

Stylistic Analysis of the Language of Some Selected Nigerian Musicians

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Abstract

The use of language is unavoidable in every activity of man. Language is used when man is active and inactive. Using language for expression is one of the communicative roles of language. In this regard, music is an outlet of expression. This paper aims to analyze the language style of some selected Nigerian musicians. The data for this study is got through a careful selection of lyrics that are rich in the use of code switching, code mixing, slang, pidgin, hyponyms and euphemisms. The collected data is discussed through qualitative analysis. The paper concludes on a discussion of the effects of the language style of these musicians on the lexicon of Nigerian English and Nigeria's indigenous languages.



1. Introduction

Every activity of man is embedded in language. There is a constant flow of discourse when man is active and inactive (McCarthy et al 2002:55). Sometimes, this flow of discourse is channeled through music which may be for relaxation and/or entertainment. This flow however is different from speech and writing because it is accompanied by organized pleasant sounds. These sounds are organized in rhymes and rhythm.

Yet, in this form, language is the raw material of music as it is used by artistes for expression. As a tool of expression, music is used in religious rites, relaxation and entertainment.

The social realities of a culture have bearings on the language of musicians as they use language to communicate to the society. In this regard, this paper will analyze the language style of some selected Nigerian musicians. A descriptive framework is adopted for this study. Data for this study are got through a careful selection of lyrics that depict code switching, code mixing, slang, pidgin, hyponyms and euphemisms.

A stylistic analysis of some selected Nigerian lyrics would provide answers to the following questions.

1) What linguistic reasons account for the

language style of the selected Nigerian musicians?

2) What are the effects of the language style of these musicians on the lexicon of Nigerian English?

In precise terms, the purpose of this study is to analyze the language style of some selected Nigerian musicians as well as to examine the effects of their language style on the lexicon of Nigerian English and indigenous languages.

In seeking solutions to these questions, this paper is organized as follows:

Section 2 provides an overview of such terms as code switching, code mixing, slang, pidgin, homonyms and euphemisms in literature. Section 3 builds on section 2 to show the use of code switching, code mixing, slang, pidgin, homonyms and euphemisms as style by some selected Nigerian musicians. Section 4 discusses the effect of the style of these musicians on the lexicon of Nigerian English. Section 5 forms the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Stylistics analysis in linguistics refers to the examination of language usage in speech and writing (Ahmad 2011). The study of style explains the choices made by individuals in their use of language. According to

Missikova (2003:20) style 'refers to the manner of expression in writing and speaking'. In this case, style would mean the language style of the selected Nigerian musicians. Stylistics analysis explores the effects of the use of style in communication.

Code switching, code mixing, use of pidgins, slang, use of homonyms, metaphors and euphemisms are common features in present day Nigerian music. These features characterize the style of Nigerian musicians.

2.1 Code Switching and Code Mixing

A code refers to a language, variety or a style of language. Code mixing and code switching are linguistic acts that are common in language patterns of bilinguals where two languages are used in discourse. Code mixing is a hybrid of two languages. In code mixing two languages are used at the same time. In code switching there is a kind of shift from one language to another. Trudgill (1992:16) differentiates between code mixing and code switching thus: code mixing is the process whereby speakers code switch between language like using a mixture of English and the local language. Code switching is the process whereby bilingual speakers switch between one language and another within the same conversation.

There are four major types of code switching (McArthur 1998): tag switching, intra sentential switching, inter sentential switching and intra-word switching. In tag switching, tags and certain phrases in one language are inserted into an utterance in another language. Switches in intra sentential level occur within a clause or sentence boundary. Switches in inter sentential switching occurs at a clause or sentence boundary where one clause or sentence is in one language and the other in another language. As the name suggests, intra-word switching occurs within a word boundary. Example of intra-word switching is *kuenjoy* which has English *enjoy* with Swahili prefix *ku*, meaning 'to' (McArthur 1998).

2.2 Slang

Slang is a language form or a language variety that is used informally. By this, it is out of place in formal styles of language (Akmajian et al 2007:303). Slang has a negative connotation as a 'low' standard form of a language. Slang is used as conversational style in informal settings. Yul-Ifode (2001:155) notes that slang are characterized by chipped and shortened forms. Slang is derived by word play and is used by people to achieve social identity.

2.3 Pidgins

A pidgin is an offspring of language contact. Common in multilingual societies, it is an offshoot of languages in contact. Usually it is a reduced language switched from bits and pieces of other languages. It has a limited capacity for expression but allows communication in an effective way (Trask 1994:65).

2.4 Homonyms

Homonyms are words which have the same form but with different and unrelated meanings (Ejele 1996:124). Ejele (2003:76) gives the following as one of the examples of homonyms.

Pile

1. A number of things lying one on top of another (N).
2. A heavy column of wood/metal/concrete, placed upright as foundation for a building or support for a bridge (N).
3. The soft surface of carpets or fabrics.
4. Piles as hemorrhoids.

As seen above the word pile has one form for the four unrelated meanings highlighted above.

2.5 Euphemism

Words for body parts, bodily functions, sexual activity and practices are socially forbidden in formal situations. A word that denotes any of these socially forbidden subjects is known as a taboo word or foul language. Wajnryb (2004:10-14) provides a glossary of foul language as follows: epithet, euphemistic swearing, expletive, insult, invectives, oath, profanity and vulgarity.

Sometimes, discussions of taboo subjects in formal situations are necessary. Euphemism provides the bailout. Euphemism makes the discussion of taboo words possible. The use of euphemism is an acceptable way to discuss forbidden subjects.

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data presented below are the lyrics of some selected Nigerian musicians.

3.1 Code Switching and Code Mixing

- 1) *Life Anagaga* by Timaya
Life anagaga, 2x
Onye mburu na turn by turn oh,
Life anagaga.
- 2) *Did I?* by Lagbaja
English -I don't know about forever,
Espanol-No me preocupare purrel manana,

- Vivamos un dia, un dia a la vez.
 Yoruba - Boo fe boo ko, ife,
 Eee, a yi ni lori sa,
 Ko ye e? Aaa ko le yee e, omo
 Forever sa? Ah
 Omo, won tit a e tan die lo ku
- Forever, pretty never,
 Forever, would we ever?
 Forever, pretty never,
 Forever, would we ever.
- 3) *Iworiwo (I Celebrate)* by Wacomzy
 Verse 1 - My mother and my father no together,
 But I was brought up by my poor
 single mother,
 Sweet like a guava eh,
 You are my sweet sugar butter,
 I was born with a silverspoon.
- Bridge - But I give God all the glory eh,
 When I waka everybody sey,
 Dem know me eh,
 And I give God all the glory eh,
 As I dey sing, I dey tell them
 my story eh, Oh, oh, oh, soo,
- Chorus - Iworiwo, Jehova emekwa la ya ozo,
 Zam ekpere, papa meperem uzo,
 Iworiwo. Am better than the rest,
 Daddy meperem uzo, Iworiwo,
 monso emekwa la ya ozo, Zam ekpere,
 Papa meperem uzo, Iworiwo.
 I jubilate, I celebrate, I prostrate,
 appreciate.
- 4) *Igwe* by Midnight Crew
 Yoruba - kosababire, kosi Babi bire,
 Ko ma s'Olorun bire
 Igbo - Igwe
 Yoruba - E ba mi gb'oloru tobi
 (Oba nla Oba to ga)
 E be mi gb'oloru tobi
 (Edumare Oba toga)
- Igbo - Igwe
 English - You are the great I am,
 All men adore Him,
 Just bow before Him,
 You are a mighty God,
 We say Igwe
 Igbo - Eze ndieze, idi egwo,
 Onye nabia ozo, Idi egwo
- 5) *Kolebaje* by Lara George
 Ise t'Oluwa se o ah, ko le baje.
 And all that's lovely in your, koni deru.
 When it seems like all has ended know,
 ko le baje o. Ko le baje, ko le baje o.
 Koni deru, koni deru o.
- 6) *Raining season* by Bello Ibrahim
 Farkon ganin kin a yi wo confusion
 Jiri nake ca ake na sha poison
 Ni ko na san ina da reason
 Reason n farko kina da kyan dressing
 Reason na biyu kullun kina san
 weaving.
- 7) *Cough (odo)* by Kiss Daniel
 I wan impress (eh-eh)
 And I want to carry my love
 away (eh-eh)
 To a place she loves (eh-eh)
 Odoyewu, 'doyewu
 Odoyewuye, odoyewu(odo')
- The data presented above show how musicians use code switching and code mixing as a means of communication in music. Daran (1994:6) explains that 'code switching is a conscious desire to mix two languages to create new forms'. In this regard, the use of code switching by some Nigerian musicians is a style. This style is predominant in Nigerian music. The reason for this is not far fetched. Nigeria is a multilingual nation where there are more than three hundred languages. Using one language may mean that some people may not understand a song so presented. Hence to gain access to more people code switching/mixing becomes necessary. In data 1 and 5, code switching/mixing is used for self expression. In this sense, code switching/mixing may be a kind of discourse strategy (Myers-Scotton 1995:57).
- In data 1 and 3, terms like 'anagaga' and 'iworiwo' are used. These terms are so used because they are cultural terms that are best expressed in English. If expressed in English, they may not convey the intended meaning (Ariffin and Rafik-Galea 2009:10).
- In data 2, Lagbaje uses three codes: English, Espanol and Yoruba in order to gain access to people who are competent in one or the three languages. In data 3,

Wacomzy uses this style to reiterate the content of his song. The addition of the Igbo makes the language of his song clearer and better understood. The chorus presents a prayer. Here the prayer is better expressed in the local language.

Data 4 presents a song in three codes: Yoruba, English and Igbo. Certain terms like the refrain (Igwe) is unique. In data 4, cultural expressions in the language are conveyed through code switching/mixing. The Igbo part presents cumulative parallelism where a new word or clause is added for the purpose of praise.

In data 5 and 6 the songs are mainly in Yoruba and Hausa respectively but they are infused with English words. The infusion of these English words is popular with what is presently in vogue with rap songs by young people in the Nigerian society. It's more of a style which shows that the musician can speak English if s/he so chooses. Most times, these musicians reside in multilingual cities (Aliyu 2011:5). Hence, they sing songs that would make appeal beyond their ethnic audience. In data 7, there is mix of English and Yoruba. Code switching/mixing lowers language barriers as more than one code is used, a musician may choose this style for the purpose of clarity of intentions.

3.2 The use of Slang

(8) *One Day* by Eldee

One day, one day
E go better for naija
Money go circulate
Light go dey
We no go need to ja
Comot naija.

(9) *Power of Naija* by Tuface

With the power of naija working together,
Victory is sure, we are champions,
With the power of naija working together,
Nothing can hold, hold us down.

(10) *Naija dey Bam* by Sammy Okposo

For this naija, no matter our language
We are one family.

(11) *Yori Yori* by Bracket

Every thing with you is yori yori

(12) *Rush* by Ayra Starr

Aje, aje, aje, can never take **my cake**

away,
aje You can't count my grace, I just
dey my lane,
my lane Me no get the time for the
hate and the **bad energy,**
got my mind on my money Steady on
my grind,
no wan hear what they wan tell me,
kudi na my fantasy

Nigerian musicians have popularized the use of certain slang like *naija* and *yori yori*. These terms are used in the world of advertisement because of the popularity they have got from Nigerian musicians.

Ofunne and Nwokogba (2008) define *naija* and *yori yori* thus: *naija*, a slang name for Nigeria. *Yori yori*, sweetness, a good feeling about someone or something. It is common to see objects addressed as *Yori Yori* in advertisement.

The underlined words in data 12 are language forms common in the speech of young people in Nigeria.

3.3 The Use of Pidgin

The use of pidgin in Nigerian music is common. The following are just few examples.

(13) *Pop Something* by Dr. Sid

Pop, pop, pop, make you pop champagne,
Hold your baby when I dey pop champagne,
Because anytime wen I enter the club pop
champagne,
And the ladies see me dey pop
Dem they burst their brain.

(14) *Hand of God* by Duncan Mighty

Shebi you know what is means
When you are coming from the ghetto
You no need to fumble and
I was leaving in a face me I face you house
You need to see to many trouble when you
want to bath...

(15) *Plantain Boy* by Timaya

Dem know me wella
Everybody know me as Mr. Timaya
When I be common plantain seller
God don change my name to Timaya.
Everybody just dey feel me
Coast to caost dem know my name

The dominance of pidgin in Nigerian music is a reflection of the linguistic situation in Nigeria. The use of pidgin is common in multi-lingual nations like Nigeria (Agbedo 2007:45). Variation in pidgin in Nigeria is as a result of different contact points with different ethnic groups. Terms like *Shebi* in 12 and *Wella* in 13 show that certain variation can be observed in the pidgin spoken in different parts of Nigeria.

The dominance of pidgin can be traced to its ease in expression. Pidgin is flexible in terms of phonology and syntax. In using pidgin, one is not afraid of errors which are obviously not allowed in Standard English.

Moreso, the use of pidgin enables an artiste to gain access to a large audience. The ease of expression and access to a large audience make some scholars to advocate for the official recognition of Nigerian Pidgin (Gani-Ikilama 1999:219).

3.4 The Use of Homonyms

The use of homonyms is best exemplified in *Screen Saver* by Whiz Boy

- (16) Asa nwa you go make am finer,
If only say you go sign am,
I for like to give you a ring oh,
Na this kind of ring oh,
No be that kind of ring oh,

The word *ring* as used in this song has two meanings. One is related to marriage. The other meaning is related to the tune or call from a phone.

3.5 The Use of Euphemisms

The taboo subjects used in the songs shown below are not offensive because they are coded in euphemisms.

- (17) *Implication* by Tuface
As I jolombi your sister,
As I passy the border,
As I disobey my mother,
I come get wahala.
- (18) *Qualified Doctor* by Poliano
I no be qualified doctor,
She wants make I give her injection.
- (19) *Spiritual Conji* by Nicca Nice and M. Josh
When this spiritual something hold
man,
River Niger dey dey like Kainji dam,

Dat time you no go think well,
If you no control am,
You fit follow any girl.
If you follow any girl, yawa must gaz.
.....
If you no fit then you are on your own,
If spiritual conji hold you true true,
Then na any girl wen you see,
You go wan chuck.

- (20) *Electricity* by Pheelz and Davido
Shake it
Baby shake it
I feel your vibration
Fine girl omo toh Shan
Beautiful temptation
Bad girl on rotation
Shake it
Oh tonight
Electricity
Vibes on a frequency ah

The lyrics presented in 17 to 20 are based on subjects whose discussion in public is formally forbidden. The lyrics in 17 to 20 have sex, the act and the parts of the body used for sex without the mention of the word, 'sex.' Here presented in euphemisms they are sung or discussed as if they are allowed in social discourse. This is in line with the meaning of euphemism as the use of an agreeable expression for an offensive term.

3.6 The Use of Words of Endearment

Some Nigerian artistes use words of endearment to identify with their audience. In the song presented below, Johnny Drille sends complements to make the audience not to despair but to know that there is someone that cares. In a time of economic hardship, violence, insecurity and fears, it is comforting and soothing to know that that there is someone who cares for whatever befalls them.

- (21) *How Are You (My Friend)?* by Johnny Drille
I know sometimes e be like
say nobody send you
That one na lie, I dey for you,
my friend Padi no vex for me
Say I never call you since
But I hope that you are well
I hope your market sell
Every day, I dey pray for you
Make Baba God bless you
I never forget you
How I go forget you?

See my shoulder, make
you rest upon me
You know I got you,
na me be your friend indeed

The words of endearment used in this song creates a therapeutic effect on the listener- padi, I, you, me, no vex, well, market sell, pray, never forget you. The song writer identify with the listener as a friend would.

4. Discussion

The language style of some selected Nigerian musicians affects the lexicon of Nigerian English. The use of code switching/mixing is sometimes seen as a constraint in the competence of one of the languages of a bilingual. However, the lyrics presented in this study show that it has some sociolinguistic benefits. This style allows for increased impact when used as medium of communication in a multilingual setting (Skiba, 1997). Moreover, code switching/mixing as used by Nigerian musicians promotes Nigerian indigenous languages as language terms from indigenous languages are popularized. Moreso, in the form of music, Nigeria's indigenous languages are packaged for exports as the exploits of Nigerian musicians are beyond the shores of Nigeria. And wherever the lyrics which contain these indigenous languages are played, indigenous language items in these songs are embossed from decay.

New terms are introduced from the language used by these musicians into the lexicon of Nigeria English. *Naija* and *yorì yorì* which were slangs are now integrated into Nigerian English. Other words like nobody send, maga don pay, my face show, am on code, dey my lane, no dulling are words popularised by Nigerian musicians which are now common in spoken and social media discourse especially among young Nigerians. These terms borrowed from popular Nigerian music are now used as words in Nigerian English. Through this kind of borrowing, there is an extension of the language-system of Nigerian English (Lyons 2009:309).

The use of pidgin by these musicians shows that pidgin in Nigeria is a language of broad communication (Adekunle 1990:246). In this light, policy makers can proposed the recognition of pidgin for official oral discourse as Nigerian pidgin presently lacks codification (Llames and Stockwell 2002:152).

5. Conclusion

This paper studies the effects of the language style of Nigerian musicians on the lexicon of Nigerian English and indigenous language. Through the use of code

switching/mixing, pidgin, slang, euphemism and homonyms, Nigerian musicians have extended the lexicon of Nigerian English. The style of these musicians is a kind of packaging indigenous languages for exports. There is more, language items in these songs are embossed from decay.

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Appendix

List of Songs in the order of presentation in paper

- (1) *Life Anagaga* by Timaya
- (2) *Did I?* by Lagbaja
- (3) *Iworiwo (I Celebrate)* by Wacomzy
- (4) *Igwe* by Midnight Crew
- (5) *Kolebaje* by Lara George
- (6) *Raining season* by Bello Ibrahim
- (7) *Cough (odo)* by Kiss Daniel
- (8) *One Day* by Eldee
- (9) *Power of Naija* by Tuface
- (10) *Naija dey Bam* by Sammy Okposo
- (11) *Yori Yori* by Bracket
- (12) *Rush* by Ayra Starr
- (13) *Pop Something* by Dr. Sid
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- (20) *Electricity* by Pheelz and Davido
- (21) *How Are You (My Friend)?* by

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