

CODE-SWITCHING IN SONGS AS A TOOL FOR NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

The use of code-switching in the Nigerian music industry is a prevalent trait that is employed by artists in the composition of the lyrics of their songs in order to reach out to a wider audience and communicate ethnicity. This has become one of the major tools of enhancing and promoting unity in cultural and language diversity in Nigeria. The use of code-switching is not only evident in the secular sector alone, but in the gospel sector too. Code-switching in these songs does not only make the song easily acceptable for those who speak the languages involved but also makes it more appealing as it relates to the cultural base of the listeners. It has become a recent phenomenon motivated by the expansion of the mass media that provides unprecedented opportunities for people all over the world to be easily exposed to language and culture other than their own culture, thereby enhancing nation building and growth. This paper focuses on code-switching involving English and one or more of the major languages in Nigeria, as a strategic tool used by the artists to achieve certain social goals in communication which also helps in eradicating language endangerment.

Keywords: Code-switching, Culture, Language, Nation building, Music, Unity.

Introduction

According to Llamas and Watt (2010:1), “Language not only reflect who we are but, in some sense, it is who we are and it defines us both directly and indirectly. We must also note that identity cannot exist in vacuum because people identify and communicate with each other for definite purposes and it could seem that the main purpose is for the economic subsistence of the society. This is because without an economy to sustain it, it would appear that language, society and culture have no foundation upon which to exist. Language, culture and

society are related in that, language operates in society and language is an expression of culture. However, we can locate identity in language (Bucholtz & Hall: 2010), just as it is possible to locate language in identity.

In everyday interaction, people usually choose or use different codes in different situations. As we know, code switching and mixing are not limited to just conversations alone, as this has been the focus of most scholars. As observed, code switching and code mixing are phenomena that are also used in music by Nigerian artistes in both the gospel and the secular sector; creatively to reach out the wider audience, accommodate and communicate their message to their listeners. It can also be seen that artistes sometimes use the code switching, to communicate ethnicity. With the use of this language, the artiste is able to connect with people from his own background.

Code switching, in conversation is different from code switching in music. It is a deliberate style used by the artiste who would have prepared and reflected upon the lyrics before the release of the song. Therefore, we can say that artistes who code switch, use this as a way of announcing their identity and ethnicity. According to Davies and Bentahila (2006), code switching in song lyrics is by no means a recent phenomenon motivated by the expansion of mass media that provides unprecedented opportunities for people all over the world to be exposed to music originated from cultures other than their own. For this reason, artistes who seek commercial success within the huge market of popular music, use code switching as a stylistic innovation in their song lyrics.

In Nigeria music industry, one can hardly find a single song that does not feature any of the types of the code switching, using English with Nigerian pidgin or any of the Nigerian language. This paper seeks to address the nature of code switching as a linguistic phenomenon, the stylistic devices of this trend, the implications of the practice, that is; the effect code switching has in communication and also to check the strategy that Nigerian artistes employ to carry this out effectively and how this contributes to nation building. This research will be looking at the various Nigerian songs which will be selected in the course of this work. Six songs are selected for this study; three gospel music and three secular music. These songs will be selected from artistes who have had great reviews and have gained recognition in the music industry because of their musical achievement.

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this research:

1. To identify and describe Nigerian songs focusing on the artist's use of code-switching.
2. To describe the importance of code switching to the Nigerian music industry.
3. To examine the 'art' of nation building and how it relates to music.
4. To provide insights to how code switching in songs contribute to nation building.

Literature Review

Code-Switching

Code-switching can be defined as the use of more than one language, variety, or style by a speaker within an utterance or discourse. According to Koike (1987: Scotton Sury, 1977) in Nakamura (2005:1679), "from a sociolinguistics point of view, code switching has been studied as an important strategy for establishing social relationships". It has been shown to be a personal communication device for enriching discourse.

(Mujiono et al, 2013:48) states that "code switching is the use of two or more languages within an utterance or what linguistics call code switching, is fairly common especially between two of the most used languages in the country". Wardaugh (2006:101) states that "code-switching, also called code mixing can occur in conversation between the speakers' turns or within a single speaker's turn". Code switching is selecting a particular code whenever people choose to speak, and may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes even within sometimes very short utterances.

Code Switching in Song Lyrics

In the music industry today, we can see that there are many song lyrics that used more than one language. Code switching in song lyrics has become a common phenomenon but at such, code switching in naturally occurring conversation is different from code switching in music.

According to Davies and Bentahila (2008:2); "Code switching in addition to being a useful resource for the bilingual in everyday interaction with other bilingual, may also serve as a poetic function, contributing to the aesthetic and rhetorical effects of discourse that is

not spontaneous but carefully constructed".

Code switching in song lyrics is a deliberate style used by the artiste who would have prepared and reflected upon the lyrics before the release of the songs. Artiste are conscious of the possibility that their words may be received by people outside their immediate context of language use. Nigeria artiste try as much as possible to communicate to their audience by telling stories, explaining personal life experiences thereby switching code from English to a Nigeria local language or NPE (Nigerian pidgin English). They use this alternation in such a way that even listeners that are not from the same cultural background end up enjoying the mixture of languages even when they do not understand the lyrics of the language used.

Sarkar et al (2005:20) states that code switching as it is artfully and premeditatedly employed by for instance song writers can offer insights into the way languages interact to index, as well as in act. The collective cultural and linguistic identity of a particular speech community. By using code switching, the song writer shows their identity and ability in using more than one language.

Nation building

Nation building can be understood as the process that involves the reconstruction of a nation's cultural, political, economic and social institutions in order to establish a stable and cohesive society. Nation building involves various activities and strategies with the sole purpose of fostering national unity, promoting economic development, strengthening governance structures and enhancing social cohesion. This paper aims at describing how code-switching in Nigerian songs serve as a tool for nation building.

This next section analyzes 6 different; 3 hip hop songs and 3 gospel songs. Each of these songs experiences a switch in two or more different languages and the three major switches are inter-sentential, intra-sentential and a change in pronunciation and spelling.

Methodology

The collection of this data used for this research is gotten from the output of 2 Nigerian secular

artistes and 2 Nigerian gospel artistes that have made waves in the music industry locally and internationally with multiple awards to their records in the past 6years. These songs comprise of 4 altogether which are: Secular music- Adekunle Gold" Orente", Kizz daniel ft. Tekno "Buga". In the gospel music,we have: Chioma jesus ft. Mercy Chinwo "Okemmuo", Preye Odede "Bulie". The lyrics were gathered from online music libraries(Musixmatch and shazam), audio and books. In this research, the song selection is gotten from Igbo, Nigerian pidgin English and Yoruba.

This tables below gives us an information about the name of the artiste, the selectedsong, the year of release and the languages in which the song was code switched.

TABLE 1: Nigerian hip-hop artists, songs, year of release and their code-switching language

Artiste	Title Of Song	Year Of Release	Code-SwitchedLanguages
Adekunle Gold	Orente	2015	English, Youruba, Igbo, Npe
Kizz Daniel Ft. Tekno	Buga	2022	English, Yoruba,Npe

TABLE 2: Nigerian gospel artist, songs, year of release and their code-switching languages.

Chioma Jesus Ft.Mercy Chinwo	Okemmuo	2020	English, Igbo
Preye Odede	Bulie	2016	English, Igbo

One noticeable point in the table above is that all of these songs are done in four languages: English, Igbo, Yoruba, and Pidgin (Nigerian Pidgin English). For the purpose of clarity on this work, these songs will be arranged numerically in lines according to it arrangement in the appendix.

Data Analysis of Selected Songs

‘ORENTE’ By Adekunle Gold

This song is a blend of highlife and afro pop. “Orente” is a love song about the faithfulness of a woman who adores a man despite all the odds against them. It also tells us the strong connection between the artist and his lover. A major part of verse one and two is written in NPE and a few mixtures of Igbo and Yoruba words.

(1) oya now. (Let's start now)

(2). Shout out to my one and only

(3) na you be my alobam. (You're my real friend)

In line (1), the artiste uses a Yoruba word (oya) which signifies "let's start" to begin his song. It reflects the artiste's closeness to the audience as he carries them along in expressing his feelings.

Line (2-4) is an intra-sentential switch. Here, the artiste switches from English to NPE then to Igbo and finally ends in English. In these two lines (2 and 3), the artist attempts to reach out to his alobam which is a slang that originates from the Eastern part of Nigeria to mean "my real friend". He uses NPE to admit that he cannot deny his lover

(4) A le ma ni ile lori, Orente no dey complain oh! (We might not have a house, but my baby doesn't complain)

(5) Dorobuchi dey toast you (A rich man woo you)

(6) omoge to loyal. (A loyal lady)

(7) Baby mi to sure ju. (My sure baby)

In line (4), we have an inter-sentential switch. This is because the first clause starts with a Yoruba language while the other is in NPE.

In line (5), he explains the faithfulness of his lover. The word "Dorobuchi" is a slang used in NPE to describe a range of personalities. It can stand for a rich, handsome, cool person in this context, it refers to a rich man. He explains that even without a house, his lover still loves him.

In line (6&7), the type of code switching shown there is intra-sentential. In this verse 2, the

artistes show the confidence he has in his lady and it also shows the extent to which his lady is being faithful and loyal. The word 'omoge' is a Yoruba word that is used to call a young, beautiful lady/girl. Though it can also be replaced with the Yoruba word, 'obirin'. "Orente" as being used by the artiste is an ancient word in Yoruba which literal meaning is a lady who is elegant. In this context, it is used to depict a lady who is beautiful, loyal and well-mannered in Yoruba. He didn't use the name because he lacked a particular equivalent to be used but he used it for cultural coloration and for its stylistic effect. His alternation from Yoruba to English in the lyrics, indicates a Yoruba cultural background.

BUGA by Kizz Daniel ft. Tekno

The song 'Buga' is a mid-tempo Afro pop and Afro beat record. The artiste said the song was meant to celebrate dedication, hard work and success. He added that "after one has put in the work, one should let one's results speak loudly. He further emphasized that people work hard for their money and they should be proud to flaunt the efforts of their hard work. It actually teaches us to focus on appreciating our own efforts and hard work by taking care of ourselves. The first verse of the song has a more of NPE and Yoruba with a little English.

(8) gbera, go get that mullah (get up, go get that money)

(9) *Kala gbowo yen low dealer. (Be wicked in collecting the money from the dealer)*

(10) you suppose to dey jaiye. (You supposed to be enjoying life)

(11). kilo kan mi kan pesin matter. (What concerns me with someone's business)

(12). Person wey don mad oh. (Someone that is mad)

(13) When I land, I land softly on a sofa floor

(14). so far so good, ko ni baje. (So far so good, it won't spoil)

In Line (8) the artiste makes use of a Yoruba word 'gbera' which means 'get up/takeoff' to begin the switch. The switch used there is an inter-sentential switch. The artiste further makes use of an American slang 'mullah' which means 'money' whose origin is unknown. The word 'mullah' signifies an Islamic religious leader. Another theory speculates that the word comes from the Spanish word 'mula' meaning 'mule' which signifies the beast of burden

which was historically used as a form of currency.

Line (10) has an inter-sentential switch which occurs at the word finals. In line (11-14) they're all single sentence with evidence of an inter-sentential switch that goes from Yoruba to NPE and the other, English to Yoruba. In the sense that, the alternation occurs at the word initials and finals of the sentence. In this verse, the artiste tries to encourage the audience to work hard and appreciate their efforts no matter how small it is. He uses more of Yoruba to connect more to his audience and to show his identity as a proud Yoruba man.

The chorus has a combination of English, Yoruba and NPE.

(15). Buga won, lemme Buga won. (Flaunt it to them, let me flaunt it to them)

(16) lemme see you dey buga o. (Let me see you intimidate them/flaunt it)

In lines (15-16), there's an intra-sentential switch that occurs within the sentences. The artiste switches from Yoruba to Pidgin and then back to Yoruba in line 15 while the switch goes from Pidgin to English then back to Pidgin and ends with Yoruba (Buga) in line 16. The artiste makes use of a Yoruba word 'buga' in order to let his audience understand what he's talking about. The word means to unapologetically flaunt yourself as well as your success and achievement.

OKEMMUO by Chioma Jesus ft. Mercy Chinwo

'Okemmuo' is a spirit lifting song that describes God as the spirit of all spirit and also a Covenant keeping. The song has a combination of Igbo and English. The Intro consists of both languages.

(17) chukwu okike, abba father. (God of creation, abba father)

Line (17) is a single sentence that begins with Igbo and ends with English. The chorus below also indicates code switching.

(18) *Okemmuo Okemmuo, you're the covenant keeping God. (The spirit of the spirit, the spirit of the spirit, you're the covenant keeping God)*

There's evidence of inter-sentential switch.

(19). Ebube dike n'agha. (Mighty man of war)

(20). There's nothing you cannot do

(21). Echeta obi e sike. (Him who I remember and have faith)(22).

Yes, you never ever die oh oh oh oh

In the third verse, there's an evidence of code change. Line (19-22) involve sentences with an inter-sentential switch. It switches from Igbo to English. This continuous switch of codes could have been born out of a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling of reverence for God.

In the fourth verse, there's evidence of code switching.

(23) Okemmuo, God of victory. (the spirit of the spirit, God of victory)

The artiste intermittently switches from Igbo to English. She uses code switching to show her depth of gratitude to God who has always fulfilled his promises in her life.

(24). Eze mmuo, onye dika gi. (The highest priest who is like unto you)

(25). You're the covenant keeping God

(26). Chukwuokike, onye nwe mo. (God of creation, owner of my life)

In line (24-26), the switch observed here is an intra-sentential switch in which, there is an alternation from Igbo to English and then to Yoruba. The artiste uses code switching to display God as a covenant keeper who can never fail and as for those who might have given up, it is a wakeup call for them to have total confidence in God.

BULIE by Preye Odede

'Bulie' is a thorough worship song meant to serenade the Almighty and also to get his people to hallow his name. This song is deep and melancholy in its tone. The lyrics of the song show light the feeling of sadness. The artiste thanks God for never changing and having his back in the toughest time. It is a song that will inspire faith and happiness in Christ.

The song has a combination of Igbo and English.

(27) From age to age, idighi agbanwe agbanwe. (From age to age, you never change)

(28) You never never change, Chim o. (you never never change, my God)

(29) When I call on You, idighi agharipu. (when I call on you, you never disappoint)

(30) Ocean divider, odighi onye dika gi (Ocean divider, there's no one like you)

(31) He's the king of glory oh oh oh, Eze. (He's the king of glory oh oh oh, king)

In the chorus, from line (27-31), the artiste employs the intra-sentential switch whereby there's a switch from English to Igbo then back to English and then to Igbo, vice versa to complete the sentence.

The Role of Code-Switching in Nation Building

Code-switching in songs promotes inclusivity and cultural appreciation. When an artiste rather than focusing on only his native language, decides to add another language (possibly as a more general language), it shows that, despite appreciating his own culture and language, the artist values and respects other cultures and intends them to feel involved. This also bridges the gaps between linguistic communities and reduces the possibility of exclusion and discrimination and members of other ethnic groups in the nation. Code-switching in songs tends to facilitate effective communication with other ethnic groups by helping people of different cultural background and language, understand sometimes, even speak the language without formal education. In other words, it permits the artist to promote a sense of national identity and unity. Through the use of code-switching, the artists are able to connect to a wider audience and preserve indigenous languages and culture, which contribute to a stronger sense of national identity and pride. Furthermore, music as a form of arts, contributes to nation building especially through the tool of code-switching.

Findings and Conclusion

This paper examined 4 songs collectively; 2 secular songs and 2 gospel songs. The findings reveal three types of codeswitching and code-mixing namely; inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and that involving change in pronunciation. Most of the data incorporates the inter-sentential switch, while few has the intra-sentential and that of change in pronunciation and spellings. Code-switching in these songs, is seen as a strategic choice made by speakers in order to achieve certain social or interactional goals in conversation.

It is discovered that the gospel artistes seem to use more of code-switching than the secular artiste in their music. These artistes use their indigenous languages to demonstrate their bilingualism. Some of the artistes who wrote about love in their songs write the most

sensitive and emotional parts of the song in their own indigenous languages. To them, their indigenous languages can express their feelings better than any other language. Such feelings are better expressed in their local languages which can be used to better capture and describe exactly how they feel. Speakers often code-switch because it tends to make the speaker feel at home without much attention paid to the grammatical formation. Code-switching as used in this data, makes the songs acceptable by both the high and the low in the society because they can largely understand the message and identify with the culture, and at the same time bridging the gap between different linguistic communities. With respect to the reasons why people code-switch, this work further reveals that in addition to the personal reasons why the artistes code-switch, it also serves notable functions in terms of nation building. People tend to learn, understand and speak other languages used in the songs without formal education amongst other, already listed in the previous section. Code switching in Igbo could be a subtle way of resisting the overbearing influence of English in the Nigerian social setting, especially among the elites. It has been observed that most Nigerians cannot make full statements, in social contexts, without code-switching. This is an indication that code-switching has become a habit for most bilinguals in Nigeria. The data reflects attitude of Nigerians towards their indigenous languages. The use of native languages in these song lyrics has gone a long way not only to re-awaken the native speakers who have abandoned their local language but also to awaken the interest of non-native speakers in other languages and cultures. This helps preserve and promote indigenous languages and cultures, which contribute to a stronger sense of national identity and pride.

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