ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Use of Language in Gosple Music: The Case of Monique's "Power Flow"

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Abstract

This paper explored the use of language in gospel music with focus onMonique's *Power Flow.* It investigated the stylistic features employed in the song and the aesthetic effects they evokein the listeners. The research design is qualitative. The primary data is composed of a gospel music culled from the Internet while the method of analysis is textual.The framework on which this paper was carried out is linguistic stylistics.The study found that figures of speech, exhortation, simple sentence, pronominalization, phonics, exclamation, and code switching are the stylistic devices employed in the gospel music. The code switch to indigenous languages is distinctive. Its use is an indication of the artistes' desire to reach a larger audience as well as the desire to communicate more effectively to the audience.The paper also found out that the use of local languages in gospel songs is a device to showcase Nigerian languages. This paper, thus, recommends further research on the blend of the English language and indigenous languages in gospel songs in order to find out more linguistic import of it.

Keywords: communicative effectiveness, indigenous languages, linguistic stylistics, music

Introduction

Language is a fluid device that can be used to effect various intents of the user. In recent times, it has become very rampant to find the use of more than one language in the composition of many gospel songs by Nigerian artistes. This trend in the musical world, is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that needs to be looked into. Dennison (1971), McCawley (1975), Auer (1984), Ejele (2003), and Fanany (2008) all consent to the fact that the blend or use of more than one language in a single musical presentation could be the sociolinguistic result of multilingualism that is prevalent in a society. Thus, in this paper, the intent is to examinethe lyrics of some Christian gospel songs by Nigerian musical artistes and give an account of the presence (blend) of indigenous Nigerian languages and the English language.

Conceptual Review

Music is an agreeable sound: a euphony. "Music is a vocal or instrumental sound (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty, form, harmony, and expression of emotion" (Wikipedia). This means that music is an art that involves sounds made either by human beings or objects. Music has been defined in Wikipedia as "… the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination and in temporal relationship to produce a composition having unity and continuity." This means that in music all the sounds must form a composite structure that will be pleasing to the ears. In other words, one can say that music is an activity that is defined by its sound patterns. Thus, the formation of sounds into music requires the combination of various sounds and tones in a harmonious sequence. Also, music "… is the combination of sound and silence in an organized fusion" (Wikipedia). This implies that quietude is a constituent of music, implying that in music there are intervals where no sound is heard, yet everything is in a harmonic structure to produce euphony to the listening ears of man.

Music is categorized as to type, namely: blues music, jazz music, rock and roll music, hip-hop (disco), pop music, folk music, dance music, gospel music and so on. The focus of this paper is on gospel music; thus a descriptive detail of the various types of music that have been mentioned will not be given here. The gospel music is a type of music that is concerned with Christian songs. "Gospel music usually has dominant vocals rendered off with song

use of harmony and with Christian lyric" (Wikipedia). This means that gospel music involves lyrics that are sung in association of the sounds of other sounds such as the clapping of hands, stamping of foot, playing of the piano, drums, flute cymbals, guitar or other musical sound instruments. "Gospel songs are used for many purposes, including aesthetic, pleasure, religious, ceremonial and entertainment purposes"(Wikipedia). Thus, gospel music is used for worship purposes, relaxation, and other religious rites such as marriage, naming ceremonies, birthdays, and burials. Gospel music also have a form called gospel blues that is played in combination of blues, guitar and evangelism lyrics. There is also another type of gospel music called Christian music. Christian music is also referred to as country music. This genre of gospel music has a country flair.

The Relevance of Music

Since it has been established that music refers to pleasant sounds that are sung or played on musical instruments, it is relevant to mention some of its functions to human beings below:

a. Music stimulates the mind by quickening it into great thoughts about a conceived subject.
b. Music is a mood enhancer because it is used to ease off stress and psychological pains and trauma.
c. It enables one to feel all the emotions that one experiences in life.
d. Music is sportive in nature, because of this when it is sung and danced the whole body is vigorously warmed up and reinvigorated.
e. Music helps one in the proper coordination of the vocal organs in the oral cavity.
f. Music helps in the development of language reasoning. This is because in the act of listening to music one has to reason along to grasp the various connotations a single word could have. Thus, it helps to increase one's intelligent quotient (IQ).
g. It leads to better brain development, since the joy of listening to music increases the flowof blood to the brain cells.
h. Music enhances the development and use of language skills like: speech and reading, since by singing the performance of the articulatory organs are improved and reading skills are enhanced since musical notations that are acquired are added skills to the regular language skills a person already has.
i. Music encourages team work, since different roles are played by different individuals towards a harmonic sonic output. Thus, music creates room for socialization of individuals.
j. Music can help to bring back a fond or lost memory about a thing.
k. Music is an integrative subject. This is because in the study of music, many subjects are involved such as: literature, fine art, linguistics, electronic, physics, computer, sociology, psychology, medicine and so on (nspired classroom).

Having briefly discussed what music is and its relevance to man, in the next sub-section, communicative effectiveness will be briefly explained.

Communicative effectiveness

According to Yul-Ifode (2001, p. 187), "Communicative effectiveness is the ability of an individual to speak any language and communicate effectively with those to whom he is talking to according to the requirements of the occasion." This implies using a language that is well understood by a large number of the audience to pass information to them. Yul-Ifode goes on to add that to communicate effectively, one should be able to send one's intentions, feelings, emotions, and ideas explicitly to other people. It also means that a presenter of information must be able to know that factors such as setting, age, sex, class, education, topic, religious or cultural background, and so on determine one's choice of language. Thus, the ability to be controlled by these sociolinguistic parameters in the transfer of information is what is known as communicative effectiveness and the reverse is called communicative ineffectiveness. In this paper, communicative effectiveness is of great importance because it plays a major role in the

multilingual presence in the gospel music that will be discussed in this paper.

Language

The term *language* has been variously defined by many language scholars depending on the person's perception of what language is. Irrespective of the numerous assertions of what language is, few definitions of this human device of transference of information will be discussed here. According to O' Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, and Rees-Miller, (2001, p. 1), "Language is in many things a system of communication, a tool for thought, a medium for self-expression, a social institution, a source of ethnic pride, and political controversy." From the above assertion by O'Grady et al., it is obvious that language can be defined from many angles which all depend on what the observer is looking at. Yul-Ifode (2001, p. 3), defines language as any system that is employed in giving, receiving, or hiding information. It can be made up of sounds and call, signals and sign, postures and gestures, including silence." This means that language is constituted of both vocal sounds and non-vocal forms, but all of which are used to pass across some information from a sender to a receiver in a social interaction.

Carnie (2007, p. 4) notes that the term *language* refers to the ability of individuals to speak any (particular) language. Carnie goes on to add that the ability to speak any known language is referred to by Chomsky as the *Human Language Capacity.* Further Carnie notes that Language (written with a capital L) is the part of the brain that allows you to speak, whereas language (with a lower case l) (also known as e-language) is an instantiation of this ability (like French or English). What Carnie tries to explain here is that there are various senses in which the term language can be used apart from being used to refer to known languages or as a code for the transference of information.

Matthews (2007, p. 215) notes that language is "The phenomenon of vocal and written communication among human beings…." This then implies that language as code of communication, could be spoken or graphically represented. Finally, according to Agbedo (2009, p. 20), "Language is the pivot on which all human activities, ranging from the most prosaic to the most profound, revolve. As an exclusively human activity, the seemingly inexhaustible potential of language is continually exploited by man for business transactions, exchanging banters, swapping yarns and gossips as well as discussing and explaining issues". From the assertion of Agbedo, it is obvious that language is an indispensable act in human existence; it must be involved in the execution of all that man does. Having considered some definitions of language, an explanation of what indigenous languages are will be discussed below.

Nigeria and Indigenous Languages

The British colonial rule brought in the English language as both official and lingua franca in the country, since the colonial masters could not speak the native multiple indigenous languages of Nigeria. After independence, Nigeria continued to use English as her official language in order to resolve the political and social problem of language in the country. According to Grimes (2000, p. 166), "Nigeria as a multilingual nation has over 515 languages. Out of these languages, 505 are still living indigenous languages, 8 are extinct, while 2 are second languages." From Grimes's assertion, one can see that Nigeria is faced with the problem of multiple linguistic situation, where there are many living functional languages, with the English language serving as the official cum lingua franca of the nation, while the French language serves as a foreign language. This situation is clearly stated in the words of Otite (2000, pp.14-20), "The linguistic situation in Nigeria is simply chaotic, and these languages are spoken by about 373 ethnic groups". This implies that apart from the multilingual nature of Nigeria, it is also faced with multiple ethnic groups.

To describe the linguistic nature in the country further, Udoh and Okon (2008, p. 14), assert that "Nigeria's official language is English. It is the official lingua franca, while the Nigerian Pidgin is the unofficial lingua franca. But in addition to this, and perhaps due to the need to break off imperialistic ties, the country has chosen three

official languages: Hausa, spoken by about 20million people in the northern region; Yoruba, spoken by about 19 million people in the western region; and Igbo, spoken by about 17 million people in a part of the south-east region. These three languages are regarded as 'major' languages. In addition to these three, there are over 500 "languages" (some with very small numbers), referred to as 'minor' languages". This shows that the linguistic situation in Nigeria is a very complex one. Indigenous languages are thus, the languages that are local (belong)to the indigenous people of Nigeria in the context of this paper. Some of these indigenous languages are: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Anaang, Kalbari, Edo, Urohbo, Fulani, Isoko, Tiv, Nembe, Degema, Ogoni, Izon, Langtang, Berom, Bokyi and so on.

Theoretical Framework

According to Ogum (2017, p.1), "The study of different styles of textual composition, the analyses of the effects that the styles produce as well as their interpretations are the preoccupations of stylistics". This means that stylistics is a field of study that seeks to inquire into the features that exist in a spoken or written text. Ogum, goes on to add that "Stylistics is a broad field that has been applied profitably to a range of disciplines". This implies that stylistics as a framework can be used to inquire into the nature of disciplines such as medicine, psychology, economics, chemistry, history and so on, since each textual composition in different disciplines will have its unique pattern of presentation of facts. Thus, any text, oral or written, can be analysed with the framework of stylistics in any known human discipline.

Linguistic stylistics is the framework that is adopted for this paper. Obadan (2017, p. 276), notes that "The credit for this approach to language study goes to Ferdinand de Saussure. This is because after his death, his student Charles Bally became the expressive stylistician as he became a stylistician". This means that it was Ferdinand who laid the foundation on which Charles Bally worked hard to promote. According to Obadan (2017, p. 276), "Linguistic stylistics is a blend of style and linguistics…." This means that in linguistic stylistics, the principles that are used in the analysis of linguistic and literary works are involved in the description of a set of data that are under consideration. The reason for this is to attain the highest possible meaning in the data. Linguistic stylistics is thus concerned with the salient cohesive linguistic and literary persuasive techniques employed in the explication of speech or writing that are employed to give a text its unique quality.

A known apparatus in linguistic stylistics are the figures of speech that are used in the analysis of creative writing in ancient Greece in 5BC. The poetic use of the figures of speech was to quicken thought or emotion. Figures of speech are also referred to as *elocutio*. Their role was to describe the relationship between form (structure) and content (meaning) of a work by focusing on the characteristic features of expression. The linguistic rules involved in linguistic stylistics are the phonological, lexical, morpho-syntactic and semantic rules of language. This, in other words, means that there is a study of both the linguistic and literary devices that are employed in the presentation of an argument or a thesis. It also means that any use of language within the confines of creative writing such as poem, drama, and prose must of necessity operate within the rules of language and *elocutio* (figures of speech).

Literary stylistics differs from Linguistic stylistics. According to Ogum (2017, p. 1),

> One of the disciplines in whichthe *what, how and why* questionsof stylistics are professionally asked and rewardingly answered is the inquiry into how literary texts are composed, why literary texts take their peculiar forms and linguistic patterns, and the specific effects and interpretations of literary experiences are embedded in literary stylistic scholarship. In its application to literature, stylistics offers a meeting point between the systematic study of human language (linguistics), and the aesthetic use of language to create and imitate experiences (literature) and much

more.

Thus, stylistics enhances textual studies in the scientific study of language and creative writings: drama, poetry and prose. Literary stylistics accounts for the values of aesthetics by the application of the device of figures of speech, while linguistic stylistics describes the organization of linguistic motifs that are employed in the conveyance of a message by the application of the principles of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Linguistic stylistics preserves the literariness of language. It observes the consistent appearance of certain structures, items, and elements that are present in a spoken or written text and interprets literary or poetic features within the principles of linguistics. Having discussed briefly the background under which the data in this paper are analysed, the next sub-section presents the methodology under which the data used were collected.

Methodology

The study adopted a quailitative research design. The primary data is a song by Monique titled: *Power Flow,* which was purposively culled from ... The method of analysis adopted in this paper is textual analysis. The reason for this is because the linguistic and literary features of the song under consideration are examined.

Data Presentation

***Power Flow* by Monique**

Stanza 1

Let your power flow
In this place
Let your healing come
In this place
I call for signs and wonders
In this place
Let your presence show
In this place (ohyeah)

Stanza 2

Anointing fall on me a
Your mercy will I see
Just like the days when power part the sea
Your power remains the same
Yes, you never change

Refrain

Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Onyeoma

Stanza 3

I worship you
Alagbawa wi mi oh
I adore Jehovah
Eledumare
I depend on you
Agbanilagbatan Oba
Your covenant is sure oh
Yes, you never change yeah eh

Stanza 4

Anointing fall on me
Your glory will I see (oh, oh, oh)
Just like the days when power part the sea
Your power remain the same
Yes, you never change
Baba

Refrain

Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Onyeoma
Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Fi agbara re han
Onye oma

Stanza 5

Emmanuel e comforter, oh
Emmanuel e redeemer
Emmanuel my protector, oh
Iwo ni my sign and wonder
Agbanilagba tan, oh

Awoni lagba tan
Iwo lato ri shey
Iwo lato farati
Raise your voice

Refrain
Fi agbara re han (Lion of the tribeof Judah)
Fi agbara re han (your power part the waters)
Fi agbara re han (you are Lord you're alive)
Onye oma (you're able, you're faithful)
Fi agbara re han (covenant keeping God)
Fi agbara re han (you're the ancient of days)
Onye oma

Stanza 6
Emmanuel e comforter oh (Fi agbara re han)
Emmanuel e redeemer oh (Fi agbara re han)
Emmanuel my provider, oh (Fi agbara re han)
Iwo ni my sign and wonder (Onye oma)

Stanza 7
Emmanuel my comforter
Emmanuel e redeemer, oh
Emmanuel my provider, oh
Iwo ni my sign and wonder
Iwo ni my sign and wonder, oh
Emmanuel Emmanuel onye oma
Hallelujah!

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

A literary analysis of *Power Flow* by Monique

Power Flow by Monique is a song that is compositely written by Michael Olayinka Abdul, P. V. Idemudia, and Temitope Monique Lawal. *Power Flow* was released in November 2, 2014. It is an eleven track album. Some of the *themes* of the music are adoration and supplication unto God. The song talks of the strength of God Almighty, the able and faithful one. In the first stanza, the song requests the flowing power, flowing healing and flowing presence of God. The second stanza calls for the down pour of the anointing of God as in the days when the Red Sea and the River Jordan were parted according to biblical account. The authors believe that God never changes, and because He did it then, He can still do it now. The refrain or chorus repeatedly calls for the manifestation of God's overflow of His might. The third stanza still talks of: worship, reliance on God and the unchangeable nature of God. Stanza four like the second stanza repeats the call for anointing, the glory and the revelation of the might of God. The fifth stanza talks of the functions of the son of God (Jesus Christ), who is at the centre of the Holy Trinity. The Son of God, represented by the name *Emmanuel,* is referred to as: the *comforter*, *redeemer*, *protector*, the *sign* and *wonder*. In stanza six, the attributes of *Emmanuel* (the son of God) are re-echoed. Emmanuel in the song is given the attribute of God as the *Provider,* the attribute of the Holy Spirit as the *Comforter* and He is given His own natural attribute as the *Redeemer.* This may be explained in the fact that *Emmanuel* is at the centre of the trinity. He can then serve all the functions of the *Triune*. Stanza seven is a repetition of the qualities of the Triune that are embedded in *Emmanuel,* who in the Bible refers to the son of God. The last line in stanza seven, which is a single word *Hallelujah,* denotes that victory solely belongs to God.

Figures of speech in the song/music: *Power Flow*

In the gospel music, *Power Flow,* there are some literary motifs or techniques that were employed to embellish the literary piece. Some of these as identified in this gospel music are:

a. **Simile:** Simile as a literary technique is used to compare one thing to another. In *Power Flow,* this is seen in the third line of the second and fourth stanzas which reads: *"Just like the days when power part the sea".*
b. **Imagery:** This literary device is used to create a mental picture of what is said in the mind of a listener or reader of a text. In this song, one can mentally visualise the image of an anointing power overshadowing the personality that has requested it as in the first lines of the second and fourth stanzas, which reads: *Anointing fall on me*.
c. **Repetition:** Repetition as a literary technique is the constant or recurrent use of a sound, morpheme, or word in a literary piece for

emphasis. In *PowerFlow*, this technique is commonly employed as in: *Let your…in this place, Emmanuel e, Fi agbara re han, Onye oma, I, My, Iwon ni,* and so on.

d. Symbolism: Symbolism is the representation of something by another thing that implies it.In the music, the name *Emmanuel* is used as a symbol that stands for: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

e. Mood: Mood as a literary technique informs one of the tone of a literary work. The tone of the music is that of excitement, joy, hope and dependence on a Supreme Being that has an immense ability to do great things. Hence, the song calls on the Supreme Being to make known His mighty power to many who may be in doubt. As seen in the lines: *Let your power flow* and in the line presented in the Yoruba language: *Fi agbara re han*, which means 'reveal your power to them'.

A Linguistic Analysis of *Power Flow* by Monique

In this subsection of the paper, an analysis of the music: Power flow will be given using linguistic principles.

a. Exhortation: Exhortation is a construction which pleads with someone to do something in an urgent manner. In the music *Power flow* by Monique, the first line of the first stanza is an exhortative construction because it presents a plea or a wish to a supreme being. For example: *Let your power flow.*

b. Simple Sentence: A simple sentence is a construction that is constituted of a predicate that has no embedded or coordinated construction. In the song, *Power flow,* the type of sentence that is used generally is the simple type of sentence. There is no compound or complex sentence in it. The coordination that is seen in *I call for signs and wonders* is between two lexical items: *signs* and *wonders*. The distinctive use of simple sentences in the song shows the urgency with which it is sung. For example: *Your power remains the same*.

c. Pronominalization: Pronominalization is the syntactic act using pronouns or grammatical nouns instead of lexical nouns. In the gospel song: *Power flow,* there is the use of the pronouns such as: *I, My, You, Iwoni* (you, as in the Yoruba language) *Onye* (you, as in the Igbo language). The artistes use this in order to personalize their feelings and to specify the personality in whose hands all power resides.

d. Local Languages: Local languages as used in this paper refer to the languages that are indigenous to Nigeria. In the gospel song*, Power flow,* apart from the English language which is the main language that is used, there is the presence of two local Nigerian languages namely: Igbo and Yoruba, and the Nigerian Pidgin English. For example: Igbo: *onye oma* 'the good/perfect one'; Yoruba: "Fi agbara re han", 'reveal your strength to them';*Iwoni,* 'You are';*Agbani lagbatan Oba,* 'great deliverer/king'; *Eledumare,* 'God the creator/heavenly king'; "*Baba",* 'father'; Nigeria Pidgin English: "*Your covenant is sure oh.*" The vocalic, *oh,* pidginized the construction which looks like a standard English construction. It also intensifies the certainty of the hope that the authors of the song haveon the Supreme Being. The multiplicity of languages in the song is a reflection of the sociolinguistic condition in Nigeria as a multilingual nation. This points to the fact that, in Nigeria, the ability to speak more than one language gives one the opportunity to reach a larger audience. Thus, being competent in only one language in Nigeria is a social defect.

e. Phonics: Phonics, are concerned with sounds: consonants or vowels. The vocalic *e*, sound found in: *Emmanuel e comforter oh,*…and *Emmanuel e redeemer oh…,* acts as a place holder for a determiner which could be: *the,* or *my.* In the chorus, there is a play on the[r] sound in: *Fi agbara re han.* 'reveal Your strength to them'. The last syllable in *agbara* 'strength' starts with [r] and the next word *re* 'your' begins with [r].

f. Exclamation: Exclamations are syntactic constructions that give commands that are marked with the exclamation mark (!). In the

music, because of the urgency of the tone, many of the constructions are exclamatory sentences. For example: *Let your power flow!Raise your voice, Hallelujah!* And so on.

g. **Code Switching:** Code switching is the sociolinguistic principle of moving from one language form to another, while code mixing is the use of two or more languages in the same sentence. In *PowerFlow*, the principle of code switching is used. The first three lines of the refrain is in the Yoruba language, while the last line is the Igbo language. The languages in the music were exclusively used. The implication is that the musician sees it as style which re-echoes and re-emphasises in way what has been said in the initial stanza. Having briefly examined the literary and linguistic styles employed in *Power Flow*, one can see that Linguistic stylistics is a framework that gives an analyst a platform to critically evaluate a piece of art work.

Conclusion

This paper reveals that the use of local languages by gospel musicians is meant to promote communicative effectiveness and inclusiveness. This is to make sure that the intended message by the artiste is communicated to his audience. The combined use of English and indigenous languages in *Power Flow* reflects the multilingual nature of the country. It also shows the ability and proficiency of the people to use more than one language at a single instance of communication. It equally depicts the fact that language plays an important role in the Nigerian nation. The style of using multiple languages in Nigerian gospel music is an attempt by Nigerian gospel artistes to reach a larger audience. It also reflects an encouragement and freedom to use Nigerian local languages.

Findings also show that the local languages add aesthetic effects to the gospel music, *Power Flow.* The use of Nigerian local languages in the music depicts the attempt by the artiste to appeal to the emotions of the Nigerian audience. Finally, the use of Nigerian local languages in Nigerian Gospel Music, it was discovered, show cases the Nigerian languages to the world at large. The analysis of the music using the tools of linguistic stylistics framework gives one the opportunity to deeply unravel the literary and linguistic contents of the music.

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