

CODE-SWITCHING IN SELECTED SONGS BY WIZKID: A STUDY OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION IN NIGERIAN HIP HOP

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Abstract

Nigerian musicians often employ code-switching, blending English with other major Nigerian languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, and Nigerian Pidgin, with particular emphasis on Yoruba and Pidgin. This study aims to critically analyze selected albums by Wizkid within the Nigerian music industry. The data for this research focus on one artist, Wizkid. The objectives of the study are to examine the nature of code-switching, investigate its underlying causes, analyze its artistic impact, and explore the consequences of this practice for musical expression. It is observed that Nigerian artists utilize code-switching in their music to connect with their intended audiences.

Key words: Code-switching, Nigerian hip hop, songs

Introduction

Language is generally considered means of communication, and it is a set of vocal signs that enable members of a linguistic community to communicate with each other. Murana (2022) viewed that language is not just a medium by which a people communicate; it is also a carrier of a societal culture, norms and generational value system. Language, culture and society cannot be separated because the three are inter-related. A society is identified by their language, and culture is made up of language.

According Bamgbose (1985) stated that language contact situation particular a close one where an exoglossic language becomes official role in a country, the language is bound to be influenced by its linguistic and cultural role. Gardner-Chloros (2009) explained code-switching as the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by a bilingual person, additional Chloro maintained that the word code adopted by linguists, originated from a term in communication technology, referring to unambiguous transduction of signals between systems, while „switching“ simplistically means changing of the position of „the mental toggle switch“ between varieties. Therefore, the coexisting of Nigerian languages and English has resulted in certain sociolinguistic effects, including language interlarding, which includes borrowing, interference, and code-switching. According Omoniyi (2006) as cited by Orji Dereck, Chuka Okeke & C Akas “Nigerian hip hop artistes facilitate negotiation and construction of identity through language choice. Apart from singing in English, these sets of Nigerian artistes use Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) and indigenous languages in their lyrics in order to set up what might be constructed as a Pan-Nigerian identity”. Therefore, Nigeria artistes who seek popularity must use code-switching as a stylistic innovation in their lyrics. In Nigeria, code-switching has played a lot of significance role in hip hop artistes. This study is based on the diversity and important of code-switching in the music industry to the Nigeria society.

The concept of code-switching

Code switching is the one of alternative ways to bilingual of two or more languages in the same conversation. Hymes (1974) defines code-switching as “a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles” while Bokamba (1989) defines code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. The code-switching means the use of alternate more languages in the same discourse. Oleh (2012) explained code-switching in different perspectives, a major approach in sociolinguistics focuses on the social motivations for switching, a line of inquiry concentrating both on immediate discourse factors such as lexical need and the topic and setting of the discussion, and on more distant factors such as speaker or group identity, and relationship-building. Mostly, code switching is a language commonly used by Nigeria Artist not because the artists are deficiency in learning but it may be considered as a useful strategy in getting the attention of their audience, and their aim is clear and to transfer the knowledge by getting popularity in an efficient way.

Evolution of Hip Hop music in Nigeria

The emerged of American rap music among Nigerian youths in the early 1980s marked the beginning of hip-hop music in Nigeria. Rapper's Delight by Sugar Hill Gang became a tremendous hit in Nigeria, inspiring many to follow in their footsteps and Adedjei (2017) explained that “Nigerian music scene caught the hip hop bug in the early 1980's with the release of Ronnie Ekundayo's rap album *The way I feel* (1981) but the genre achieved its

popularity and consolidation in the 1990's and early 2000's through series of transformations by creating a unique sound with appropriation of existing musical forms and indigenizing it by infusing the Nigerian languages into it through code-switching assuming a new appellation of Afro-hip hop. Therefore, it was quite tough for hip-hop rappers to gain recognition because of major influence of Highlife and Fuji music which was the most widespread music in Nigeria. Adedeji (2017), started that "this evolution as started by the first generation hip hop artistes like The Remedies (trio of Tony Tetuilla, Eedris Abdulkareem and Eddie Montana), Baba Dee, Lord of Ajasa, Sound Sultan, Rugged man and 9ice among others who continues till the present time giving the Nigerian variant of Hip hop a global presence and recognition". The Nigerian music industry has grown considerably in recent times because of the popularity and dynamism of the hip-hop genre, which has established itself as the current musical mainstream. According to Shammah (2023) "one of the first Nigerian rappers to emerge was **Ibrahim Salim Omari**, a member of the American rap group the **Sugar Hill Gang**, who came to Nigeria in exile in 1980. While in the country, **Omari** released the first rap single in Nigeria titled: **I am an African**. He also collaborated with Nigerian musicians like **Fela Kuti** and **King Sunny Ade**. Though his song did not take root, it laid seeds for what was to come that is the future of Hip hop artistes, but Babalola & Rotimi (2009) explained that Hip Hop artistes gained their "popularity until the 1990s when the country witnessed increased availability of computers and cheap music editing software. This enabled Nigerian artists to achieve higher quality recordings that quickly won over the Nigerian audience". Code-switching is one of the factors that contributed to the popularity of Nigerian Hip hop artistes because their audiences were not left behind that is the larger society.

According to Davies & Bentahila (2008) cited by Babalola & Rotimi noted that: Code-switching, in addition to being a useful resource for the bilingual in everyday interaction with other bilinguals, may also serve a poetic function, contributing to the aesthetic and rhetorical effects of discourse that is not spontaneous, but carefully constructed. The emerge of model days artiste like 2face, Olamide, 9ice Davido, Wizik cod-switching has transformed Nigerian Hip hop artistes. Nigerian artists are aware of the possibility not to gain the popularity if their lyrics were not acceptable by their immediate people.

Methodology

The lyrics of the chosen artist serve as the main source of information for this study. The purpose of this study is to discover and categories instances of code-switching from Standard English to Yoruba language, and Pidgin English in this song through the analysis.

Data presentation and Analysis

The presentation of data and analysis contain the lyrics of the tracks Ojuelegba by Wizkid:

Ayo: Ojuelegba by Wizkid

Prologue

It's legendry beats	English
Wizzy baba o	Yoruba

Verse 1

Ni ojuelegba	Yoruba
They know my story	English
From holdup studio	English
I be hustle to work ee	Pidgin/English/ pidgin
Ni ojuelegba o	Yoruba
Me and cd	English
From holdup studio	English
We been hustle to work ee	Pidgin/English/pidgin

Chorus

Ni ojuelegba o	Yoruba
My people dey there	English/pidgin
My people suffer	English
Dem dey pray for blessing eh	Pidgin/English/pidgin
Ni ojuelegba o	Yoruba
My people dey there	English/pidgin
Dem dey pray for blessing	Pidgin/English
For better living eh eh	English/ pidgin

Verse 2

Aye ole to yen o	Yoruba
Aye o ni double	Yoruba/English
Adura lo le se o	Yoruba
Call on daddy	English
Adura abga o	Yoruba
Ti isu eni ba dele	Yoruba
A fowo bo je	Yoruba
I am feeling good tonight	English
This thing got me thinking God for life	English/pidgin

Chorus

Oh I can't explain eh eh eh	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh yah eh	English/pidgin
I am feeling good tonight	English
This thing got me thinking God for life	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh eh	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh yah eh eh	English/pidgin

Verse 3

They know my story	English
From holdup studio	English
I be hustle to work ee	Pidgin/English/ pidgin
Ni ojuelegba o	Yoruba
Me and cd	English
From holdup studio	English
We been hustle to work ee	Pidgin/English/pidgin
See eh e kira fun mummy mi o	Yoruba
Ojojumo lo ni se adura	Yoruba
Mon jaye mi won ni won soro ju	Yoruba
Eki ra fun mummy mi o	Yoruba
Ojojumo lo n s'adura	Yoruba
Mon jaye mi won ni won soro ju	Yoruba
Won ni won ni won soro ju	Yoruba

Chorus repeated:

I am feeling good tonight	English
This thing got me thinking God for life	English/pidgin
Oh I can't explain eh eh eh	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh yah eh	English/pidgin
I am feeling good tonight	English
This thing got me thinking God for life	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh eh	English/pidgin
I can't explain eh eh yah eh eh	English/pidgin

The lyrics open with a seductive prologue meant to establish the overall tone of the performance. It's English, Yoruba and pidgin languages lines reassure the listener that a worthwhile work is developing. In the verse one the first eight-lines are composed in English, Pidgin and Yoruba languages, it showed that the musician is used to both languages. In the chorus one, the singer used more of English and Pidgin languages because he wants to carry non Yoruba communities along. The verse two was mostly composed in Yoruba languages, the line two and nine were code-switches from Yoruba to English and from English and Pidgin. In the chorus two Wizirk maintained the used of code-switch out of five lines chorus four lines were code-switch with English and Pidgin languages while only a line without code-switch. The twelve lines of verse three, code-switches were employed in two lines which contained Pidgin/English/Pidgin and the rest verses were targeted to Yoruba and English audiences. The last chorus was repeated and Wizirk still make used of code-switches in the chorus without the mother-tongue language. Generally, Wizirk make used of simple sentences in all the verses and choruses it implies that the general societies will be carried along without exclude the audience.

Conclusion

This study examines songs that represent the linguistically and culturally diverse settings in which they are produced. Hip hop, a music genre with Western influences, has evolved as a platform that utilizes code-switching to communicate the unique linguistic and cultural realities of Nigerian society. Due to their massive fan bases, multinational companies often rely on artists who employ code-switching to promote their products and services. The code-switching of Nigerian languages with English and Pidgin in the music industry may also serve as a way of resisting the westernization of foreign culture and the dominant influence of English in Nigerian society, particularly among the educated elite. Through code-switching, Nigerian artists are able to construct distinct identities for themselves and their music. This is because the blending of multiple languages especially Nigerian Pidgin, which transcends ethnic and social boundaries enables them to reach a broader audience.

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