

FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS AND SLANGS USED BY NIGERIAN RAPPERS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

As technology continues to facilitate the globalization of music, the study of linguistic patterns in Nigerian rap becomes increasingly relevant. This paper aims at conducting a sociolinguistic analysis of slangs and figurative expressions used by Nigerian rappers by examining the linguistic features, creativity and cultural references embedded within the language used in the rap music. The data used in this study is secondary data which involves the collection of lyrics of the chosen Nigerian rap songs. The songs were selected randomly. The findings of this research unveil the unique cultural elements embedded in the language choices of Nigerian rappers, showcasing the richness of the Nigerian identity on the global stage. This paper provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language, culture and artistic expression in Nigerian rap music and concludes that these linguistic features serve as a reflection of social identities, values and experiences within the Nigerian society. It also provides valuable insights for language teaching and learning and aid in intercultural communication. This research reveals how to be able to recognize and be on the lookout for the underlying messages and uncover vague but germane concepts and opinion in Nigerian rap.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic, Slangs, Figurative Expressions, Rapps, Culture and Language.

Introduction

The study of sociolinguistics focuses on the dynamic interactions that exist between language and society. Gaining an understanding of the linguistic subtleties unique to particular social groups—like Nigerian rap artists—can help one better understand language creativity, communication styles, and cultural identity. The objective of this research is to perform a thorough examination of the slang and metaphorical language used by Nigerian rappers in order to illuminate the sociolinguistic aspects of their poetic skill.

Nigerian rap music has gained global recognition for its unique blend of diverse linguistic elements, drawing from a rich tapestry of local languages, pidgin English, and global influences. Scholars like Akin Odeunmi (2018) have emphasized the cultural significance of language in Nigerian hip-hop, emphasizing its role as a tool for self-expression and cultural representation.

Figurative expressions and slangs within rap lyrics often serve as linguistic artifacts reflecting societal norms, political views, and cultural references. In the context of Nigerian rap, researchers like Olufunmilayo Adesanya-Davies (2017) have explored the sociolinguistic implications of linguistic choices in hip-hop lyrics, highlighting the potential impact on identity construction and cultural discourse.

Furthermore, the work of Sali A. Tagliamonte (2016) on sociolinguistic variation provides a theoretical framework for understanding how language evolves within specific social contexts. Applying these concepts to the analysis of Nigerian rap lyrics allows for a nuanced examination of linguistic innovation, code-switching, and the negotiation of identity within the rap subculture.

As technology continues to facilitate the globalization of music, the study of linguistic patterns in Nigerian rap becomes increasingly relevant. With the advent of digital platforms and social media, the impact of Nigerian rap extends beyond geographical boundaries, making it a powerful vehicle for cultural exchange and representation.

This paper aims at conducting a sociolinguistic analysis of the slangs and figurative expressions used by Nigerian rappers. By examining the linguistic features, linguistic creativity, and cultural references embedded within the language used in Nigerian rap music, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics in Nigerian society.

This research endeavours to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in sociolinguistics by delving into the intricate world of Nigerian rap. By examining the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers, we aim to unravel the linguistic intricacies that shape the cultural and social landscape of contemporary Nigerian hip-hop.

The paper aims at conducting a sociolinguistics analysis on the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers. Understanding the linguistic choices made by these artists can provide valuable insights into their cultural identity, social dynamics, and communication patterns.

The problem at hand is the need to explore and analyse the jargons used specifically by Nigerian rappers. Figurative expressions, such as metaphors, wordplay, and cultural references, are integral to rap music and often carry deep cultural significance. Similarly, slangs are a common feature in rap lyrics, serving as a form of self-expression and establishing a unique identity for the artists.

By examining the figurative expressions and slangs employed by Nigerian rappers, this paper seeks to address several key questions. Firstly, what are the common figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers? How do these expressions contribute to their artistic style and lyrical creativity? Secondly, what cultural values, beliefs, or experiences do these expressions reflect? How do they shape the identity and social dynamics of Nigerian rap culture? Thirdly, how do these expressions vary among different Nigerian rap artists based on factors such as region, language, or musical influences? Are there any emerging trends or changes in usage over time?

Understanding the sociolinguistic aspects of figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers can have practical implications in various fields. It can provide valuable insights for language teaching and learning, especially for those interested in understanding Nigerian rap music and its cultural context. It can aid in intercultural communication, as understanding these expressions can help bridge gaps and foster better understanding between Nigerian rap artists and their global audience. Moreover, this analysis can contribute to the preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage and linguistic diversity by documenting and studying these unique linguistic features in the context of rap music.

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the sociolinguistics of figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers, shedding light on their cultural identity, social dynamics within the rap community, and communication patterns in their music.

Conceptual Framework

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society, including how language varies and changes in different social contexts. Theoretical studies in sociolinguistics often explore topics such as language variation, language attitudes, language contact, and language change. Based on our knowledge on the variation in language meaning from social contexts, an understanding of how peculiar derivatives other than the original ones in terms of meaning can be deduced. According to Wardhaugh and Janet (2015:1), "Sociolinguistics is the study of our everyday lives – how language works in our casual conversations and the media we are exposed to, and the presence of societal norms, policies, and laws which address language". It can be spotted that "how language works" implies that a unique duty can be assigned to language when applied in our casual conversations and the media which in the case of this project refers to rap music specifically.

Gumperz (1971: 223) points out that sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occur. (Wardhaugh and Janet 2015:14) agrees with Chambers (2002:3) which is even more direct in stating that 'Sociolinguistics is the study of the social uses of language...'.

It is "the study of language in relation to society. It is concerned both with the ways in which language reflects and expresses social identity and with the ways in which social structure and social context may affect language" (Wardhaugh, 2006). It involves "the study of the way language varies and changes in social groups, that is, the study of the interaction between language and society" (Trudgill, 2010:1).

Meyerhoff offers a contemporary perspective, describing sociolinguistics as "the study of language variation and change as it relates to society, with a focus on the social aspects of language use, including issues of identity, power, and social structure" (Meyerhoff, 2011:1), while Holmes characterizes sociolinguistics as "the investigation of how social factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and network structure influence the way language is used, maintained, and changed in communities and societies." (Holmes, 2013, p. 1).

Sociolinguistics as a branch of linguistics covers dialects, its variations and usage. There are three main types of dialects, they are: Regional dialect, Standard dialect and Sociolect.

Regional dialect: An individual's surroundings and geographic location is the major impact and influence on their regional dialect.

Standard dialect: is used for formal or professional communication, is the dialect that a community of language speakers selects to represent the "most proper" dialect of that language.

Sociolect: A sociolect refers to a specific linguistic variety or style of language use associated with a particular social group or community. It is shaped by shared social characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, class, or a common interest, and reflects the unique linguistic features and expressions of that group.

From the above description, the rap community is a social group and they operate and communicate with their unique terms and jargons. In the context of the rap community, sociolect plays a crucial role in shaping the distinctive linguistic identity of rappers and their audience. The sociolect within the rap community is characterized by a blend of linguistic

elements, including specialized vocabulary, slang, and figurative expressions that contribute to a unique form of communication. This linguistic style often emerges as a form of cultural expression, allowing the rap community to establish its identity and communicate shared experiences. In the rap community, sociolect is evident in the use of specific slang terms, wordplay, and metaphorical expressions that may not be as prevalent in other linguistic contexts. Rappers often draw from their cultural backgrounds, local dialects, and societal experiences to create a sociolect that resonates with their audience. The sociolect within rap is dynamic and continually evolving, influenced by cultural trends, societal changes, and the creative innovations of artists.

The use of sociolect in rap lyrics serves multiple purposes, including the establishment of group identity, the expression of cultural pride, and the creation of a distinct artistic voice. It also allows rappers to connect with their audience on a deeper level, as listeners familiar with the sociolect can relate to the shared linguistic and cultural references embedded in the lyrics.

Figurative expressions

Figurative expressions are literary devices that suggest a more imaginative interpretation than their plain meaning. They contain a variety of linguistic devices, including personification, similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and idioms. Figurative language enhances communication by providing richness, vividness, and originality. This typically makes concepts easier to understand and retain.

"Figurative language involves a departure from the literal, using words in a non-literal way to add richness and depth to communication. Figurative expressions, such as metaphors, similes, and personification, contribute to the imaginative and nuanced aspects of language." (Gibbs, 1994:6).

Rappers are regular customers of these expressions and here are some instances of its applications by Nigerian rappers:

Metaphor:

A metaphor involves making a direct comparison between unrelated concepts, asserting that one thing is another.

Example: In Olamide's song "Story for the Gods," he uses a metaphor when he says, "My belle go sweet you, no be say I too talk."

Simile:

Definition: Similes compare two different things using "like" or "as," often to highlight similarities.

Example: In Falz's song "Soft work" he uses simile "Dem dey come find us like we herbalist"

Personification:

Personification attributes human characteristics to non-human entities or abstract concepts.

Example: In Phyno's "Parcel" "Money going taller, Energy mu solar"

MI Abaga's "The Middle," he personifies a city, saying, "This city has fallen in love with the night. The buildings are jealous of the beautiful neon lights."

Hyperbole:

Hyperbole involves exaggeration for emphasis or effect.

Example: In MI's song "The hate" he uses hyperbole in this line, "I'm a god I'm a king I'm a pharaoh (yes), Been a king since I was a day old"

Wordplay and Double Entendre

Wordplay involves using words with multiple meanings or creating clever twists of language.

Example: In Ycee's "Jagaban" "They tried to feed me beef, I told them boys wait for Ramadan".

These examples showcase how Nigerian rappers employ figurative expressions to add depth, creativity, and cultural resonance to their lyrics, contributing to the vibrant and expressive nature of Nigerian hip-hop.

Slangs

According to Crystal (2003:314), "Slang is a variety of language which seeks to communicate more than literal meaning, often through the use of connotations, context, and shared cultural references. It is typically associated with informal, spoken communication within specific social groups."

It is also described as "an ever-evolving set of colloquial words and expressions, often created and adopted by particular groups as a means of establishing identity or exclusivity. It reflects the dynamic nature of language and the cultural contexts in which it thrives." (Aitchison, 1994:164). These definitions highlight the dynamic, cultural, and identity-building aspects of slang, emphasizing its role in informal communication and its connection to specific social contexts.

The relationship between Nigerian rap and slangs is intricate and symbiotic, reflecting the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and artistic expression. Several key aspects contribute to this relationship:

1. Cultural Identity and Authenticity

- Nigerian rap artists often incorporate local slangs, idioms, and expressions into their lyrics to connect with their audience on a cultural level. This use of familiar language contributes to the authenticity of their storytelling and reinforces a sense of shared identity.

2. Street Credibility and Local Flavour:

- Slangs are frequently drawn from the streets and everyday life, adding a layer of realism and street credibility to Nigerian rap. Rappers use these colloquial expressions to capture the vibrancy and rawness of urban Nigerian experiences, making their narratives more relatable.

3. Linguistic Innovation and Creativity:

- Nigerian rap serves as a creative space where artists play with language, invent new words, and repurpose existing slangs. This linguistic innovation not only contributes to the genre's unique sound but also showcases the artists' creativity in manipulating language to convey their messages.

4. Cultural Commentary and Social Critique:

- Slangues within Nigerian rap often serve as a tool for social commentary and critique. Rappers use slangs to address societal issues, political events, and cultural phenomena, allowing them to communicate nuanced perspectives in a language that resonates with their audience.

5. Youth Culture and Trends:

- Slangs are an integral part of youth culture, and Nigerian rap, being a genre that resonates strongly with the youth, mirrors contemporary language trends. Rappers often introduce and popularize new slangs, contributing to the continuous evolution of language within the Nigerian hip-hop community.

In essence, the relationship between Nigerian rap and slangs is symbiotic, with slangs serving as a linguistic palette for artists to paint vivid pictures of Nigerian life, communicate social messages, and connect with their audience on both local and global levels. The fluid and dynamic nature of slangs aligns perfectly with the ever-evolving landscape of Nigerian rap, making it a powerful medium for cultural expression and artistic innovation.

Research Methodology

The research involves the collection of secondary data. Lyrics from Nigerian rap songs are compiled and analysed. This compilation involves collecting a corpus of Nigerian rap lyrics from various artists and analysing the language used within these lyrics.

The songs used in this analysis are three (3) in number. They are: *Fuwa Sewa* by Phyno, *Hypocrite* by Falz ft Demmie Veen and *Vigilante Bop* by Alpha Ojini ft Odumodu blvck. The songs are selected the researcher randomly because a diverse selection of rap songs from different regions, languages, and time periods are sampled to capture a comprehensive range of figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers.

The analysis will focus on identifying and categorizing the slangs and figurative expressions, understanding their meanings, and uncovering the social and cultural contexts that influence their usage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Here; a compilation of some songs that will typically expatiate some of the most basic figurative expressions and slangs featured in Nigerian rap lyrics.

Song 1: *Fuwa Sewa* by Phyno

The song “**Fuwa Sewa**” by “**Phyno**” is a prototype of a song encompassing the slangs and street language that Igbo Nigerian rappers adopt to pass their opinions and views. Contrary to the putative knowledge of the song being a groove for the use of cannabis or smoking weed, Phyno made some vital implications and communicated useful knowledge that is only comprehensible to those who are familiar with the jargons of the rap community, the work and effect of figures of speech in a literary work. Nigerian rapper Phyno's single "Fuwa Sewa" song's lyrics encourage taking chances and living life to the fullest. Phyno thinks that life should be fully appreciated and that anything can happen at any time. The song's opening lyrics (line 1, chorus)

1. “Iberibe na enye onye ara morale morale” translate as "foolishness boosts a mad man's morale" but when a dissection of this line is done it can also translate “It's crazy how ignorance fuels one's morale”
2. (line 2,3,4) “Onuma mere obi guys le waa le waa. Ojo donye iro amagu bochaa bochaa. Me ka etuto etoo gi na abu fuwa fuwa”

“Frustration has driven the boys to develop a hardened heart (“**Le waa**” is an Igbo word with a coinage slang, coined to reflect recklessness and nonchalance),

‘Ojo’ in this context refers to the police, this word has been used to signify the police in a couple of other songs ‘amagu’ (a place in Enugu but often used to refer to street boys) clears out (“**bo chaa**” is another slang) Phyno discusses the need for self-defense in an increasingly dishonest environment.

Raise your arm like there's a boil in your armpit and puff (as in smoking)”

Above is the literal meaning of the lyrics but the above implies that he and the boys despite the risks and odds will press on and continue to live the “lvida loca” which “fuwa sewa (puff)” metonymized.

Here are some slangs and figures of speech in the song;

3. “Ohu” in line 7 verse 1 refers to a sex worker in the context.

4. “Hits nwoke kariri...

The number agafego kwa onu ogu” (the man's hit has surpassed the count of numbers) in line 9 uses hyperbole to communicate the amount of hit tracks he's made.

“Onu ùgù” in line 11 means “the mouth of pumpkin leaf” but here implies “weed as in Indian hemp”.

5. “The nwa aburokwa brand new but nwanne tear rubber” in line 13 is a triple entendre and wordplay.

Being that the term “tear rubber” is a phrase associated with items that are brand new, hence, the irony- ‘she isn't brand new but go on and tear rubber’. “Rubber” in street slang also refers to a condom, implying the artiste says although she isn't a saint but he neglects the condom. Finally, the line is metaphoric to the theme of the song that implies recklessness and facing life raw and without fear ignoring the risks and dangers involved.

6. “Said I'm a monster, now I'm getting monster money” line 23

He uses the metaphor “monster” to refer to his prowess as a core rapper as it implies in the rap community but at the same time plays on the word “monster” by indicating he's making money from his endorsement with the energy drink brand “monster”.

Lines 3&4, verse 3, contains a basic wordplay,

7. “Asi ndi ngbu a ha akpozina m

Na mu abulo keyboard (I tell these sickos to quit calling me, I'm not a piano)”

“kpo” in Igbo language translates as “call” but at the same time means “to play” especially for musical instruments, ergo, the wordplay.

In the last 4 lines of verse 3

8. “Omadu efe ga ako naru mmadu

Mana nke m siri gi akoro nu mmadu ka ije kolu mmadu

Adim acho mmadu mana nnocharu n'cornerru mmadu

Mmadu tichalu mmadu

Mmadu enwero obi mmadu” is a wonderful display of alliteration on the /m/ sound and assonance on the /a/ sound.

The use of slangs in Phyno's "Fuwa Sewa" contributes to the meaning and impact of the music in several ways. First, the slangs add authenticity and local flavor to the song, as they are often rooted in the artist's cultural and regional background. This can help Phyno connect with his audience on a more personal level and create a sense of community and shared experience. The use of slangs in the song served as a form of coded language, allowing Phyno to convey messages or ideas that may not be readily apparent to listeners who are not familiar with the specific slang terms. This can create a sense of exclusivity and insider knowledge among fans who understand the slang, while also inviting curiosity and interest from those who are not familiar with it.

In summary, the use of slangs in "Fuwa Sewa" by Phyno contributes to the song's meaning and impact by adding authenticity, creating a sense of community, conveying hidden messages, and enhancing the overall energy and vibe of the music.

Song 2: Hypocrite by Falz ft Demmie Vee

The chorus:

“People just dey do like say dem no dey shit
People just dey do like say dem no dey breathe o
People just dey do like say dem get superpower dem
People just dey do like say dem no dey weak o uh uh
Nobody wan dey sow where he no dey reap o”

9. “Hypocrite” by Falz serves as a thought-provoking commentary on societal and religious hypocrisy, urging listeners to reflect on the authenticity of their beliefs and actions.

The song addresses issues of morality, integrity, and societal expectations with a critical and insightful perspective. The above lines are obviously metaphorical, conveying self-denial, hypocrisy and pretence. There is no actual way to behave that portrays not being able to defecate or respire. It continues to portray how many behave like they do not have their own weaknesses or other frail qualities of mortality.

10. “People just dey do like say na dem be Jesus” Line 1, verse 1

Simile is applied here to address the matter of pretentious piety, as Jesus is a global figure for holiness and is believed to have standards unattainable by regular men, the comparison is not ceremonial rather one of reproof. He further explains more with line 2 in

11. “people so wicked but they so religious”

That line is paradoxical being that religious people are supposed to be the epitome of kindness, but rather they are wicked but only wear religion like a cloak. Wild socio-economic and political ills continue to plague the society. The rich aren’t helping as they continue to enrich pockets of cronies. The poor are often bought or just too laid back to take to the streets to protest the non-working system.

12. Line 4 verse 1 “Who dey demonstrate dey run leave us” could also be referring to 2face Idibia’s calling off planned nationwide protests.

13. “People too complain but dey fear to speak up,

You don't want to die but nothing to leave for,
Christain and corrupt no suppose be mixture,
Real musulumi no suppose dey thief joor...”

Lines 5-8, verse 1

Here, he decides to expose the oxymoronic behaviour of so-called religious people.

The word “musulim” means “Muslim” and was coined with effect of poetic licence in order to maintain rhythm and flow.

14. “Pastor wey dey do like say he no be sinner

See the spec in your eye no dey point finger...” Lines 1&2 of verse 2

The artiste uses simile to tackle Pastors who live in pretence with reference to the belief that no one is truly innocent and void of sin, in the next line he proceeds to adopt the metaphorical expression of the Bible in Matthew 7:3-5 (because he's referring to Christians at this point). In this case, the spec in one's eye is metaphorically used to represent a major fault or sin. The

figure of speech is employed to convey a moral lesson about self-reflection, humility, and addressing one's shortcomings before being quick to judge others.

15. “And what about even you voters
Wey dey act like say you only see two jokers
Recycle the same corrupt men
Later you complain you say you hate the government” Lines 5-8, verse 2
“Jokers” a metaphor the artiste used to refer to the competing candidates of the two major political parties that has been shuffling leadership amongst themselves for decades in Nigeria.

16. “Some say na Devil box o
No telly for their parlor” This line is talking about how certain christian groups and denominations refuse to buy TVs claiming it’s the devil’s box. Line 14 verse 2.

Characteristics of Falz song,

- Falz focuses on the disconnect between religious teachings and the actions of some individuals. The song highlights instances where people claim to be devout followers of a religious faith but engage in dishonest, corrupt, or immoral behaviour.
- The lyrics serve as a form of social commentary, pointing out societal issues and the contradiction between professed values and actual conduct. Falz calls out individuals who use religious or moral high grounds to conceal dishonest practices.
- "Hypocrite" explores the idea of double standards, where people judge others for their actions while engaging in similar or worse behaviour themselves. The song challenges the moral inconsistencies present in society.
- The song critiques the materialistic mindset that sometimes accompanies religious or societal expectations. Falz questions the sincerity of individuals who prioritize wealth and social status while claiming to adhere to certain moral or religious principles.
- Falz encourages authenticity and genuine adherence to one's beliefs.

Song 3: Vigilante Bop by Alpha Ojini ft Odumodu blvck

“Vigilante Bop” appears to be a socially conscious and politically charged song that addresses issues of police misconduct, corruption, and social injustice in Nigeria.

‘Vigilante bop’ by Alpha Ojini ft ODUMODU BLVCK, it is a song done in the year 2022 and was inspired by the state terrorism acts of the government against the citizens especially the youth. The song makes a lot of reference to the October 20th massacre at Lekki Toll Gate in the year 2020 which stemmed from the ENDSARS protest of that year.

The introductory parts of the song made some allusions to two concepts that were popular in the 90s.

The first line of the intro:

17. “Lock up the cops and gbes”

Introducing the major theme of the song, the line features a youth slang “gbes” which means to disappear or evacuate a scene.

So the artist explains his desire to see the police face their own peril, he goes on to say...

18. “Kanayo put them in handcuffs ehn

Living in bondage...”

'kanayo' being a famous Nigerian movie character in the movie “living in bondage” that portrayed a ritualist, over time “kanayo” has become a reference to diabolic rituals and captivity. Hence, the subliminal message of feeding the cops with doses of their medicine.

(Locking them up and cuffing them)

The lyricist's reference to Dillinger in line 6 of the introductory verse "Dillinger break all the laws in raps"- talks about a gangster John Dillinger who was popular during the Great Depression for robbing banks and would typically represent deviance to give more meaning to the rest of the line where he said he broke all the rules in rap.

19. "Since nineteen sixty we dey hustle for five Naira
We no see Tafawa
So fuck a prime minister..."

In the first verse by Alpha Ojini uses the term 'nineteen sixty' to refer to the year of Nigeria's independence because the Nigerian currency came into effect after that year, and 5 naira being the least of the Naira notes was still not available to the masses denoting the state of poverty the people have had to endure since that time till now.

20. "After one hour na small photocopy put niggas for soup... Line 7 verse 1
And na money kill am" (in this verse he was talking about his experiences with the police roadblocks where they stop and search vehicles not to find criminals but to find reasons to extort money from the occupants which they did in his case).

'Soup' here is used as the regular Nigerian metaphor that depicts 'trouble'...

In the next line he uses personification to elaborate that shortage of cash for bribery was the cause of the calamity.

21. "Bubu keep face like Jonathan for campaign...Line 13, verse 1.
E enter office e turn Abacha"

The artiste uses simile to describe the disposition of Former President Muhammadu Buhari prior to his election as president.

He metaphorically refers to his pious outlook and gestures as "like Jonathan", also a former president who is well acknowledged as a true leader with very civilised ethics. The artiste proceeds to use the metaphor "Abacha", another Nigerian president whose regime was cruel and not reputable, to refer to the latter actions and decisions of Buhari after he became president.

22. "Heavenly felony you know the matter
Abobbi i dagbo olopa" Line 1, verse 2.

The artiste uses the oxymoron "heavenly felony" to explain that his thoughts towards the police are grievous but of a just cause. He uses the slang "Abobbi I dagbo olopa" which translates "my guy I detest the police". Those words are purely street slang that only those familiar with street language can comprehend with ease.

23. "I for don stain all him beret with egusi,
They know say na me,
I spit on their uniform,
Use am take clean cum" Lines 4-7, verse 2.

This is a reference to disrespecting both the officer and his uniform, in the streets it is a big sign of disrespect to use a person's cloth to wipe a plate clean and to show the extremity of his hatred towards the corrupt officers he includes that he'll spit on them and use their uniform to

wipe cum , in this case using the police man’s beret to clean out a plate of egusi refers to doing him physical harm and disrespect.

24. “My papa dey craze omo lawless” Line 9 verse 2

As a wordplay, the phrase “my papa” in youth slang could refer to either the speaker's actual father or the speaker himself.

So, in either interpretation, if the artiste calls his own father crazy (whether because he's implying that his wild nature is genetic or that his father is actually not rational with decisions) he drives a point that he has no limits to how rude he can get, hence, “Omo lawless” (lawless child). If he referred to himself as crazy then it explains why he went ahead to call himself a lawless child.

25. “They’re getting me fed up

Na wetin my ipo tell me na setup

The thing be like lay up” Lines 14-16

The verse plays with the word “up” and uses a double entendre to lay emphasis. He's fed up suggests that he's had enough of their marginalizations, the next line he uses “up” as well and finally relates the situation to a basketball move that requires gently lofting the ball into the basket from a close range a “lay up”, he uses this to illustrate since the last three lines have all been related to ascension or going “up” in literary sense.

26. “Inec pass me the plastic

(Fuck this government (Fuck them)

20-10-20 them think say we forget

2023 you go collect)” Lines 1-4 of verse 3

In this verse, the lyricist was making reference to the upcoming 2023 presidential elections and when he asked Inec to pass him the plastic (voters card) he was suggesting an alternative viable means to change the government without violence which would be through voting.

27. “See them for saloon

Don dey wash your head” Lines 5&6

The artiste was referring to the masses believing and buying the lies that government sell them. ‘Wash your head’ is a slang term that refers to being brainwashed, hence, ‘see them for salon’.

28. “Boys in black still causing hold up” Lines 9 & 10

This line tackles the incessant checkpoints on major express roads mounted by the police.

“Boys in black” is a synecdoche in the metaphor referring to the police due to the colour of their uniform.

29. “Imagine olopa get mind

To ask me anything for weekend

Me I just lock up”

The artiste goes on to site one of his experiences with police men and their attempt to extort him.

“Anything for the weekend” is a slang term usually used by cops to request money or bribes.

“Me I just lock up”

Here, he uses the slang term ‘lock up’ to denote that he restrained and comported himself.

The song overly sites the following themes;

Police Brutality and Corruption: The lyrics vividly depict issues of police brutality, corruption, and extortion. There's a strong critique of law enforcement, with references to unethical practices, abuse of power, and the negative impact on citizens.

Social Injustice: The lyrics touch on broader social injustices, including the struggles faced by the common people. The mention of the cost of living, police harassment, and corrupt practices highlights the societal challenges in Nigeria.

Resistance and Defiance: The tone of the lyrics suggests a strong sense of resistance and defiance against oppressive forces. The artists express their refusal to succumb to unjust practices and criticise the authorities for their actions.

Discussion of Findings

The above data gives us a tangible insight and proof that Nigerian rap songs possess more essence than the regular listener knows or assumes. The analysis above goes on to corroborate that Nigerian rap is a perfect blend of entertainment and impactful knowledge at the same time; these rappers adopt figures of speech and slang as the core of the theme in their songs. The elliptical messages imbedded in the lyrics are for everyone to hear and learn but at the same time is available to only those who can recognise it.

Nigerian rappers often use figurative expressions and slangs to convey political and social commentary specific to their country. By addressing issues like corruption, inequality, and social justice, they contribute to a global discourse while maintaining a distinct Nigerian perspective.

The findings of this study have implications for sociolinguistic research, as they contribute to our understanding of how language is used as a medium of self-expression and identity construction within Nigerian rap culture. Additionally, the findings may have relevance with quite some contributions from additional study of anthropology and culture as they will provide insight into the social and cultural nuances embedded in the language used by Nigerian rappers.

Finally, the findings of this study contribute to a broader appreciation of the cultural and linguistic dimensions of Nigerian rap music, providing a nuanced understanding of how language is harnessed as a powerful tool for creative expression and social commentary within the Nigerian context. This research serves as a foundation for future studies in sociolinguistics and cultural studies, offering a framework for further exploration of the complex interconnections between language, culture, and artistic expression in diverse musical genres.

Conclusion

This paper delves into the exploration and categorization of common figurative expressions and slangs employed by Nigerian rappers in their lyrics. This involves an in-depth analysis of linguistic patterns, themes, and variations across diverse rap songs, capturing the richness of Nigerian linguistic creativity. Investigating how the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers contribute to the construction of a distinct Nigerian identity within the global hip-hop community is a primary focus. The study unveils the unique cultural elements embedded in the language choices of Nigerian rappers, showcasing the richness of Nigerian identity on the global stage.

The research investigates the potential effects of the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers on language change and development in Nigerian vernacular. Through a sociolinguistic lens, the study explores whether these linguistic innovations influence broader language patterns and contribute to the evolution of Nigerian vernacular.

The findings from this analysis contributes significantly to a better understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics within Nigerian rap music. By unveiling the cultural, social, and linguistic implications of the figurative expressions and slangs, the research provides valuable insights into how language functions as a dynamic force in shaping societal norms, values, and identity within the context of Nigerian rap.

This research holds the promise that the uncovering of the intricate relationship between language, culture, and identity within Nigerian rap music is actualised. The insights gained are not only pertinent to the field of sociolinguistics but also contribute to a broader understanding of the societal impact of linguistic choices in the realm of hip-hop. Future directions could explore the longevity of linguistic innovations, the interplay between local and global influences, and the potential evolution of Nigerian rap language over time. In essence, this paper aspires to illuminate the multifaceted role of language in Nigerian rap music, shedding light on its cultural significance and global implications.

A sociolinguistic analysis carried out to examine the sociocultural contexts that shape the language use, including aspects such as dialect, ethnicity, class, age, gender, and socioeconomic background. The analysis also explores the semantic and pragmatic functions of these linguistic choices and their potential social implications.

Another significance of this study is to correct the impression of many people, especially of the millennium age assume that rap music is genre of music that barely holds relevance, promotes extravagance, low morals, violence, misuse of drugs and other activities that depict low ethics. This research reveals how to be able to recognize and be on the lookout for the underlying messages and uncover vague but germane concepts and opinion in Nigerian rap.

In conclusion, the sociolinguistics analysis of the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers has provided valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language, culture, and artistic expression within the context of Nigerian rap music. Through a comprehensive examination of the linguistic elements present in the lyrical content of Nigerian rap, this study has shed light on the unique linguistic features and cultural influences that shape the expressions of Nigerian rappers. The analysis has revealed the rich tapestry of figurative expressions and slangs used in Nigerian rap, reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural landscape of Nigeria.

Furthermore, this paper highlights the sociolinguistic implications of the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers, and concludes that these linguistic features serve as a reflection of social identities, values, and experiences within Nigerian society. The exploration of these linguistic elements has deepened our understanding of the role of language in shaping cultural identity and artistic expression within the realm of Nigerian rap music, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between language, music, and society.

Recommendations

Based on the sociolinguistics analysis of the figurative expressions and slangs used by Nigerian rappers, several recommendations can be made for further research and practical application:

1. Encourage further research: This study has only scratched the surface of the linguistic and cultural complexities within Nigerian rap music. Future research should delve deeper into specific linguistic features, such as the use of proverbs, code-switching, and language mixing in Nigerian rap lyrics. Additionally, comparative studies with other African or global rap scenes could provide a broader understanding of linguistic diversity in rap music.

2. Promote language preservation: The use of indigenous languages and local slangs in Nigerian rap highlights the importance of language preservation. Efforts should be made to document and preserve these linguistic elements, as they are integral to the cultural identity and artistic expression of Nigerian rappers.

3. Support language education: Given the influence of Nigerian rap on popular culture, educators and policymakers could leverage the appeal of rap music to promote language learning and appreciation among the youth. Incorporating rap lyrics into language classes could enhance students' engagement with language and foster a deeper understanding of Nigerian culture.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can further explore the intricate relationship between language, culture, and artistic expression within Nigerian rap music, while also promoting linguistic diversity, cultural appreciation, and social cohesion within Nigerian society.

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