

CODE-SWITCHING IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN HIP-HOP MUSIC

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Abstract

While Nigerian scholars have examined code-switching in conversation and in literary language (Akere, 1980; Amuda, 1986, 1994; Goke-Pariola, 1983; O'Mole, 1987; Lamidi, 2004; Ayeomoni, 2006) this study presents a critical examination of code-switching in contemporary Nigerian hip-hop music. In spite of the fact that most Nigerian hip-hop singers use English, they still try to identify with their roots by mixing English with their indigenous languages. We present code-switching in the lyrics of five Nigerian hip-hop musicians: Sunny Nneji, Weird MC, D'Banj, P Square and Styl Plus. The objectives are to examine the nature of the phenomenon of code-switching, to examine the reasons for code-switching, to discuss the stylistic effects of this trend, and to examine the implications of this practice for communication through music. Our findings reveal that while most code-switching is done in three languages – English, Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba – Yoruba plays a prominent role. This makes the language the vehicle for the elaboration of themes within the songs. We also observe two major kinds of code-switching; ones in which chunks of ideas in different languages feature in turns, (inter-sentential code switching) thereby producing switches at discourse boundaries; and ones in which expressions from other languages are sandwiched between those of a dominant language (intra-sentential code switching). The study concludes that the unique identities created by code-switching in Nigerian hip-hop have positive local and global influences for music and artists, and reflect the ethnolinguistic diversity of the Nigerian nation.

Key words: Nigerian Hip-Hop, code-switching, Yoruba, English, Nigerian Pidgin.

1. Introduction

Any keen observer of the Nigerian music scene will readily agree that much innovation has been introduced by the new Hip-hop groups whose brand of music is very popular with Nigerian youths and adults alike. These young Nigerian entertainers demonstrate creative ingenuity in the way they have blended Nigerian languages with English.. In fact, you can hardly listen to any of such music now without noticing the creative use of one Nigerian language or another with English or its Pidgin variety. In some of these pieces, almost half of the music is composed and sung in a Nigerian language, and the other half in Standard English or a Pidgin variety. This phenomenon in language use has been described in sociolinguistics as code-switching. Although this sociolinguistic concept has been widely studied, its investigation has largely been restricted to speech or conversational situations, and mostly within formal settings. Our investigation has shown that few works in Nigeria (if any) have been carried out on its use in other domains of language use, including music. Although music can be regarded as a kind of speech performance, it is a genre clearly different from any informal conversational exchanges. This paper will examine this new trend of code-switching Nigeria's indigenous languages with English, with a particular focus on hip-hop in Nigerian music

2. Code-switching

The above sociolinguistic term is a product of bi/multilingualism. This is because when languages are in contact they are bound to influence one another. Notable among the products of bi-/multilingual contact are borrowing, code-switching, interference and transfer. Code-switching can be described as a means of communication which involves a speaker alternating between one language and the other in communicating events. In other words, it describes someone who code-switches using two languages (interlingua) or dialects (intralingua) interchangeably in a single communication. Milroy and Muysken (1995:7) see code-switching as 'the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation'.

Other terminologies commonly used in code-switching are ‘intra-sentential’, which describes switches within the sentence, and ‘inter-sentential’ used to describe switches between sentences. Milroy and Muysken (1995: 8) equally mention ‘tag-switching’, ‘emblematic switching’ or ‘extra-sentential switching’ that is used to refer to a switching between an utterance and the tag or interjection attached to it. Communication, which may involve a native tongue and a foreign language, or two foreign languages or dialects of the same language, can be initiated with one language and concluded in the other. For example, one could start a discussion in French and conclude it in English, or initiate a discussion in Standard English and complete it in a non-standard variety of the same language. The following are some examples of code-switching typical of Yoruba/ English bilinguals:

- (1) Kelvin was at the party. ‘Sugbon mi o ri i rara’. (But I did not see him at all)
Only God knows where he sat. ‘Se ko je e lowo sa’? (I hope he did not owe you).

- (2) Awon boys yen lo de maa n disturb awon girls to wa ni area wa every time
ti awon girls yen ba ti n koja.
(It is those boys who always disturb the girls in our area anytime the girls are passing by).

In the Example (1) the switch is at the end of each sentence, reflecting a total change from English to Yoruba. This is an instance of inter-sentential code-switching, that is, the alternation in a single discourse between two languages, where the switching occurs after a sentence in the first language has been completed and the next sentence starts with a new language (Appel & Muysken 1987: 118). In Example (2) Yoruba is the matrix language and English words have been inserted ‘indiscriminately’ in the speech, making it a bit difficult to mark out the specific boundaries of the switch. This is intra-sentential code-switching or code-mixing.

3. Code-switching in Song Lyrics

The study of code-switching has often been restricted to conversations in bilingual communities. Some scholars observe that code-switching is a rule-governed variety used by members in accordance with certain norms, and often functions as a powerful in-group identity marker (Jacobson, 1977, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1993). The study of the public use of code-switching in discourse aimed at a mass audience is a very recent phenomenon. Davies and Bentahila (2008: 2) note that:

Code-switching, in addition to being a useful resource for the bilingual in everyday interaction with other bilinguals, may also serve a poetic function, contributing to the aesthetic and rhetorical effects of discourse that is not spontaneous, but carefully constructed.

As such, code-switching in naturally occurring conversation is different to code-switching in music. It is a deliberate style used by the artist who would have prepared and reflected upon the lyrics before the release of the songs. Artists are conscious of the possibility that their words may be received by people outside their immediate context of language use. 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 originating in cultures other than their own (Davies and Bentahila, 2006: 368). For this reason artists who seek commercial success within the huge market of popular music use code-switching as a stylistic innovation in their songs lyrics.

4. Hip-hop Music: What is it?

Hip-hop music is a genre or brand of music, developed in the 1970s, when Black parties became common in New York City, particularly the Bronx, a community well known for its large African American population. The term ‘hip-hop’ is often credited to Keith Cowboy, a rapper with the American singing group (the Furious Five) led by DJ Grandmaster Flash. It is believed that Cowboy created the term while teasing a friend who had recently joined the United States Army by scat singing (e.g., making melodies with the voice similar to musical instruments) the words “hip/hop/hip/hop” in a way that mimicked the rhythmic cadence of marching soldiers. Keyes (2002) identifies four essential elements of hip-hop culture: graffiti, break dancing, turntabling (or DJing) and rap. The most prominent of these in contemporary times is rap, which according to Sakar, Winer and Sakar (2005: 58) is a musical form that includes an underlying beat often created by a specialized beatmaker. The performer speaks rhythmically and in rhyme, generally to the beat. One major feature of hip-hop that made it acceptable in most parts of the world is the sense of freedom it facilitates through its expressive nature. It has few rules, promotes originality, and artists can sing about almost anything, especially how they feel about their world.

4.1. The Emergence of Hip-hop Music in Nigeria

Hip-hop culture started spreading in Nigeria during the 1980s, but did not grow in popularity until the 1990s when the country witnessed increased availability of computers and cheap music editing software. This enabled Nigerian artists to achieve higher quality recordings that quickly won over the Nigerian audience. The Nigerian version of hip-hop music was popularised by a number of artists including (but not limited to) Ruggedman, TuFace, Dbanj, Eedrris Abdulkareem and Dare Art Alade. The general rapid growth of the entertainment

industry and support from the media helped the popularization of hip-hop music in Nigeria. Television Programmes like the *MTN's Yello show*, *Music Africa*, and *Soundcity* played a major role in this respect. The popularity of hip-hop music has also won the attention of multinational companies that spend millions of naira (the Nigerian currency) promoting hip-hop artists for open air shows.

4.2. Perspectives on Hip-hop

Very few applied linguists have studied discursive practices in hip-hop music. Fenn and Perullo (2000) look at choices of language in hip-hop music in Tanzania and Malawi, two neighbouring East African nations. They note that rap music is carried out in the two major languages in Tanzania, Swahili and English. While English rap borrows heavily from American hip-hop discourse, with such themes as parties and friends, Swahili rap focuses on issues pertinent to Tanzanians, like AIDS, drug use, corruption, unemployment and immigration from the country. The historical process that allowed Swahili to be the most widely spoken language in Tanzania, and English to be the dominant political and economic language, created a unique environment for hip-hop culture to develop. Though Swahili dominates the country's hip-hop scene, English continues to play a significant role in rap. The authors (2000) observe that Tanzanian hip-hop musicians mediate between English and Swahili, relying on both languages to construct a unique landscape for their music.

Sarkar, Winer and Sakar (2005) state that hip-hop is not a very familiar terrain for applied linguists. In their paper on multilingual code-switching in Montreal hip-hop, they observe that an examination of code-switching, as it is pre-meditatively employed by poets and song writers can also yield insights into the way in which two or more languages may interact or

index a particular speech community's collective linguistic and cultural identity. Montreal has an urban youth community with a multilingual orientation, and hip-hop groups are a mirror of the ethnolinguistic diversity salient in the Montreal scene. The authors identify lexical and phrasal code-switching in Montreal hip-hop music, and observe that code-switching draws on more than two languages; with code-switching between Standard Quebec French, Non-Standard Quebec French, European French, Standard North American English, African-American English, and Caribbean Creoles.

Bentahila and Davies (2002) comment that code-switching in conversation is very different in music. In musical lyrics, it is neither spontaneous nor intimate. Secondly, it is not addressed to one interlocutor, or to a small group known personally to the speaker as it is in conversation. They observe that code-switching between French and Arabic in Algeria performs two important functions: globalization and localization (2002: 206). The performers demonstrate their links to the global culture outside the local context, as they try to ground the increasingly internationally recognized 'rai' music in the local context. In a related study, Davies and Bentahila (2008) show how code-switching relates to the structure of the rai lyrics. They observe that code-switching is skillfully exploited to produce rhetorical and aesthetic effects.

Omoniyi (2006), situating Nigerian hip-hop culture within global popular culture, analyses extracts from Nigerian hip-hop song lyrics and reports a discovery of divergence through (deliberate) phonological variation, code-switching, cross-referencing, nicknaming, colloquialisms and reinterpretation. Cutler (2007) provides a sociolinguistic exploration of hip-hop culture. She looks at the issue of authenticity in terms of language, and other aspects of identity such as one's race, class and connection to young urban Black Americans. She also

examines how local hip-hop scenes use language to express local identities. Consequently, it is important to note that hip-hop music and culture have always been about individual and communal expression and not necessarily concerned with "proper" use of language. Hip-hop music and culture will, however, help a listener or viewer (regardless of where they are) to hear and see the social, political, economic and often religious situation in which the artist dwells. Hip-hop in many cases advocates for an honest expression of one's circumstances and/or realities. It is clear that because the expression of thoughts in hip-hop is so personal, it tends to be grounded in local or regional syntax, dialect, slang and vernacular. It is based on the practitioner's unique situations, which can be understood by others in similar situations if they understand the verbal references, analogies, illustrations and other uses of literary tools for communication. This particular study is different from the studies reviewed above because of its uniqueness as one of the few that examines hip-hop from the perspective of the language used to express thoughts in Nigeria, the most populous Black nation in the world. This approach differs from Omoniyi's (2006) work that examines other sociolinguistic phenomena in Nigerian hip-hop. This study, in comparison, examines how contemporary hip-hop artists employ the creative nature of language by code-switching in Nigerian languages and English. We now move to discuss Nigerian hip-hop and naturally occurring code switching data in context.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Background Information on the Data

Table 1 presents the five Nigerian hip-hop musicians, related songs and code-switching features to be discussed below.

Table 1: Nigerian Hip-Hop Artists, Songs and Code-Switching Features

Artist	Song Title	Theme	Code-switching Language	Year	Feature
Sunny Nneji	<i>Oruka</i>	Marriage	English/Yoruba	2003	Inter/Intra
D'Banj	<i>Tongolo</i>	Disappointment	Pidgin/Yoruba	2004	Intra
P Square	<i>Omoge mi</i>	Love/Betrayal	Pidgin/English/Yoruba	2005	Inter/Intra
Styl Plus	<i>Olufunmi</i>	Love	English/Yoruba	2003	Inter
Weird MC	<i>Ijo ya</i>	Dance	Yoruba/Pidgin/English	2006	Intra

The artists listed in Table 1 have been selected based on individual achievements, popularity and quality of their songs. Their albums are constantly in the Nigerian charts and the songs have won various awards both within and outside the Nigerian entertainment industry. One notable stylistic feature of code-switching in Nigerian hip-hop songs is that Yoruba is prominent in all of them. This is a reflection of the source and roots that produce the songs. While not all artists are Yoruba by origin, they have acquired the language while growing up in Lagos, a major Yoruba city and the former capital of Nigeria. It is in Lagos where most hip-hop fans reside and most hip-hop activities take place. It is also important to note that singing

hip-hop refrains in Yoruba is relatively common. For instance, three of the songs analysed have their refrains in Yoruba (*Oruka*, *Olufunmi* and *Ijo ya*). In addition, four of the five titles are Yoruba. Despite the fact that hip-hop fans are spread all over the country, the use of Yoruba refrains appears to be widely accepted, and not out of place in Nigerian hip-hop culture.

In the songs analysed, code-switching is done in three languages: English, Yoruba and Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). These three languages are significant in different ways in Nigerian hip-hop culture. English is the country's official language and by extension, the second language of educated Nigerians. It is also a dominant language for socialization among educated young adults who constitute the majority of hip-hop fans. NPE is a very popular English-based pidgin spoken across the nation, originating from contact between the local people and Portuguese traders in the late 17th Century. It has become a kind of lingua franca in Nigeria due to the country's linguistic heterogeneity, and is particularly more common among Nigerians on the coastal region. In fact, some scholars have observed that Pidgin is becoming a Creole in these parts of Nigeria, especially in the Delta and River States (Ofulue, 2004; Elugbe, 1995). English is the superstrate of NPE, and the three major languages in Nigeria (e.g., Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) are the substrates. The use of NPE started gaining popularity in the country when the late Afro Beat legend Fela Anikulapo Kuti started using it in the early 1970s. Since then, several other Nigerian musicians have adopted NPE, capitalising on the wide acceptability the language enjoys in the country. Government agencies also use NPE for propaganda, making it easier for them to reach a wider Nigerian audience. Some popular advertisements used by government agencies, such as the National Agency for Foods and Drug Control (NAFDAC), use the medium of NPE both in songs and

spoken messages in their radio and television jingles. Hip-hop artists are particularly interested in using NPE because it is fast becoming the language of Nigerian youth, irrespective of their origin or educational background. We now move to analyse code-switching data from specific songs set out in Table 1.

5.2. Code-switching in the data

5.2.1. Ijo ya (*It's time to dance*) Weird MC

In this song the entire refrain from where the title is taken is rendered in Yoruba. The verses oscillate between Yoruba, NPE and English, with the first two dominating the entire song. The song has a fast beat and the refrain is often echoed by fans. The chorus is reproduced below.

(3) Ijo ya, ijo ya	It's time to dance, it's time to dance
Ijo ya, ijo ya	It's time to dance, it's time to dance
Awa ma ni joya	We are the ones, it's time to dance
Ijo ya, ijo ya , ijo ya	It's time to dance (3ce)
Awa ma ni jo	We are the ones to dance

The features of code-switching in Examples (4) and (5) below show how English expressions are sandwiched between Yoruba expressions.

(4) Desola l'oni flow	Desola (name of the artist) has the flow
(5) Lyrics l'ori gangan	Lyrics on the talking drum

Here, we have instances of the use of two English nominal items, *lyrics* and *flow*, which belong to the register of music and cannot be easily captured by the Yoruba language. Likewise, there is a Yoruba concept, *gangan* (a type of African drum used to mimic speech,

popularly known in Nigerian English as the “talking drum”). The examples from (4) and (5) are typical Yoruba structures. In example (4), the English concept is the complement in the syntactic structure, while in example (5) the English concept is the subject. The switches made capture concepts that would have otherwise been difficult to express in either Yoruba or English without losing the import of the messages. Examples (4) and (5) are instances of intra-sentential code-switching

A typical feature of traditional Nigerian music is the acknowledgement of the instrumentalists and other members of the singing group. This is done by calling out their name, and sometimes praising them in the lyrics. It is also often the case that musicians sing using their own names. In the past, this would typically characterize some of the local brands of music in Yorubaland, such as *Juju*, *Apala* and *Fuji*. However, this has also entered hip-hop culture. In actual fact, most of the singers of these local music brands are now tending towards hip-hop culture to gain acceptance among the educated youth. Below are instances from the data where such acknowledgements can be seen:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (6) Sola l’ori gangan | Sola on the talking drum |
| (7) Desola l’oni jo | Desola owns the dance |
| (8) Weird MC gan dey on fire | Even Weird MC is on fire |

Apart from Yoruba-English code-switching, there is also an English/NPE switch, as reproduced below:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (9) Na so we dey flow dey go | This is how we are flowing on |
| (10) Everybody come dey hala | Everybody is screaming |

(11) Weird MC gan de on fire

Even Weird MC (the musician) is on fire

(12) Na different category

This is a different category

In example (11) the word *gan*, is a Yoruba intensifier meaning “very” or “even.” Other typical Nigerian Pidgin expressions are ‘dey’ (*be* and all its variants), ‘na’ (*it is, this is*), ‘yansh’ (*buttocks*). It is common for Nigerian ladies to shake their buttocks while dancing, hence the expression ‘shake your yansh’ in *Ijo ya*. Examples (9), (10) and (12) are also instances of intra-sentential code switching between NPE and English, while in (11) the switch is between NPE and Yoruba.

2.2. **Oruka (Ring) Sunny Nneji**

Oruka is a song of encouragement, assurance and hope for newly married couples and is performed in two languages, Yoruba and English. The theme of marriage is held very sacred among Nigerians. The song celebrates this institution and offers candid advice to the young woman who is about to cling to her ‘hussy’ and the young man who is about to cling to his ‘wifee’. Sunny Nneji is an Igbo by origin, but was born and grew up in Lagos. His previous work was consistently sung in English or a mixture of Standard English and NPE. However, in *Oruka*, released in 2003, he sang the refrain in Yoruba, which has made the track the most preferred of the five-track album. According to the singer himself, he initially composed the track in English, until somebody hinted that the track would be better sung in Yoruba. He then settled on mixing the two languages. He later admitted that the track became the ‘smash hit’ of the album. Music lovers across the Nigerian nation identify with the song, and in Nigeria now it is the song on the lips of both young and old, elite and commoners, workers and

The use of ‘ololufe’ rather than its English equivalent *lover* in example (14) may be deliberate. Ololufe has an endearing connotation in Yoruba, which the word *lover* may not be able to convey in the context of the message. Also, since the word Ololufe has been consistently used in the Yoruba chorus it fits perfectly into the context. The English noun ‘aroma’ is used within a Yoruba sentence because the Yoruba word *oorun didun* may not be able to capture the import of the message of ‘sweet’ love between the lovers. ‘Aroma’ is metaphorical in the sense that it is a culinary lexical item that does not have a perfect collocate in the sentence where it is used. The artist has thus used it to ‘spice up’ his message of love. The last verse is rendered purely in English. Both examples (15) and (16) are instances of intra-sentential code-switching. While in example (15), we have a switch at the clausal level. In Example (16) the English noun *aroma* is inserted into a Yoruba structure.

5.2.3. Olufunmi (*God has given me*) Styl Plus

The song ‘Olufunmi’ is organized into two verses and a rap, then, followed by the last verse. After each of the English verses there is a refrain in Yoruba. Because of the repetitive nature of this chorus it dominates the song, thereby projecting the message of love in the music. The title of the song ‘Olufunmi’ is also a female Yoruba name meaning *God has given me*. The song is emotion-laden and is meant to woo an aggrieved lover:

- (17) When I said to you I never want to love another woman
Girl, it was true, so true
I mean to marry you and when I did,
I’d be the one to take care of you
Now you say you want to leave me girl
When around you I have built my world
Whatever you heard about me baby is definitely crazy

Please give me one chance to show...

(18)	Olufunmi ooo	(God has given me)	Name of a female Yoruba
	Ma pa mi l'ekun o	Don't make me cry	
	Olufunmilola	(God has given me wealth)	A fuller version of the name
	Mase fi mi s'ile lai lai	Don't leave me forever	
	Duro timi ooo	Stay by my side	
	Olufunmi o	(God has given me)	Name

The switch in example (17) can be described as a code change, a kind of inter-sentential code-switching, given that the musicians break completely away from English; the initial code with which the music was initiated; and sing the chorus in Yoruba. This is similar to the observation in examples (13) and (14). In this kind of switch, the musician has not left us in doubt about their intention to use two distinct codes to write their music. Thus, the introduction of the Yoruba language at chorus stage is not incidental to the composition of the music, but a deliberate act to enhance the beauty of the song. Furthermore, the wording in the chorus is standard Yoruba that will be understandable to many across the country. Expressions such as 'ekun' (*tears*), 'fi sile' (*to leave*) and 'duro' (*wait*) are all common Yoruba words whose individual dialectal variations have been cleverly avoided by the musicians. This, we believe, is to enable the song to have a wider acceptability among other tribes who have little knowledge of the language.

From the first verse, the musicians introduce the theme of the song and develop its thematic pre-occupation in the following verses. But the cogent appeal the songwriters wish to make is encapsulated in the chorus rendered in Yoruba. This shows the significance and the central role of the Yoruba language that is not in any way subordinated to English.

Yoruba word that means ‘the essential thing’, the word ‘tongolo’ appears to be a coinage of the artist. In fact, the word is not a real Yoruba word with any apparent meaning; it is thus a word invented by the author of the song, but which the audience can easily relate to because of its unusual form and sound. Repetition of these words is meant to restate the theme of the music, familiarise the listeners and give the song its unique rhythm that fans can sing along with.

Another code-switching feature is apparent in the rap section. These sentences have a typical Yoruba language structure with occasional switches to English words that are mostly nouns and adjectives. An interesting feature of code-switching is that occurring at the sentence boundary, where English adjectival complements are used in Yoruba sentence structures as seen in example (22):

(22)	Mo wa talented	I am talented
	Yes, mo wa gifted	Yes I am gifted
	Seri kini mi o ma gbe e lifted	Seri, my thing did not lift you
	Igo oju e ma file shifted	Your glasses are shifted
	Boyfriend e gan o wa evicted	Even your boyfriend is evicted
	Ko ma fi mo pe D’Banj is addicted	That you may know that D’Banj
	Te ba so pe no, maa wa persistent	If you say no, I will persist
	Mo ni iyawo n’le t’on get e twisted	My wife at home gets twisted

This deliberate code-switching produces a sentence boundary rhyme of English adjectival complements ending with *-ed* and provide additional prominence for the English words. One possible interpretation of the motivation of the artist is the need to find a rhyme. This is similar to Davies and Bentahila’s (2008) findings on code-switching between Arabic and

French *rai* lyrics from Algeria and Morocco, where French was frequently inserted into *rai* lyrics at sentence boundaries to produce a rhyme.

5.2.5. Omoge Mi by P Square

‘Omoge Mi’ is a song of betrayal. The song title is in Yoruba, but it is formulated in English, Yoruba and NPE. The introduction is a lament with expressive words like *No, yeah, yeah!* showing the feelings of the artist about the betrayal of love by his girlfriend. The only meaningful English expression is *girl why*, repeated twice. There are also two Yoruba expressions, a compound noun: ‘omoge mi ati padi mi’ (*my girlfriend and my paddy*) and a nominal phrase: ‘ore mi’ (*my friend*). The verses are formulated in NPE and a Yoruba/English code-switch appears in the refrain, as seen in example (23) below.

- (23) If na you tell me wetin you go do your girlfriend if you were the one tell me
Wetin you go do your girlfriend what you would do to your girlfriend
Omoge ti mo feran ju the girl I love most
Ti emi feran ti emi fe ri that I love and want to see
Omoge mi ati padi mi my girlfriend and my paddy
Won ti se mi ni nkan ti oda they did something bad to me
Wetin you go do your best friend? what will you do to your best friend
This na padi mi ore mi eeh...eeh this is my paddy, my friend eeh...
Eeh... eeh... girl why...

The message in the refrain shown in Example (19) is not an entirely new one in the context of the song, as it has been communicated in the first verse. For instance ‘Omoge mi ati paddy mi’ is the Yoruba interpretation of *My girlfriend and my best friend* in the first verse. Code-switching to Yoruba in the refrain is therefore used to elaborate what has already been said.

The use of a Yoruba title and subsequent code-switching into Yoruba (in a song predominantly composed in NPE with some Standard English expressions) appeals to the large Yoruba hip-hop audience in Nigeria. Most of them reside in Lagos, the Yoruba-speaking former capital of Nigeria and are familiar with the language. Other fans outside Lagos and Yoruba speaking areas of the country find the style equally interesting, and this has won the artists many fans within the country.

6. Conclusion

The hip-hop songs examined in this paper clearly reflect the cultural diversity and multilingual nature of the setting in which they are produced. Despite the fact that hip-hop came to Nigeria from America, it has been largely domesticated to express uniquely Nigerian linguistic and cultural realities created by the code-switching features. The homegrown hip-hop stars have popularized their brand of hip-hop to the extent that they are engaged by multi-nationals companies (e.g. MTN, Globacom), drinks producers (Nigerian Breweries, Nigerian Bottling Company) and so forth. In fact, we could not but agree with Bentahila and Davies (2002) that the employment of code-switching serves the dual purpose of globalization and localization of the music. While the artists gain more fans and increase the sales of their albums in geometrical proportion, particularly among Yoruba speakers, the elite promote the music in various countries of the world; thereby making this music not just popular in Nigeria, but also among Nigerians in the Diaspora. This earns the artists more invitations to international music festivals in Europe and America to promote their music. It is also evident from our analysis that code-switching draws on more than one Nigerian language, thereby reflecting the ethnolinguistic diversity of the country.

It is also important to note that one aspect of hip-hop culture, namely rap, is gaining acceptance in the Church, particularly among the youth. This clearly shows that as the hip-hop culture evolves in Nigeria, it has no bounds. There is also an indication that the use of the local language – Yoruba – is spreading hip-hop faster than lyrics in English only. The mixing of Nigerian languages with English in hip-hop music may also be a subtle way of resisting the overbearing influence of English in the Nigerian social setting, especially among the educated. A Nigerian brand of hip-hop is popularly accepted not only among the educated, but also the uneducated youths because they can largely understand the message and identify with the culture. In addition, many African hip-hop singers have often been criticized for imitating American singers in their attempt to sing and rap. They are even accused of trying, unsuccessfully, to fake an American accent and rehash lyrics that have been recorded and performed by artists from overseas. This is because many of these singers fail to recognize the fact that rapping is a matter of uniqueness in style, and that most music lovers the world over appreciate something that is different from what they are used to. However, with this new wave of code-switching Nigerian musicians are establishing unique identities for themselves and their music. As their music gains more fans at home, the continued global influence of the Yoruba language (particularly in the United States, Britain and Germany) has also made a positive impact on Nigerian hip-hop music, and this has encouraged hip-hoppers to improve in their creative efforts at blending the languages in their music.

To finish, the data presented here shows two kinds of code-switching features in the five songs, namely inter-sentential and intra-sentential. The songs however differ in the styles they exhibit in these code-switching patterns. Three of the songs (*Ijo ya*, *Oruka* and *Olufunmi*) have complete switches to Yoruba refrains. The kinds of switch in the verses differ. In *Ijo ya*

and *Oruka*, there are intra-sentential switches. While in *Ijo ya*, the switch is between Yoruba and NPE; in *Oruka*, the switch is between Yoruba and English. In *Olufunmi*, there are switches between the verse (English) and the refrain (Yoruba) and the bridge (English). In *Tongolo* Yoruba and NPE are mixed in the verses and the refrain. The raps have a Yoruba structure with occasional switches to English nouns and adjective complements. The general code-switching feature of the song, however, is intra-sentential. *Omoge mi* exhibits features of both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching between English, Yoruba and NPE. Future research needs to examine how more Nigerian indigenous languages are used in contemporary Nigerian music lyrics. It should become clear that Nigerian languages, especially Pidgin English and the so-called minority languages, are widely used in Nigerian music, and this is yet to be studied extensively in linguistic research. Studies of these kinds can pinpoint how indigenous languages are used in a musical piece, and to what extent such musical lyrics are more successful than those composed and sung entirely in English. The socio-semiotic aspect of Nigerian hip-hop music is another fertile ground of linguistic study that will further showcase the rich linguistic diversity of Nigeria.

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