humor by relying on shared knowledge between the participants. Mr. Richard's brief reply also flouts the maxim of quantity by providing insufficient information, echoing Cutting's (2002) perspective that under-informing can obstruct clarity and require additional listener interpretation.

The maxim of quantity is also flouted when the woman responds to Wisdom's question about her boyfriend, dismissing him with "*abeg! That one no get job now, I don leave am teyey. Na today?*" (Excuse me, the fellow is jobless; I have left him long ago). She not only answers the immediate question but adds unsolicited details about her breakup, offering insights into her ex-boyfriend's joblessness. This surplus information extends the discussion into a commentary on the importance of financial stability in Nigerian romantic relationships, hinting at societal values. Mr. Richard seizes on the woman's remark to introduce his perspective with a pun, "*I tell people every time, any ex that did not meet our expectations, is an experiment.*" By playing on "ex," "expectations," and "experiment," he combines humor with social commentary, suggesting that unfulfilled relationships serve as learning experiences. This light-hearted pun evokes laughter while also flouting the maxim of relation, as the statement shifts the discourse from personal relationships to a philosophical reflection on expectations.

The conversation's dynamics further escalate as Mr. Richard pivots to self-promotion, introducing himself as "CEO, GNCC Masterclass," and delivering an extended speech on financial empowerment. This monologue, packed with proverbs, alliteration and aphorisms like "*any matrimony without money is a maltreatment*," flouts the maxims of quantity and manner. The excessive detail is unnecessary from the immediate conversational purpose, while the lengthy, metaphorical language (which rides on pun) diverges from clarity and succinctness. In the excerpt, Mr. Richard's use of puns and proverbs (*any matrimony without money is a maltreatment*, for instance) functions as a persuasive strategy to captivate his audience, mirroring the marketing techniques of multilevel marketing (MLM) schemes that promise wealth with minimal effort: an implicit critique of economic realities in Nigeria. The woman's unexpected question, "*Excuse me, sir, are you a man of God?*" illustrates a flouting

of the maxim of relation. While unrelated to Mr. Richard's sales pitch, it implicitly conveys her interest in his rhetoric, likening his pitch to a sermon. Her question, though unexpected, reinforces the persuasive success of his speech, furthering the comedic effect through her sudden shift in focus. Wisdom's response, "*Don't you know this man?*" flouts the maxims of quantity, relation and manner. His vague and ambiguous phrasing suggests familiarity, yet fails to clarify Mr. Richard's identity or role, leaving the listener to infer meaning, consistent with Cutting's (2002) suggestion that ambiguity requires additional listener interpretation. The question is also thought to be irrelevant to the current discourse. The humor reaches its apex when Mr. Richard, inquiring about the woman's profession, hears "*makeup artist*" and responds, "*Makeup artist, I will need you to make up your mind this very instant.*" Here, Mr. Richard again employs a pun, connecting the profession of "makeup" with the directive to "make up" one's mind. This clever wordplay serves both as humor and persuasion, emphasizing his eagerness to secure her as a client.

Finally, Mr. Richard's pitch crescendos with a direct offer: "*Madam, are you ready to join GNCC MasterClass? What we do is 15,000 naira ³regular and for women seeking economic power, we are doing 5,000 naira, and in four days, I will make you a millionaire.*" This claim flouts both the maxims of quality and quantity by presenting an exaggerated, likely untruthful outcome (i.e., becoming a millionaire in four days) and lengthy statement. The hyperbolic nature of his statement reflects the methods of MLM schemes in Nigeria, parodying their promises of quick riches through minimal effort. His persuasive language further underscores the role of humor as a rhetorical tool, exploiting exaggeration to entice his audience.

Essentially, this excerpt illustrates the strategic violation of Grice's maxims as a means of enhancing humor and social critique. The characters' dialogue combines humor with cultural commentary, offering a microcosmic reflection of economic realities and social values within the Nigerian society. Through puns, proverbs, and exaggeration, the content creator, Layi Wasabi, humorously critiques the socioeconomic pressures of contemporary Nigeria, while also engaging the audience with familiar tropes and rhetorical tactics. This analysis aligns with Grice's Cooperative Principle by demonstrating how deliberate maxim flouting can create humor while simultaneously advancing social commentary.

Video Title: Poverty Alleviation Program

³ Nigerian currency.

Excerpt 2

Background: A conversation between Mr Richard and a potential client.

The conversation opens up with Mr. Richard giving an account of his experience at a just-concluded poverty alleviation conference organized by the First Lady.

Mr Richard: Few days ago, I had the privilege of speaking at an event organized by the First Lady. It was called the Poverty Alleviation Program. This is a program where you invite poor people, admonish them, and give them a few handouts. Sir, on getting there, you would not believe the multitude of people that I met at that event. At what stage of poverty do they call for a poverty conference and you decide to polish your shoe and attend? Speaking to them, the first thing I said to them that the mentality they have is why they are poor. Sir, do you know that you don't have to be foolish to be a fool? There are different routes to becoming a fool, foolishness is just one of them. Sir, even a fool can be wise. I am sure you have heard that wisdom in the hand of a fool is destruction as money in the hand of a pauper is wastage. Do you know even the Bible says the fool and his money are soon departed because you need wisdom to be able to hold wealth.

Potential client: But wait, Mr. Richard, which portion of the Bible did it say that?

Mr Richard: Okay so, even if the Bible does not say it, does it not make sense to your hearing? Even God gave Solomon wisdom before He gave him wealth, why? I normally say this all the time, your financial IQ is your account balance. Going by that analogy, how financially smart would you say you are?

Potential client: Hmmm, 3,000.

Mr Richard: Is that all the money that you have?

Potential Client: That's all I have.

Mr. Richard: Ehm for you now that is a financial dullard, how much can you afford to pay for this master program?

Potential Client: Ehmm 2,500

Mr Richard: Make it 3,000 and let's see what we can do for you.

Potential Client: Mr. Richard, everything?

Mr Richard: Yes. Alright, that's okay.

Potential Client: Mr Richard, how will I go home now?

Mr Richard (stares and points at potential client's legs then says): what are those?

Potential Client: My legs?

Mr Richard: Exactly! Not only do you need wisdom, you need to keep fit to be able to enjoy your riches. I'll see you on Saturday, okay?

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhGMRJu7/>

In this excerpt, Mr. Richard engages a potential client in a conversation recounting his experience at a poverty alleviation program led by the First Lady. Through this dialogue, Mr. Richard leverages rhetorical techniques, humor, and strategic violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle to enhance his persuasive appeal. The analysis below highlights how Mr. Richard flouts the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner to achieve humor, underscore his authority, and elicit a particular response from his listener.

Mr Richard's opening statement, a very long one, flouts the maxim of quantity by providing more information than is contextually necessary. The voluminous detail about the concept of foolishness diverges from the primary point, creating an overwhelming effect that exaggerates his authority and credibility. Through this excessive elaboration, Mr. Richard implies that he possesses deep insight, framing himself as knowledgeable and competent—qualities desirable in an advisor or mentor. This strategic verbosity may function as a rhetorical device, aligning with Grice's theory, as it serves to engage and impress the listener rather than inform succinctly.

In a further attempt to assert his authority, Mr. Richard references a fabricated biblical verse: *"Do you know, even the Bible says, the fool and his money are soon departed because you need wisdom to be able to hold wealth."* This statement flouts the Maxim of Quality, as Mr. Richard knowingly conveys a falsehood to his audience. By citing an invented scriptural reference, he aims to establish an ethical or religious foundation for his viewpoint, appealing to the listener's presumed religious values. This manipulation aligns with Grice's concept of implicature, whereby the listener is led to assume that Mr. Richard's statements are rooted in shared cultural or moral understanding. However, his listener quickly catches this deception, demonstrating an awareness of the potential manipulation inherent in Mr. Richard's approach. Mr. Richard's use of paradox, as in the statement *"even a fool can be wise,"* creates an ambiguous, almost contradictory message that flouts the Maxim of Manner. By presenting the idea that wisdom can exist within foolishness, Mr. Richard intentionally introduces a level of complexity that might confuse his listener. This use of paradox and ambiguity functions as a rhetorical strategy, to cast Mr. Richard as intellectually superior, and capable of nuanced thought. The resultant conversational implicature is the impression that Mr. Richard has a perspective on wisdom and wealth—a portrayal that both entertains and

positions him as a figure of authority, able to interpret complicated ideas in unconventional ways. When his listener challenges the accuracy of the supposed biblical verse, Mr. Richard responds evasively, saying, *"Even if the Bible does not say it, does it not make sense to your hearing?"* This response further flouts the Maxims of Quantity and relation by deflecting from the central question with additional, unrelated information. Rather than directly acknowledging the falsehood, Mr. Richard shifts the focus to the perceived wisdom in his assertion, attempting to maintain his authority while diverting attention from the original question. His reliance on rhetorical questions also highlights his evasive approach, using deflection as a humorous tactic and reinforcing his persona as a persuasive, albeit verbose, speaker.

In a later exchange, Mr. Richard's ambiguous question, *"What are those?"* (pointing to his client's legs) further flouts the Maxim of Manner. Here, the ambiguous reference serves as a humorous implication, suggesting that the client might need to walk home due to a lack of transport fare—a subtle criticism veiled in jest. This statement elicits humor following Dare's (2005) theory that verbal creativity can delight audiences, encouraging engagement rather than offense. The potential client's brief response, *"My legs?"* also flouts the Maxim of Quantity, as it is minimal and implies a need for clarity, humorously underscoring his confusion. Mr. Richard's follow-up, *"Not only do you need wisdom, you need to keep fit to be able to enjoy your riches,"* layers further implications. Through this response, he both humorously and indirectly suggests that the client use the opportunity to exercise, linking fitness to wealth in a way that appears to justify the situation, while still positioning himself as an instructor offering life advice.

Throughout this excerpt, Mr. Richard's dialogue demonstrates strategic flouting of Grice's conversational maxims, particularly Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. His use of paradox, puns, and evasive tactics functions not only as a humorous device but also as a tool for persuasion, aligning with the pragmatic theory of conversational implicature. By violating these maxims, he crafts an image of authority and wit, subtly positioning himself as an insightful mentor. His humor and rhetorical style serve as techniques to engage and persuade his audience, blending humor with practical advice to create a memorable and effective exchange.

Video Title: State of the Economy

Excerpt 3.

Background: A conversation between Mr Richard and a potential client.

Mr Richard: I understand your point, but let me tell you something, because you suffered to make your money, does not mean you should hold on to it sir. Let me tell you something, money was not designed to stay in one place, that's why money is called currency, because a current what? A current flows.

A man that is going to make money moves should know how to make his money move. Or you see Dangote on Forbes interview, and they say, sir, "How did you make your billions?" And he says "I kept it."

Never that! Invest! Most especially as this economy... okay let me tell you something about this economy, Prof. Bello Abduleef sat down on Wednesday morning with TVC to tell the nation that he does not understand where this economy is going. That is a 13 years retired professor of Economics from the University of Ife does not understand where the economy that me and you... you, what did you study in university?

Potential client: Food Science

Mr Richard: Perfect! So my next question pertains to your field of study. Are we not in soup?

Answer now, food science!

Potential Client: Yes sir

Mr Richard: I am telling you to come and invest you say you want to hold on to...

Potential client (interjects): Ehn... at least, let me think about it.

Mr Richard: Think about what? Were you thinking before I met you? Answer now! Let me tell you something, overthinking does not solve problem because overthinkers often don't have enough time to do as overdoers don't have enough time to think. You want to analyze and strategize. May your analysis not lead to your paralysis. You will not say "Amen?"

Potential Client: Okay, give me your account details.

Mr. Richard: No, let me give you my Bitcoin wallet, we are in a digital economy. Do bitcoin.

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhG6K7H4/>

In "State of the Economy," Mr. Richard, engages a potential client in a conversation that humorously critiques Nigeria's economic conditions. Through Mr. Richard's persuasive monologue, the character uses both wordplay and other rhetorical devices to highlight the absurdities of financial advice within a struggling economy. This dialogue, while ostensibly informative, flouts several of Grice's conversational maxims, specifically those of quantity and manner. By doing so, the skit underscores both the satirical and persuasive tone of the skit.

Mr. Richard flouts the maxim of quantity by providing an excessive amount of information, to emphasize his points. For instance, he states, “*Because you suffered to make your money, does not mean you should hold on to it, sir. Let me tell you something, money was not designed to stay in one place, that’s why money is called currency.*” Here, the explanation exceeds what is necessary, yet serves a rhetorical function. By giving the client a piece of advice on wealth circulation, Mr. Richard highlights the futility of financial advice in an unpredictable economy. Mr. Richard also flouts the maxim of manner, which calls for brevity. His use of the phrase “*money was not designed to stay in one place, that’s why money is called currency, because a current what? A current flows*” introduces ambiguity by likening the concept of currency to electrical currents. Although the analogy is clever, it is not immediately clear and can be misinterpreted, thereby undercutting the clarity expected in financial advice. This flouting introduces humor by employing wordplay on “*currency*” and “*current*,” effectively transforming the conversation into a humorous critique of economic jargon that often confuses rather than clarifies.

Mr. Richard’s exaggerated explanation of the economy includes references to “Prof. Bello Abdulateef,” a supposed authority who is unable to make sense of the current economic landscape. By introducing an expert who “*does not understand where this economy is going*,” Mr. Richard implies that if a professor (though retired) cannot comprehend the economic situation, then laypeople like himself and the client stand little chance. This irony underscores the hopelessness of the economic conditions and reflects Mr. Richard's skepticism toward economic predictions. The inclusion of this rhetorical device both exaggerates the situation and builds Mr. Richard's authority, subtly positioning his “class” as a potential solution.

Furthermore, when Mr. Richard asks about the client’s field of study, and the client responds with “*food science*,” the brevity of the response suggests either reluctance or disinterest. This minimal response flouts the maxim of quantity by providing insufficient information, implying that the client might be disinclined to engage further. However, Mr. Richard seizes this response to insert humor by stating, “*Perfect! So my next question pertains to your field of study. Are we not in soup⁴?*” Here, Mr. Richard’s pun on “*soup*” leverages the client’s expertise in food science to imply that both of them are in a dire situation. This flouting of the maxim of quantity amplifies the humor by connecting the client's background to the skit's central theme—survival in a struggling economy.

⁴ A phrase in Nigerian English implying ‘to be in trouble.’

In another notable instance, Mr. Richard attempts to dissuade the client from “overthinking” by saying, “*Overthinking does not solve problems because overthinkers often do not have enough time to do as overdoers do not have enough time to think.*” This statement not only flouts the maxim of quantity but also exemplifies the maxim of manner, where multiple analogies on overthinking and overdoing stretch the clarity of the point. By stating, “*May your analysis not lead to your paralysis,*” he employs rhyme and parallelism to caution the client humorously. This choice of words, although excessive, is a playful warning against hesitation, creating humor through the hyperbolic cautionary phrase. The flouting of the manner maxim through dense phrasing and wordplay contributes to the humorous tone, while simultaneously encouraging the client to make a quick decision about joining his class.

The culmination of Mr. Richard’s attempt at persuasion is seen when the client finally acquiesces and asks for details to enroll in the class. Mr. Richard’s response, “*No, let me give you my Bitcoin wallet; we are in a digital economy, do Bitcoin,*” again flouts the maxim of quantity. His mention of “*digital economy*” serves as an unnecessary but humorous aside, further underscoring the absurdity of financial advice in a challenging economic environment. This response reinforces the satire of the skit, where traditional advice is swiftly replaced by the latest trends, capturing the bewilderment often felt by individuals navigating modern financial systems.

Through strategic maxim flouting, Mr. Richard’s character creates a persuasive yet humorous dialogue that satirizes financial advice in a challenging economy. By exceeding the necessary information (quantity) and introducing ambiguities (manner), the character amplifies the absurdity of economic rhetoric, drawing attention to the unpredictability of financial stability.

Video Title: Atheist

Excerpt 4

Background: This is a conversation between Barrister Olayiwola and his client, who has been charged with public diversion of funds.

Client: Ehen, Barrister, you’ve not said anything about the case.

Barrister: That’s what I’m hoping we can discuss sir. So during court procedure, they ask you to swear either you’re Christian or Muslim. What’s that thing you used to respond?

Client: Oh, I said I’m Atheist.

Barrister: Atheist, what church is that sir?

Client: I'm Atheist Barrister, it means I don't believe in God. I'm a man of science and logic.

Barrister: Ah! You don't believe in God? So that's why you committed the offense that you're charged with.

Client: The law, I'm innocent.

Barrister: Well, you know the problem with that? You have confessed that you're atheist to an honorable justice that is Methodist. Me that I'm your lawyer gan, I'm Baptist.

Client: Whatever you believe is fine. I believe that religion is a prison.

Barrister: You're talking to me about prison... do you know Iyaganku Correctional Center in Ibadan?

Client: I do not.

Barrister: That's a prison, not a religion and that's where you're headed. You that they charged you with public funds diversion, You cannot even give account of that. On the last day, you don't believe in the God, you still wouldn't be able to give account. No problem. You said that you are for science and logic. When you get to prison, you will believe in signs and wonders.

Client: Barrister, let's discuss.

Barrister: You're not even that smart *gan*⁵, you're saying that you're atheist. They catch you for account forgery. You're wasting atheism there.

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMhG6n3gT/>

In the dialogue between Barrister Olayiwola and his client, humor is generated through the strategic flouting of Grice's conversational maxims. This exchange allows Barrister Olayiwola to convey underlying criticism and personal viewpoints subtly, while also creating a comedic effect. By flouting the maxims of quantity, manner, quality, and relation, the barrister evokes humor while implicitly critiquing his client's stance and behavior.

The maxim of quantity requires speakers to provide the right amount of information—neither too much nor too little. In response to his client's inquiry, “*Ehen, Barrister Olayiwola, you've not said anything about the case,*” the barrister replied, “*That's what I'm hoping we can discuss, sir. So, during court procedure, they ask you to swear either you're Christian or Muslim. What's that thing you used to respond?*” diverges from a straightforward answer. Instead of addressing the case directly, the barrister brings up the court procedure and his client's religious responses. This deviation provides more information than required,

⁵ An emphatic marker in the Yoruba language.

indirectly conveying the barrister's disapproval of the client's prior actions in court. The implication here is that the barrister is subtly questioning his client's credibility and hinting at his discomfort with the client's potential 'irreligiosity' or perceived inconsistencies in moral standards.

Grice's maxim of manner requires clarity, brevity, and the avoidance of ambiguity. Barrister Olayiwola's question, "*atheist, what church is that sir?*" intentionally lacks clarity. The barrister, fully aware that atheism denotes a lack of religious belief rather than a specific church, pretends ignorance. By doing so, he feigns a misunderstanding, thus flouting the maxim of manner to indirectly urge his client to clarify his beliefs. This technique creates humor through the barrister's apparent confusion, which the audience perceives as exaggerated or artificial. The maxim of quality mandates that speakers refrain from giving false information or information lacking evidence. When the barrister states, "*Ah, you don't believe in God? So that's why you committed the offense you're charged with,*" he knowingly makes a categorical assumption regarding the client's guilt. The lack of evidence to support this claim reflects a deliberate flouting of the quality maxim. The barrister's rhetorical leap from atheism to guilt humorously critiques his client's stance on religion by associating disbelief with moral misconduct, even if no logical connection truly exists.

Grice's maxim of relation requires that contributions to a conversation be relevant to the topic. When Barrister Olayiwola says, "*You have confessed that you're atheist to an honorable justice that is Methodist, me that I'm your lawyer gan, I'm Baptist,*" he introduces religious denominations that have no direct bearing on the case. By contrasting "atheist," "Methodist," and "Baptist," the barrister flouts the maxim of relation (as mentioning these belief systems does not have any direct bearing to the case), achieving humor by highlighting religious differences that are irrelevant. This wordplay implicitly questions the client's credibility, suggesting that his nonconformity might affect how he is perceived in court. In discussing the potential consequences of the client's actions, Barrister Olayiwola mentions Iyaganku Correctional Center in Ibadan: "*You're talking to me about prison, do you know Iyaganku Correctional Center in Ibadan?*" Here, he flouts both the maxims of relation and manner. Mentioning the correctional center appears unrelated to the immediate conversation and can be seen as an indirect implication that the client may end up there, thus evoking a foreboding sense of irony. The ambiguity and lack of directness contribute to the humor by hinting at the barrister's pessimism regarding his client's future without explicitly stating it.

The barrister's closing statement "*You're not even that smart gan, you're saying that you're atheist. They catch you for account forgery. You're wasting atheism there*"—further

flouts both the quantity and manner maxims. Here, the barrister implies that the client's atheism contradicts the supposed intellectual sophistication commonly associated with atheists. This nuanced insult, delivered colloquially and indirectly, emphasizes the barrister's humorous but cutting critique of his client's lack of cunning in his alleged offense.

Through the use of humorous and strategic flouting of conversational maxims, Barrister Olayiwola conveys his opinions on his client's actions and beliefs without overtly criticizing him. By flouting Grice's Cooperative Principle in ways that align with the principles of conversational implicature, the barrister not only reinforces social norms and expectations but also generates a comedic effect that resonates with his audience. This subtle layering of criticism within humor enhances the comedic appeal of the exchange while allowing the barrister to assert his values and skepticism indirectly.

6. Discussion

The analysis of the selected excerpts reveals significant engagement with Grice's Cooperative Principle, specifically through the deliberate flouting of its four maxims—quantity, quality, manner, and relation. This strategic non-adherence results in the comedic and satirical elements in Layi Wasabi's skits, engaging audiences while also serving as a critique of sociocultural and institutional realities in Nigeria. Each maxim is flouted to varying extents, with the maxim of quantity emerging as the most frequently flouted, followed closely by the maxim of manner, then quality, with the maxim of relation being flouted the least. The maxim of quantity, flouted 13 times across the data, often involves instances of excessive or insufficient information, creating absurdity that amplifies the humor. Such exaggerated verbosity or intentional withholding of detail disrupts audience expectations, prompting laughter while subtly commenting on social behaviors.

The maxim of quality, which is flouted seven times, employs overtly untrue statements, irony, or exaggeration to craft humorous exchanges that often touch upon socio-political themes. By using statements that are implausible or contradictory, Wasabi critiques the often surreal or paradoxical nature of legal and socio-economic systems in Nigeria, thus intensifying the comedic effect while prompting reflection on real-life institutions. The maxim of manner, flouted five times, demonstrates how ambiguity and obscure expressions contribute to humor by introducing an element of surprise or confusion. Layi Wasabi frequently utilizes convoluted phrasing or intentionally ambiguous statements, requiring the audience to infer hidden meanings, which adds layers to the humor and enhances the satirical critique. The Maxim of Relation, although flouted the least (three instances), plays a crucial

role in humor creation by introducing unexpected or seemingly irrelevant responses within dialogues. This disruption of relevance serves as a comedic device to surprise the audience, maintaining engagement while subtly critiquing conversational norms and the often-unpredictable nature of interpersonal communication within legal and socio-economic contexts.

Conclusion

Combining Grice's Cooperative Principle with Raskin and Attardo's humor theories allows us to point out how in Layi Wasabi's skits, the flouting of maxims functions to elicit laughter. Humor in Layi Wasabi's skits is achieved through the intentional violation of Grice's maxims, which in turn aligns with some aspects of incongruity theory. The result is a humor that contains its own critique of Nigerian societal institutions, particularly at the legal and economic levels.

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