

SOCIO-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC

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Abstract

This paper examines the socio-stylistic analysis of Nigerian gospel music. The qualitative research design was adopted in analyzing the data collected using descriptive content analysis. The source of data for this paper is primarily two lyrics of selected Nigerian gospel musicians-Mercy Chinwo and Amaka Okwuoha. The findings of this paper reveal that the Nigerian gospel musicians' code-switch and that the codes in most cases are English, Indigenous languages, and Nigerian Pidgin. This paper further establishes that Nigerian gospel musicians code-switch to show solidarity, express their happiness, surprise, and excitement and share their identity with their audience. Finally, the paper establishes that Nigerian gospel musicians use some other stylistic features such as simile, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, metaphor symbolism, apostrophe, onomatopoeia, slang, and repetition to draw the attention of their audience and communicate their feelings and emotion more effectively.

KEYWORDS: SOCIOLINGUISTICS, NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC, STYLISTICS, CODE-SWITCHING.

1. Introduction

Gospel music is a well-known music among Christians in Nigeria. Nigeria gospel songs are heard in all parts of Nigeria and are being appreciated and respected by Nigerian Christians. In blending Nigerian languages, English and Nigerian Pidgin, Nigerian gospel musicians show a high level of creativity and inventiveness. The way they write their lyrics in indigenous languages and blend them with English and or Nigerian Pidgin demonstrates that a lot of innovations and skills have been introduced into their music and also show that they do not forget their root or background. These gospel musicians also use their indigenous languages, Nigerian Pidgin and English to set up their identity. The use of language in this manner has been described in sociolinguistics as code-switching and code-mixing. Nigeria gospel musicians usually connect to their God, tell stories, and explain their personal experiences and life occurrences using languages which they switch between their indigenous language, Nigerian Pidgin English or English. This paper examines the trend of code-switch/code-mixing and stylistic strategies used by Nigerian gospel artists.

The present study contributes to the study of sociolinguistics and stylistics aspects of language studies. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. The data presented in this study were collected from the lyrics of two selected Nigerian gospel musicians-Mercy Chinwo and Amaka Okwuoha.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the terms style/ stylistics, code-switching, and the theories that apply to this study.

Style has generally been seen as the way an individual or groups of people distinctly do things or perform some actions. According to Leech (1969), style is how an act is spoken, written, or performed. It is the manifestation of how a person speaks or writes. This may include his/her peculiar way of word use, sentence construction, and the use of figures of speech. Leech and Short (1981) state that style refers to how language is used in a given context, by a given person, and for a given purpose. Similarly, Birch (1989) states that language and style never move beyond a concentration on the supremacy of words. He observes that words somehow contain meanings that manifest in ways that suggest they are different from ordinary language.

Olorunfoba-Oju (1999) sees style as almost synonymous with variety. This means that style refers to how expressions differ according to their various contexts.

Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". He believes that there is a relationship between linguistics and literary discourse since one helps in the analysis of the other. He states further that stylistics occupies a central place between linguistics and literary criticism and its role is to mediate between the two. Ekwutosi (2009) states that stylistics is an aspect of linguistics that studies the features of the distinctive uses of varieties of language in different situations. It tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.

2.1. Code-Switching/Code-Mixing

A lot has been said about code-mixing or code-switching in the literature. Code-switching has been described as a communicative option available to a bilingual member of the speech community as much the same as switching between styles or dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker. (Romaine 1994:59). Nwode et al (2018:16) define code-switching or mixing as the use in daily conversation of elements belonging to more than one language consciously or unconsciously, by speakers who have two or more languages in their repertoires when speaking with other speakers who are bilingual in the same languages. They noted that code-switching research has progressed under three main perspectives a. The psycholinguistic perspective claims that the altering of the human internal mechanism is responsible for the coding and decoding. b. The grammatical or structural perspective sees code-switching as a phenomenon subject to grammatical rules and constraints. c. The sociolinguistic perspective emphasizes the social and psychological motivations for code-switching. They observed that code-switching among Igbo-English bilinguals is generally associated with the younger generation and the use of mixed code. They claim that the Igbo-English mixture has become so natural to Igbo speakers that they can hardly make a sentence in Igbo without the use of one or more two words of the English language. Authors have not been consistent in using the terms and sometimes this has led to confusion, controversy, and ambiguity.

Different terms have been proposed in the literature to capture the differences between code-switching and code-mixing. Code-switching is associated with terminology changes at phrase boundaries (inter-sentence switching), while code-mixing is the changing or mixing of languages within a sentence (intra-sentential switching) (Martin 1999; Pagett 2006). Code-mixing is an admixture of language components of two or more languages in the same utterances at various stages (Yee Ho, 2007). It also represents the exchange of language models, like morphemes or sentences from one language into another. That is representing all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from more than one language occur in one sentence

(Kachru, 1983, Muysken 2000). Some authors use the term code-switching for both phenomena and distinguish switching between sentences and switching fragments also known as inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code-switching (Gardener-Chloros 2009, Holmes 1992, Wardhaugh 1986). Some of the reasons that motivate code-switching according to Ritchie (2012) are comparative conditions, reiteration, deep-rooted social knowledge, etc. Code-switching according to Holmes (1992) can be used to express solidarity. In this case, the speaker switches to show that he belongs to a group or shares ethnicity with the addressee. This type is short and it is primarily for social reasons. Holmes (1992) also observes that a speaker can also code-switch to quote a person and this is known as referentially oriented code-switching. Wardhaugh observes two types of code-switching-situational and metaphorical code-switching. Code-switching, where the languages used in conversation change according to the situation without changing the topic in the conversation is called situational code-switching, while code-switching where language changes according to the change in the topic known as metaphorical code-switching.

As observed by Skiba (1997), code-switching is not to be regarded as interference because it supplements speech. He explains that code-switching provides continuity in speech and enables a speaker to convey attitudes and other emotions which also as noted by Skiba (1997) increases the impact of the speaker's speech. This is the actual situation of Nigerian gospel music. Akande (2013) observes that Nigerian Hip hop artists facilitate and construct identity through language choice.

2.2. Code-switching in music

Music is generally a genre of art that has a lot of characteristics and multipurpose effects on its listener. It connects to rhymes and amalgamates to different tunes (Muhammad et al 2010). It is a prominent aspect that the trend of code-mixing or switching has eminently in the music world. Roni (2008) observes that code-switching and code-mixing are used in songs that are different from general communication. Some researchers who have investigated some aspects of songs (Muhammad 2010; Roni 2008) observe that music cannot escape code-switching. Presently, code-mixing and switching of English into Nigerian indigenous languages is at its peak in gospel songs which is reflective of socio-cultural deviation. In most Nigerian gospel music, code-switching/code-mixing of indigenous Nigerian language and English or Nigerian Pidgin are phenomena that are currently in use these days. Nigerian gospel music has become one of the places where English or Nigerian Pidgin code-switching or code-mixing has a high profile. According to Leech and Short (1981:78-79), the elements of styles are figures of speech that include metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox, simile, etc.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

We adopt three different models in explaining the choices that bilinguals make in conversation. They are:

The Communication Accommodation Theory

The Markedness Model Theory

Relevance theory

Myers-Scotten notes that these models point out the parts played by people in negotiating their way through everyday interaction by choosing from the linguistic varieties available to them.

2.3.1. The Communication Accommodation Theory

This is a framework that aims at predicting and explaining many of the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain or decrease the social distance in interaction (Giles and Ogay 2007). Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) studies the various ways in which we accommodate our communication, our motivations for doing so, and the consequences. Giles and Ogay (2007) explain that CAT addresses interpersonal communication issues. Giles and Ogay (2007) outline four basic principles of CAT as follows:

- a. Communication is influenced not only by features of the immediate situation and the participant's initial orientation to it but also by the socio-historical context in which the interaction is embedded.
- b. Interactants have expectations regarding the optimal level of accommodation. They explain that these explanations are based on a stereotype about outgroup members as well as on the prevailing social and situational norms.
- c. Communication is not only a matter of merely and only exchanging information about facts, ideas, and emotions, but salient social category memberships are often negotiated during an interaction through the process of accommodation.
- d. Interactants use specific communication strategies (in particular, convergence and divergence) to signal their attitude towards each other and their respective social groups.

2.3.2 Markedness Model:

This is a (Myers-Scotten 1993) model that tries to establish a principled procedure that both speakers and listeners used to judge any linguistic choice that they might make or hear as more or less marked, given the interactions which occur. This model attempts to explain language choices as negotiations of self-identity and desired relationships with others. Myers-Scotten (1993) explains that speakers have a sense of markedness regarding the linguistic facts available to them for any interaction. The Nigerian gospel artists do not only make choices of code but they make choices of code based on which choice brings them the best outcomes.

2.3.3 Relevance theory:

This is a theory that interprets utterances and also checks how the hearer interprets the message from the speaker. According to Wilson and Sperber (1995:260), there are two principles of relevance theory. They are the cognitive principle and communicative principle of relevance.

The cognitive principle of relevance states that a speaker should try to make the utterance a bit relevant to guarantee processing by the hearer. So, when gospel songs are drawn from the immediate environment to stress religious concern, the information will be processed by the listener in the same context.

The communicative principle of relevance states that utterances create expectations of optimal relevance. The interpretation of gospel songs in Nigeria could be difficult or easy based on the style employed by the artists. Some gospel artists in Nigeria apply various features of style to manipulate the mental states of their listeners. Theories used in this paper explain how

the listeners interpret the message of Nigerian gospel songs depending on how the artists present their ideas.

study.

3. Methodology

Two Nigerian gospel musicians were selected in this research. These two artists are among the Nigerian gospel musicians that have been known to write their songs in Nigerian languages, English and Nigerian Pidgin.

A lot of Nigerian gospel artists code-switch and use some other stylistic devices in their song lyrics. This made us have too many options to choose from. In making our choice, there was no specific procedure followed in selecting the songs that were used in this work. This is because any Nigerian gospel song with code-switching and other stylistic feature in it was all we needed for the research. Two female Nigerian gospel artists were randomly selected. The paper is on the socio-stylistic analysis of these songs. Therefore, any Nigerian gospel songs with code-switching and other stylistic features were enough. These helped us to reflect the socio-stylistic features in the songs. The names of the two artists chosen are Mercy Chinwo and Amaka Okwuoha.

Amaka Okwuoha popularly known as ‘Chioma Jesus’ is a Nigerian gospel musician. She is a very famous female gospel musician who hails from Imo state, located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. She became popular with her song 'Chioma Jesus' in 2003. Since then, her name plays a big role in the gospel music world. She sings and writes her songs in Igbo, English, and even Yoruba. She became well-known in 2010 after being nominated for a category in the Delta Yadah Award, which she won in 2011 and 2012. Delta Yadah is an annual concert that is usually held at Asaba, Delta State located in the South-Southern part of Nigeria, which features seasoned and professional gospel music ministers who are proudly some of Nigeria's finest. Amaka Okwuoha is one of the true representatives of peculiar Nigerian gospel music. Her music and lyrics are not only known in Nigeria but in Africa at large.

Mercy Chinwo is a Nigerian gospel musician, singer, and songwriter. She hails from Rivers State, located in the South-Southern part of Nigeria. She has won many awards. She won the Nigerian Idol Season 2 in 2012. In 2018, she was awarded the best gospel artist at the CLIMAX Awards 2018. In 2019 at the maiden edition of the African Gospel Awards (2019), she was awarded (1) the African Gospel New Artiste of the Year. (2) African Gospel Female Artist of the Year. (3) African Gospel Song of the Year.

4. Data Presentation and Discussion of Finding

Three different songs by two Nigerian gospel artists were analyzed. Two songs from Mercy Chinwo and one from Amaka Okwuoma.

The table below shows the names of the selected gospel musician, their selected songs, and the code-switched languages that can be found in each of the songs.

Name of Artiste	Title of the song	Year of Release	Code-switching language
Mercy Chinwo	Chinedum	2018	English, Nigerian Pidgin, and Igbo
Mercy Chinwo	Power Belongs to	2019	English and Nigerian

	Jesus		pidgin
Amaka Okwuoma	Okemmuo	2018	English and Igbo

4.1. Song 1

Chinedum

Ah ah ah ah
 Oh oh oh oh
 Chinedum mo
 EeZee Conceptz
 (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
 Ah ah ah ah (Chinedum mo)
 Oh oh oh oh(Chinedum mo)
 Chinedum mo (Chinedum mo)
 Anywhere you lead me, I will go
 'Cause you're the way, truth, and the Life
 Jesus!
 You'll never leave me nor forsake me
 Except you build a house
 The builders build in vain
 Me a'go follow you dey go
 Anywhere you lead me, I go go
 Jesus!
 My life is for your Glory
 Your Glory
 Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo
 Taking me higher eh (Chinedum mo)
 Jesus! (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
 You never leave me nor forsake me
 Chinedum o, dum o, dum o, dum o, dum o
 You've taken me higher eh eh eh
 Jesus, (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
 My Life is for your glory
 Your glory! (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
 You make the little things I do be like say na big thing oo
 Your Grace makes the difference, just dey embarrass me
 I like it oh oh oh
 I like the way you dey lead me oh oh oh
 Promotion everywhere
 Contract everywhere
 Plenty money everywhere
 'Cause you dey lead me every day
 I say I like it oh oh oh
 I like the way you dey lead me oh oh oh
 Chinedum mo (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo) dum mo dum mo

Jesus, you've taken me higher eh eh eh
Jesus (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
You never leave me nor forsake me
Chinedum mo, dum mo, dum mo (Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo)
Jesus, you've taken me higher eh
Jesus, Jesus
My life is for your glory
Your glory (Chinedum mo)
Except, You build a house
The builder builds in vain
Me a'go follow you dey go
Anywhere You lead me, I go go
Jesus!
My life is for Your glory
Your Glory
Chinedum mo, dum mo, dum mo, dum mo
Me I go dey follow you o (Follow you o, Follow you o, Follow you o)
Jesus!
My life is for your Glory
Glory
You make the little things I do be like say na big thing o
Your grace makes the difference just dey embarrass me
I like it oh oh oh oh oh
I like the way you dey lead me oh oh oh
Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo
Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo
Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo, Chinedum mo

In this song, Mercy Chinwo tries to express that the Almighty God directs her ways. She explains that Jesus leads her without forsaking her. A major part of the verse is written in Igbo and English with few lines in Nigerian pidgin. In the first verse of the song the artiste started by using Igbo to tell us how God leads her. *Ah ah ah oh oh oh chinedum mo* 'Ah ah God leads me' to explain to her audience the way God directs her. But when she wanted to talk about her response to God's directive she switches to English and Nigerian pidgin. This part carries a more sensational manner.

1. Ah ah ah oh oh
2. Chinedum mo (chinedum mo) 'God you are the one that leads me '
3. Anywhere you lead me, I will go.
4. Cause you're the way, truth and the life Jesus!
5. Except you build a house, the builder builds in vain
6. Me a'go follow you dey go
7. Anywhere you lead me, I go go

The song starts with an exclamation in line (1). This means that the artist expresses surprise at how God directs her. Line (2) tells how God leads her in every way which she expresses in Igbo. Line (3) expresses the trust she has in God in directing her. In this line (3), the artiste

switches from Igbo to English and this shows more intensity of the trust she expresses. In lines (2) and (3) there is an inter-sentential switch. In lines (4), and (5), she continues to express her closeness to God and acceptance of his leadership over her. We observe that the artist switching from one language to the other brings beauty into the song and also demonstrates her effort of fostering solidarity with her listeners.

The second stanza of the song started in English as the artiste expresses more confidence in God and also switches to Igbo as she explains the kind of love and conviction she has for God.

8. Jesus! My life is for your glory.
9. Chinedum mo chinedum mo
10. Taking me higher (chinedum mo)
11. You never leave me nor forsake me
12. You make little thing I do be like say na big thing o
13. Your grace makes the difference just dey embarrass me.

Lines 8, 9,10, and 11 also lay more emphasis on God's direction and her response of love and trust.

The artiste chooses to express herself in Igbo, English, and Nigerian pidgin to flaunt her bilingual identity to her listeners and this also shows the feeling of solidarity with her audience.

4.2. Song 2

Power belongs to Jesus

Power, power
Power belongs to
Power, power
Power belongs to
Power, power
Power belongs to
Power, power
Power, power, power, power
All the power belongs to Jesus
Power, power, power, power
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level eh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level eh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Uh ah
You already know o
Uh ah
You already know ah
You know say the God I serve
Is a biggy biggy biggy God oh
The God I serve is a biggy biggy biggy God oh

You know say the God I serve Is a mighty mighty God oh
The God I serve is a mighty mighty God oh
Uhmhhh ahhh
See I've tasted of His power ooo
E no dey do mago mago
E no dey promise and fail
Anything wey e talk e dey do am ooo
Power, power, power, power
All the power belongs to Jesus
Power, power, power, power
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level oh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level eh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Jesus e get power, power, power (Power, power)
To heal and deliver
And that same power, power, power, power
Is at work in me now now
Na why anything I talk e must to pass o
Pass o, pass o
E no dey do mago mago (E no dey do)
E no dey promise and fail (Promise and fail)
Anything wey e talk e dey do am ooo
E no dey, e no dey do
E no dey do mago mago
E no dey promise
E no dey promise and fail
Anything wey e talk o
Anything wey e talk e dey do am ooo
I say the God I serve na talk and do God oh
Na talk and do God oh
The God I serve na intentional God oh
Na intentional God
Oneekwu Onememe
Ome kwala nka ome ozo
Eledumare 1, Oba ogo
Power, power, power, power eh
All the power belongs to Jesus (Eh, eh, eh)
Power, power, power, power eh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level oh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Devil know say him no get level oh
All the power belongs to Jesus
Oneekwu Onememe

Ome kwala nka ome ozo
Eledumare 1, Oba ogo
I say power, power
Power belongs to my Jesus, Jesus
I say power, power
Power belongs to my Jesus, Jesus
I say power, power oh
Power belongs to my Jesus, Jesus
They already know say
Power, power
Power belongs to him
Power power
Power belongs to
Power power
Power belongs to
Power power
Power belongs to
Power power Power

In this song, Mercy Chinwo expresses the power of Jesus and the confidence and trust she has in the name. She talks about how the power of Jesus surpasses the power of the devil. She explains, although the devil tries to showcase his power, it is incomparable with that of Jesus. The entire song is written in English and Nigerian pidgin. The song started in English with a refrain

14. Power power power belongs to Jesus
15. Power power power belongs to Jesus

With the refrain, the gospel artiste tries to draw the attention of her listener to the fact that God is the highest power. In verse 2 in line (14) repeated in (15), the artiste switches to Nigerian pidgin.

16. Devil know say him no get level eh
17. All power belongs to Jesus

The artiste decides to switch to Nigerian pidgin to reach out to more people in Nigeria since Nigerian pidgin is more conventional to reach them emotively. We observed that the switch is an instance of an inter-sentential switch. The switch to Nigerian pidgin shows that the artiste wants to connect with her audience since Nigerian pidgin is more conventional to get to the larger population in Nigeria. After that, the gospel artiste introduces exclamation.

18. Uh ah
19. You already know o
20. Uh ah
21. You already know oh

This exclamation is used by the artiste to show how deeply touched she is. This exclamatory expression is directed toward God, not at her listeners. She switches over to Nigerian pidgin as in

22. You know say the God I serve is biggy biggy God oh
'You know the God I serve is a big God'
23. You know say the God I serve is a mighty mighty God oh
'You know the God I serve is a mighty God'

The artiste switches from English to Nigerian pidgin again. She explained more to her audience about how big and powerful her God is. The word *biggy biggy* meaning 'very big' is used by the artiste to describe to her audience that God is not just big, but so big and mighty. Her choice of using Nigerian pidgin as we have noted before is to get to a large Nigerian population.

In 24- 27, she switches to English and English to Nigerian pidgin.

24. See I've tasted of his power ooo
25. E no dey do mago mago
'He does not cheat or take bribe'
26. E no dey promise and fail
'He does not promise and fail'
27. Anything we e talk e dey do am ooo

The artiste's switch to English enables her to select more audiences. That is those that are not from Nigeria that might probably not understand the Nigerian pidgin. The artiste uses the expression '*mago mago*' 'cheat' in the expression *E no dey do mago mago* 'He does not cheat to tell her listeners that God does not take a bribe to fulfill the promises made to her.

4.3. Song 3

Okemmuo

Verse 1

Chukwu okike
Abba father
Ibu Kwanu okemmuo
Ochie dike na agha
Papa nke ukwu
Akprom gi okemmuo
Oje na mmuo
Ibu ebube Dike na agha
Okemmuo is your name

The spirit of the spirit
You are the spirit of the most high God
Onweghi onye dika gi
Okemmuo n'eri oke aja
Ezem onweghi onyedika gi

Okwa gi kwuru okwu na mba oke chim
O ga mezuo na mba ozo

Chorus

Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God

Verse 2

Agbanwe agbanwe
Onye mmeri
Covenant keeping God
You are my covenant-keeping father
Covenant keeping God
You are my covenant-keeping father
I have gone so far with you
There is no turning back
All you have promised me baba you have fulfilled them all
You are not a man that you should lie
Whatever you say you will do
I have found rest in you
You are Jehovah Jireh
You can never ever fail
Okemmuo eh
One with you is majority
I put my trust in you
I have no fear in you
My confidence is in you
Because you can never fail
You are the covenant-keeping God
Chorus
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God

Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Verse 2
Jehovah is your name
you are the only living God o
Okaka okaka okaka
Chim oma eh
Ebube Dike na agha
There is nothing you cannot
You are the covenant-keeping God
You are the covenant-keeping God
Echeta obi esi ike
Yes you can never ever die o
Okemmuo eh
Okemmuo okemmuo is your name

Chorus

Okemmuo okemmuo
You are covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God

Verse

All the battles around me
They are forcing me to go back
Okemmuo God of victory
I know you will deliver me
But I have made up my mind to serve you till the end
(Praising God in Igbo language)
Okwa ekwensu kpawa ekete kpacha,okemmuo ikoro m asiri
Eze m imeghele nu m obi nu
Chioma i gugoola nu m obi nu
Onye g'emere m ihe i n'emere m
You are the covenant-keeping God

Agbawo dikisi gbaagharia
Ezemmuo onye di ka gi oooo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Chukw okike m o,onye nwe m o

Chorus

Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God
Okemmuo okemmuo
You are the covenant-keeping God

This song titled Okemmuo is a song by Amaka Okwuoha popularly known as (Chioma Jesus). Amaka Okwuoha is well known for the beautiful way she switches both Igbo and English. She uses this song to appreciate God as the creator, the covenant-keeping God, and also shows how God has fulfilled his promises to her. The major part of the song is written in Igbo and English. However, the artist used one Yoruba word *baba* (father) *All you have promised me baba you have fulfilled them all*

‘All you have promised me Father you have fulfilled them all’. The artiste uses *baba* to show his intimacy with God and to show solidarity with her Yoruba audience.

28. I bu kwu Okemmuo
‘You are the superior spirit’
29. I bu ebube dike na agha
‘your are mighty in battle’
30. Okemmuo is your name
31. The spirit of the most high God
Onweghi onye dika gi.
‘Nobody is like you’

We observe that in (28-32), the artiste switches from Igbo to English. The expression *Okemmuo is your name* ‘Mighty spirit is your name’ is an instance of intra-sentential switching. This expression in (30) would have been written in Igbo and it would still mean the same, but the artiste chooses to switch intra-sentential to attract more attention to his audience and to draw more attention to her listeners. In (34) the artiste switches to English. At this time, it is an inter-

sentential switch. So, (30-31) put more seriousness into the emotional explanation already given in Igbo. In the chorus, the gospel artiste repeated the word *Okemmuo* 'mighty spirit'. This word can only be used to address a person regarded to have extraordinary power. This same 'word' is also the title of the song which is repeated several times to attach importance to the word and the meaning the word carries thus making it more weighty than other words. We note that the artist presented it in a non-official language in Nigeria which is a marked code. The *okemmuo* 'mighty spirit' could have been replaced easily with the English word 'mighty', but the artist chose the code to bring aesthetic effect into the song and also express her feeling in a more personal way.

32. All you have promised me baba, you have fulfilled them all.

In (32), the artist uses the word *baba* which means 'father' in Yoruba to also reflect the artiste's closeness to her creator. The Yoruba code is used to give a sense of fatherhood. She switches from Igbo to English and English to Igbo to buttress the point she has already made. That is that God is mighty and can save in all circumstances.

4.4. Stylistic Features of Nigerian Gospel Songs

This section explains and describes the stylistic devices found in Nigerian gospel music. They include metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, simile, apostrophe, onomatopoeia, simile switching, and rhetorical question.

4.4.1. Metaphor

This is a stylistic device in which one thing is described in terms of the other (Cuddon 1991). Metaphors are used consciously and unconsciously in our everyday activities. They are used to pass messages to the audience without over-praising or embarrassing people.

In the songs of the Nigeria gospel artists, we observe the use of metaphor. For example in the song **Okemmuo**, we have the following metaphoric expressions.

I bukwa Okemmuo 'You are the Almighty spirit'

Ochie dike nágha 'The old soldier'

Oje na mmuo 'He who goes to the spirit world'

Ebube dike nágha 'Mighty in battle.'

The artist uses them to help the audience to create a verbal picture in the mind of her audience. This also helps the audience see clearly that God is not just an ordinary God but an almighty one.

In the song **Power Belongs to Jesus**, the gospel artiste also made use of some metaphorical expressions such as:

The God I serve na talk and do god oh

'The God I serve is God that does all he says'

The artist uses this expression metaphorically to show that God does not fail, When one is referred to as talk and do' in Nigeria Pidgin, it means that the person always stands by what he says.

The two gospel artists use this stylistic feature to convey their feeling and emotion more strongly to their audience.

4.4.2. Symbolism

This is used to refer to an object animal or inanimate that represents or stands for something else. (Ndimele 1996, Cuddon 1991). Symbolism is one of the stylistic features used by Nigerian gospel artists. An example is seen in the song **Okemmuo** by Amaka (33)

33. O kwa ekwensu kpawa ekete kpacha okemmu ikoro m asiri
'If the devil weave a basket, the mighty spirit will come and tell me'

The word ekete 'basket' is used by the artiste to symbolize 'trouble' or 'trap'. The word was not used in its ordinary sense. The gospel artiste uses symbolism to create more meaning as well as emotion in the heart of her audience.

4.4.3. Slangs

We observed that the artists make use of slang. This example is found in the song Power Belongs to Jesus as in 34.

34. E no de do mago mago

The artist uses the expression *mago mago* meaning 'bribery' to tell her audience that her God does not take a bribe to answer her prayers.

4.4.4 Hyperbole

This is a stylistic device that is deliberately employed by the speaker to overstate or exaggerate facts sometimes beyond proportion (Ndimele 1996:282). The artists, employed this hyperbole for instance, in the song **Okemmuo**, we observe the following hyperboles:

35. Ezem I meghalam obi
'God you have treated me so well'
36. Chioma I guguola m obi
'Good God you have pleased me so well'

The artiste uses these expressions to add an amusing effect to her listeners. This style enables her to present the kind of love and kindness the Lord has greatly shown to her. These expressions show that the way God treats her is remarkable. This grabs the attention of her audience and makes the song memorable.

4.4.5. Rhetorical Questions

According to Cuddon (1991), it is a question not expecting an answer or one to which the answer is more or less self-evident. The artists also made use of rhetorical questions. For instance, in the song Okemmuo, the gospel musician used the following rhetorical questions.

37. Onye ga-emerem ihe I n'emere m

'Who will solve my problem'

38. Eze mmuo onye dika gi ooo

'My king who is like you ooo'

The rhetorical questions are used by the artiste to emphasize the greatness of God and to make the audience or her listeners think the same way. She uses these rhetorical questions as a powerfully persuasive and thought provoking tool to get the attention of her listeners.

4.4.6. Simile

A simile is used to make a comparison between two entities. (Ndimele 1996:280). It is a stylistic feature in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. Cuddon (1991).

Simile is one of the stylistic devices used by Nigerian gospel musicians. In the song Okemmuo, we observed the following:

39. O nweghi onye dika gi

'Nobody is like you'

40. Eze m o nweghi onye dika gi

'My king nobody is like you'.

The artiste *dika* 'like' to show that God cannot be compared with any human being. The gospel artist uses this style to create a mental picture of how mighty God is.

4.4.7. Onomatopoeia

This is a word or expression which imitates the sound associated with the entity or phenomenon that is denoted by the word or expression. (Ndimele 1996). From the data, the Nigerian artiste made use of onomatopoeia. For example, the expression from the song power belongs to Jesus.

41. The God I serve is a biggy biggy God oh.

'The God I serve is a very big God'

The expression *biggy biggy* in this song is used by the artiste to express her feeling and emotion toward God with phrase *biggy biggy*, the gospel artist tries to describe how God is more impressive to her listeners. The sound effect creates a picture in them. God is not just big but very big.

We also observe the use of onomatopoeia in the song **Okemmuo**, for instance, *okaka okaka* 'interpreter or judge' In the Igbo language, *oka* 'talker' is the root word of *okaka* 'ultimate judge'.

The gospel artiste uses this expression *okaka* ‘ultimate judge’ which has a sound effect to show how mighty the talker is. This stylistic device is used by the artiste to make a description of how God is and to make it more impressive.

4.4.8 Apostrophe

This is a stylistic device in which somebody who is not physically present is directly addressed as if the person is present or a lifeless entity or an abstract phenomenon is addressed as if it had life. (Ndimele 1996) The two gospel musicians made use of apostrophe. From the data, we observed the following apostrophe. The gospel artists use this stylistic device to draw the attention of their audience to God, who has done a lot for her.

In the song **Chinedum**, the artiste also made use of the following apostrophe:

42. Chinedum mo ‘The God who leads me’
43. Anywhere you lead me, I will go
44. Cause you're the way, truth, and the life
45. Except you build a house, the builder build in vain
46. Me ago follow you dey go.

In this song, the Nigerian artiste makes use of apostrophe as she addresses God as if he was present. This brings the attention of her listeners to God instead of her. She wants her listeners to focus their attention on God.

Amaka also made use of apostrophe in her song ‘**Okemmuo**’. Examples are as follows:

47. Okemmuo ‘mighty spirit’
48. You are my covenant-keeping God.Father
49. I have gone so far with you
50. All you have promised me baba you have fulfilled them all
51. You are not a man that you should lie.

The Nigerian gospel artiste uses the stylistic device to express her feeling and emotion toward God in such a way that the attention of her listeners is drawn to the unseen God.

Repetition: In the songs, **Power Belongs to Jesus**, **Chinedum**, and **Okemmuo**, we observed a lot of repeated expressions. In the song **Okemmuo**, we observed the following repeated expression

Okemmuo ‘mighty spirit’

You are the covenant-keeping God.

In the song **Power Belongs to Jesus**, we observed the following repeated expressions.

52. Power power power all the power belongs to Jesus.
53. You already know eh
54. E no de do mago ‘He does not cheat’

55. E no dey promise and fail 'He does not promise and fail'.
56. Na why anything I talk I must pass o pass o pass o
'That is why anything I ask he does it for me'.

In the song Chinedum, we also observed the following repetitions

57. Chinedum mo 'God leads me'
58. My life is for your glory.

From the three (3) songs analyzed, we observe that the artists always repeat words used in their choruses. This is to make the songs catching to their listeners. The gospel artists also use these repeated expressions to assist their listeners to sing along with them and also to make them retain the message of the song in their memories. They use these repeated phrases to emphasize the idea and feeling in the song.

5. Summary and Conclusion

We have examined the socio-stylistic analysis of Nigerian gospel songs. From the data, we have been able to find out that Nigerian gospel musicians code-switch in the lyrics of their songs. We observed that the reasons why they code-switch are to show solidarity with their audience and to demonstrate their bilingual capacity. It was also observed that Nigerian gospel musicians use their indigenous language, English, and Nigerian pidgin in their song lyrics.

We also noted that the use of English and Nigerian pidgin helps the musicians to pass their information to all their audience from different backgrounds. The use of the mixed code by Nigerian gospel musicians helps them create a form of connection between themselves and their audience.

We observed that Nigerian gospel musicians or artists code-switching for continuity in their songs. They convey emotion using English and indigenous language or Nigerian Pidgin and also facilitate and construct identity through language choice.

We also observed from the data, that some other stylistic features used by the Nigerian gospel are repetition, apostrophe, rhetorical questions, hyperbole, simile, symbolism, etc. These stylistic devices help them to express their feelings and emotions more interestingly.

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