

## **Stylistic Analysis of Comical Expressions in Pidgin English in the Social Media**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper embarks on critical stylistic analysis of linguistic aspects of comical expressions from a particular social media platform, tagged ‘SMAN’ (Stingy Men Association of Nigeria). Some 15 out of 30 postings were first selected in the duration of 30 days of the month of February, 2025. Furthermore, 8 data were purposively selected for the analysis. The Critical Stylistic model of ‘Equating’ by Jeffries (2010) was applied in analyzing the data. The model of ‘Equating’ assumes that texts and their writers often tend to tell their readers, what they feel is ‘equivalent’. The study reveals that members of the SMAN platform made use of ‘Equating’ to uphold, propagate, promote and cherish their Association’s principle of stringent manner of spending money on daily needs. The expressions of ‘stinginess’ by the group members, generate a kind of comical and funny effects on the platform. However, in most cases, their expressions on the economical manner of their spending, appears to be an exaggeration, even to some members of the group. This goes to portray Language beyond a code of communication among humans. It is also a system consisting different layers and patterns of expressions. Some of these patterns can be used to entertain or amuse readers, through making funny expressions, etc.*

**Keywords:** *Formal; Colloquial, Rhetorical; Comical; Equating*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Stylistics concerns the study, exploration and analysis of linguistic texts, involving critical study of texts, with a view to identify the manner, the unique approach, the meaning and meaning implications in particular texts. The field of Stylistics is preoccupied with the task of exploring the use of language in different ways, more so, exploring creativity in language use (Simpson, 2004:3). It is also referred to as the study of style in both written and verbal texts, and the effect the writer or speaker

intends to communicate to the reader or hearer.

Furthermore, Mukhtar (2004) defines ‘Style’ as the artistic function in an individual’s work. Inuwa, (2024:6) contends that Stylistics dwells on establishing principles capable of explaining the particular choices by individuals and social groups, in the use of language such as socialization and production and reception of meaning. In the present age of modern technology, communication through the internet and various social media handles

platforms cuts across all sectors of the society, including official groups and organizations. The use of language produced in different patterns and styles characterizes these communications on daily basis

The Social Media refers to the collection of internet and communication tools used for sharing and discussing information among users. It can also be described as a typical blend of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of social value. Also, a category of networking that is based on user participation and user generated content (Deba, Haruna & Isah, 2021: 213). The Social media cites include the Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, the Twitter or the 'X', etc. They applied some of the basic processes of word formation, and studied aspects of 'neologism' of Hausa words in the Social Media. These processes among others include derivation, compounding, conversion, coinage, blending and clipping. They found that the use of the Social Media by Hausa speakers has contributed to the creation and increase of new vocabulary in Hausa. They also contend that the aspect of Hausa Neologism in the Social Media led to the extension in meaning of some Hausa words.

Also, studies indicate that while communicating using English-Hausa code-switching in the Social Media most writers do that with the intention to deceive, disguise or brag to their readers.

This paper undertakes a critical stylistic analysis of linguistic aspects of ridiculous or comical expressions in a social media platform, with the acronym as the SMAN (Stingy Men Association of Nigeria). This

particular site has its postings on the Facebook. Many instances of new trends and usages in linguistic communications have evolved in the new media. The social media domain being studied here is purposely created to amuse members and readers alike, through making ridiculous postings and comments.

### **1.1 Comical Expressions**

The term 'comical' is derived from the word 'comic', meaning something amusing and making one laugh. It is connected with 'comedy' and entertainment that is funny and that makes people laugh (Hornby, A. S. 2017). Therefore, anything comical is that which is amusing, especially because it is funny or ridiculous.

In this particular context, 'comical expressions' in the social media are those expressions advertently made to make the readers of such comments laugh and get amused. There are several social media platforms dedicated to amusing members and other readers, through the manner of their postings, expressions and responses. The Stingy Men Association of Nigeria, SMAN under this study is one of such platforms. Being the expressions under study originate in pidgin, the corrupted, ungrammatical nature of the communication is in itself funny and comical.

### **1.2 Pidgin English**

Pidgin language is a language developed through a blend of the vocabulary of one major language, with that of other languages. This is done in order to facilitate communication among speakers of different

languages (Mati, H. M. 2016). ‘Nigerian Pidgin’ is a term used to denote a variety of English based on pidgin among Nigerians. Elugbe and Omamor, (1991) describe Nigerian Pidgin as a “marginal language used among Nigerians to facilitate communication needs”.

The type of language communication produced in the social media domain under this study is primary in Nigerian Pidgin. However, the pidgin expressions in this study are translated into Standard English, side by side, for clearer analysis.

### **1.0 Methodology and Framework**

Some 8 out of total 30 data were purposively selected for smooth and efficient analysis. The selection was in two phases, by firstly, sifting out 15 data, and subsequently selecting 8 in order to facilitate for effective analysis. Thus, the data herein selected serve to represent all other such comical expressions.

As earlier mentioned, the study uses the Critical Stylistic Analysis model by Jeffries (2010). The model states that every producer of text is under pressure to choose from the available lexical items to communicate his message. It adds that the choice of lexical items by the communicator is always ideologically loaded. Specifically referring to the tool of ‘Equating and Contrasting’ applied in the analysis of this paper, Jeffries points that texts are often seen to set up synonymies and oppositions between ‘words’, ‘phrases’, ‘clauses’ and even ‘paragraphs’.

The paper uses the tool analysis of ‘Equating’ and ‘Contrasting’ in the analysis of data in this paper, being one of the tools provided by the model. Furthermore, only the aspect of ‘Equating’ is used here for more precision and in-depth analysis.

### **2.1 The Equating Tool of Analysis**

The equating tool of stylistic analysis refers to how texts and their authors tend to tell their readers, what they see as ‘equivalent’. One of the ways of illustrating equivalence in the texts is by placing two items or words side by side in a sentence, in such a way that these words appear as synonyms, making similar reference (Jeffries, 2010: 51-53). The synonymies in the text could appear either in form of words, phrases/clauses and paragraphs.

The critical stylistic model asserts that what authors of texts are likely to do while telling us some version of the world for us to read or hear, is that they resort to ‘equating’ or ‘contrasting’ things concepts or ideas, etc. The model provides three possible approaches under the aspect of ‘Equating’. These three aspects are: (i) apposition; (ii) parallel structures and (iii) use of simile and metaphor.

### **2.0 Data Presentation**

The eight sampled data for analysis are presented here. The data are in form of comments posted at different times, on the Facebook platform under study, i.e., the Stingy Men Association of Nigeria, SMAN. The comments are done purposely for their funny and comical nature, with a view to evoke further responses from members, who

equally respond jokingly. Thus, each of the postings (comments) tend to emphasize the ‘stingy’ motive of the association, by shunning spending exorbitantly, or not spending at all. The data presented are analyzed at the subsequent stage, based on ‘Equating and Contrasting’ tool of Critical Stylistic model.

1. As a true SMAN, I no fit buy another boots or talk more of changing the shoe rope, so I use barb wire do am. Shey I try my fellow comrades – Sammy Blinz

2. How can I give a whole 1k (N1,000), to a barber, just to barb ordinary hair? I have to this myself. - Mart Efix

3. Since I joined SMAN, my waist has never been the same – Target Guy

4. Heat too much, so I decided to turn to my AC . We no dey spend shi shi – Vitalis Jagzy

5. Instead of paying house rent, I decided to stay outside with my wife. Hope I try - Comedian Hassan

6. It’s my first time posting here. Am I welcome? – Gabriel Iorsaa

7. To polish shoe is too cost now so I decided to use this to embellished it – Young Bishop

8. One of our SMAN members from Akwa Ibom branch decided to fabricate the pot to cook rice and stew at the same time, because of the high cost of Gas in the country.

### 3.0 Data Analysis

At this stage, the data presented above is analysed to bring out the comical essence of the various texts or discourses. Also, the analysis reflects the provisions of ‘Equating and Contrasting’ tool of the Critical Stylistic model of analysis by Jeffries, (2010). Jeffries observes that texts or discourses are involved in constructing some version of the world for their readers/hearers, telling the readers what the texts or their authors see as equivalent and what they see as contrasting. Jeffries, (2010) adds that texts are often seen to set up synonymies and oppositions between ‘words’, ‘phrases’, ‘clauses’ and even ‘paragraphs’. This can be demonstrated as follows:

(a) It was X, Y (setting up equivalence)

(b) X not Y, (setting up opposition)

Thus, the analysis of the 8 selected discourses goes as follows:

*Excerpt 1: As a true SMAN, I no fit buy another boots or talk more of changing the shoe rope, so I use barb wire do am. Shey I try my fellow comrades*

**Gloss: As SMAN member, I can’t buy new shoes or even change the shoe rope. Hence I resort to using barbed wire for the rope. I think I have tried, fellow comrades.**

In example 1 above, the interlocutor expresses his resolve to substitute ‘shoe rope’ with ‘barbed-wire’, to serve the same purpose of tying the shoe. This is a kind of improvising the former with the later, as a way of avoiding financial cost. In this instance, the two items, shoe rope and

barbed-wire are put in opposition and therefore placed at equivalent (equating) positions. The ideology of ‘stinginess’ is here achieved through this apposition, in which one item is preferred to another, because the former is deemed as costlier than the later, which may even be cost-free to the interlocutor.

Even though in reality, barbed wire could be costlier than shoe rope, however in this context, the person’s assumption in preferring to use it in place of the rope, in addition to his “I no fit buy another boot” (I can’t afford to buy another shoe), emphasizes the idea of stinginess. The interlocutor further triggered responses from members of the platform, by his statement “shey I try my comrades”, meaning “I hope I have tried my colleagues”.

Some affirming and encouraging responses such as “Correct brotherhood” and “you try my comrade” followed his expression, emphasizing their ‘stingy’ resolve of the group, further establishing the funny actions and performances by the group members. Another member throws a much more encouraging remark “over try sef, you should be rewarded for this act”, i.e., (You have even over-tried and you deserve to be rewarded for that).

Characteristically, the text having been written in Nigerian Pidgin English, adds to the aspects of comical style. Such words in Pidgin as ‘I no fit’ (I cannot); ‘do am’ (to do it); ‘shey I try’ (I think I have tried) stylistically, add more colour to the funny side of the entire text.

***Excerpt 2: How can I give a whole 1k (N1,000), to a barber, just to barb ordinary hair? I have to do this myself.***

**Gloss: Instead of paying as big amount as N1,000 to barb my hair, I decide to barb it myself**

Similarly, in example 2 above, two parallel expressions of ‘paying N1,000 to barb the hair’ and the resolve to instead, ‘barb it myself’ at apposition. This construction creates equivalence and therefore, explicitly contains and projects the ideology of ‘stinginess’ propagated by the particular social media group. Particularly with the displayed picture of the person’s head roughly and haphazardly barbed, that depicts the rather funny side of the expression.

The encouraging responses or comments that followed the social media posting such as “you have done well”; “you are making the brotherhood proud” and “thank you so much comrade”, further emphasizes the group’s conservative and doggedness to their goal. Surprisingly however, there are no vivid manifestations of Pidgin English in both the expression and the responses in this particular example.

***Excerpt 3: Since I joined SMAN, my waist has never been the same***

**Gloss: Since I joined this group of stingy men, I have been emaciating to the waist**

Two sequential ideas are expressed and the expressions placed at apposition, in example 3 above. The ideas are ‘joining the SMAN’ and the subsequent or consequent

‘thinning of the waist’ (emaciating). The message in the idea expressed is that it was enrolling as member of the stingy men group and imbibing the teachings and principles of ‘no spending’, made the person so stingy even to himself that he couldn’t feed himself well.

That action caused his emaciating and the thinning of his waist. In this instance, rather than for the person to appreciate, he seems to be regretting the consequence of his action of joining the stingy men’s group. Subsequent responses make it much funnier, such as ‘our great Association is meant to reshape people’; ‘we d brotherhoods are doing great work now you look slim and sexy’. Other remarks on the posting rather insinuate that ‘your waist is big, keep it up. We are proud of you’ and ‘you are losing weight without paying a penny to Gym instructors’.

*Excerpt 4: Heat too much, so I decided to turn to my AC, We no dey spend shi shi*

**Gloss: Due to too much heat, I resort to using my (improvised) A.C. Because we (at SMAN) don’t spend a penny on anything.**

The comical side of the above expression lies in equating local improvisation with the standard Air Conditioner, A.C. Because of the principle held by the SMAN member of stinginess, the person posting the text demonstrates his level of stinginess by choosing to relax at a cool corner, close to earthen pots, locally used as coolers. The posting is accompanied with picture of the person lying at the cool spot. The

interlocutor emphasized his stingy position by saying “we don’t pay a penny”.

The equating tool of opposition is used in the form of two clauses placed in adjacent position, i.e., “resorting to using my AC” is placed side by side with “We don’t spend a penny”. Series of responses to the posting by some SMAN members openly add weight and cheer the interlocutor for his action that promotes their ‘stingy’ posture. Some of the responses are: “is really our SMAN member” and “Congratulations”. Another response that endorses the person’s action says “This is the best option” adding that to spend shi shi (a Penny) is “unnecessary”. In appreciation to the action, another response states that “Let me cook noodles for you (out of appreciation). You have really tried.

*Excerpt 5: Instead of paying house rent, I decided to stay outside with my wife. Hope I try*

**Gloss: I opt to stay homeless with my wife, to avoid paying house rent. I think it is a wise idea**

In example 5 above, the interlocutor contrasts between the burden of expending money as ‘house rent’ and ‘staying outdoors’ or homeless with family. Being a typical stingy person and member of association of stingy persons, he rather opts to stay homeless with his family, which he thinks is wiser and economical. This particular stance resonates with the principles of the ‘Stingy men Group’, thus, portraying the comical side of his action.

The funny scenario in the particular posting was further boosted by the picture of

the person and all his household materials and family, packed and camped outdoors. This was followed by comments of members, cheering, hailing and supporting the idea, tagging him as 'hero' in the group.

***Excerpt 6: It's my first time posting here. Am I welcome?***

**Gloss: I am a new member making my first posting on the platform. Am I accepted?**

The interlocutor in example 6 above introduces himself as new member, making his first posting on the SMAN association. By presenting himself as 'new member' and asking whether he is accepted, this triggers various responses and comments of members on the platform, expressing their acceptance or rejection, based on different parameters or reasons for their decisions of judgment of the person's posted picture.

While some members indicate that the man is welcome because even by his appearance, he looks 'stingy' and fits in the group. Others jokingly express their rejection, based on what they think, the person couldn't bear, endure or obey the rules and principles of 'stinginess' of the association. In this instance, the new member's expression, portrays two opposing or contrasting issues of 'being new' and 'seeking acceptance' are placed adjacent to one another in the discourse.

***Excerpt 7: To polish shoe is too cost now so I decided to use this to embellished it***

**Gloss: Because of the current high cost of polishing shoes, I resort to applying this charcoal, (to serve as polish) on the shoe**

The SMAN member in example 7 above, is also preferring what he sees as economically alternative, by applying a similarly black substance (charcoal) on his shoes, instead of the proper shoe polish, which he describes as too expensive, (too cost). The concept of weighing two alternatives here also goes along with the theory of 'equating' and 'contrasting'. The picture of the member using the black substance on the pot's back, together accompanying, encouraging comments by members of the platform, makes the whole episode a fun and comical.

For instance, one Benjamin Iover commented "Congratulations", while another member, Ishmael Awuah Junior, remarked that "the admin need to award you". Yet another member responds approvingly, "Keep it up bro. True u are an active member of SMAN", while another member, Prince Ibrahim Ali Madaki, concludes "Very impressive".

***Excerpt 8: One of our SMAN members from Akwa Ibom branch decided to fabricate the pot to cook rice and stew at the same time, because of the high cost of Gas in the country.***

**Gloss: As alternative to expensive cooking gas, a SMAN member in Akwa Ibom State has invented a dual purpose pot for cooking rice and soup at once.**

The funny side of the statement in example 8 above lies in the improvising a dual purpose pot, in order to minimize the consumption of cooking gas, which turns out as very exorbitant for the household needs. Hence, the invention of a multi-groove device that serves the function of

several pots, but which burns same amount of fuel as one single pot, sounds most economical, if not ‘stingy’.

#### 4.0 Conclusion and Findings

The paper has succeeded in analyzing the selected data, using the tool of ‘equating and Contrasting’ of the Critical Stylistic model by Jeffries (2010). Each of the eight purposively sampled data has its peculiarities; however, all of them tend to two alternative issues placed adjacent to one another, in form of phrases or clauses in a sentence. These two options are expressed in form of synonymies (equating) or opposing (contrasting) views. In the discourses of the SMAN members communications are presented in the original (Pidgin English), followed by glosses in standard English.

The paper finds out that the use of Pidgin English by the SMAN members was deliberate, with a view to make discourses on the Social media platform much funnier and entertaining. The idea of ‘stinginess’ as adopted, portrayed and acted by the members as the principle of their association, is another comical side. The paper further unveils the use of language stylistically to portray the world in real life, because stinginess or being economical is a reality with everybody faced with the crisis of higher prices or high cost of living. The SMAN platform of the social media presents that fact stylistically, in a comical, entertaining way.

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### Appendix

1. As a true SMAN, I no fit buy another boots or talk more of changing the shoe rope, so I use barb wire do am. Shey I try my fellow comrades – Sammy Blinz  
Responses (8) –
  - i) Correct brotherhood – Sultan Fudma
  - ii) You try my comrade – Joe Smart
  - iii) Over try self; you will be rewarded for this act – Joshua Joshua
  - iv) Omg, funny – Ibrahim Adaviriku
2. How can I give a whole 1k (N1,000), to a barber, just to barb ordinary hair? I have to this myself. - Mart Efix
  - i) You have done well – Williams Shi
  - ii) You are making the brotherhood proud, keep it up – Oko Bros
  - iii) Thank you so much comrade – Mart Efix
3. Since I joined SMAN, my waist has never been the same – Target Guy
  - i) Our great Association is meant to reshape people – Wisdom Innocent Ubewu
  - ii) You are even stingy for yourself – King Solomon Int'l

- iii) We d brotherhoods are doing great work now you look slim and sexy...SMAN FOREVER – Christian Kamara
- iv) Go and eat Abeg - King Bjj Gee
- v) Your waist big ooh keep it up we are proud of you – Frankelin Onyedikachi
- vi) You are losing weight without paying shi shi to Gym instructors
4. Heat too much, so I decided to turn to my AC . We no dey spend shi shi – Vitalis Jagzy
- i) Really is our SMAN member – Danladi Kallah
- ii) Congratulations – Obanso Rachael
- iii) Ma fry nudles for you, u try we are proud of you – Great Stanley
- iv) Best option. Bo shi shi to spend un necessarily – Williams T. Yongo
5. Instead of paying house rent, I decided to stay outside with my wife. Hope I try - Comedian Hassan
- i) That’s right – Emmanuel Anthony
- ii) That is very nice – Itz Yhomhi Famous
- iii) Your bed is too expensive. You need to explain to the house... – Sarfo Edward Kingsley
- iv) Your bed is too expensive. Buy students’ mattress – Anaconda Gh Cedi
- v) I will report to the president of SMAN your bed is too expensive
6. It’s my first time posting here. Am I welcome? – Gabriel Iorsaa
- i) For your information we no de give shi shi to anybody – Celina Babs
- ii) This your face, you go like giving money to women ooo – Augustine Lapshak Kulji
- iii) Looking at your face you no go fit give shi shi – Baba Roly
- iv) Welcome stingy man – Ajekwe Msugh
- v) How stingy are you? – Oyi Chidera
- vi) Yah welcome bro hope you know the rules of the group, we no dey give shi shi – Ity Ari Jay
7. To polish shoe is too cost now so I decided to use this to embellished it – Young Bishop
- i) Congratulations – Benjamin Iover
- ii) The admin need to award you – Ishmael Awuah Junior
- iii) Keep it up bro. True u are an active member of SMAN
- iv) Very impressive – Prince Ibrahim Ali Madaki
8. One of our SMAN members from Akwa Ibom branch decided to fabricate the pot to cook rice and stew at the same time, because of the high cost of Gas in the country.
- i) Weldon I am happy for you, Sman our pride – Clement Otaba
- ii) 2M followers – Bigbag Comedy
- iii) Weldon job – Alfred Sisqo Kabwir
- iv) Proud to be Akwa Ibomite, Weldon Comrade
- v) He try ooo – Kwakye Samuel
- vi) Great job – Tony Black Tom.