The Relevance of Multi-lingual Hip-Pop Music in the learning and Preservation of Yoruba Language

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Abstract
Multilingual music is the use of various languages mostly local dialects in conjunction with the English Language in writing the lyrics of songs. This has become the tradition of mostly hip-pop musicians. This practice is also common among Nigeria hip-pop musicians where Yoruba, Igbo, Pidgin is combined with English Language. Generally, the advent of hip-pop music over the years have generated a lot of arguments among scholars where some see it to have negative effects while other see it as positive on Yoruba culture. Despite the claims, multilingual music continue to thrive home and abroad in the music industry. To also note is the prevalent of more of the combination of Yoruba and English language hip-pop music calls for a research. This study examines the relevance of Multilingual hip-pop music on learning and sustenance of Yoruba language. Findings show that, multi-lingual hip-pop music is a veritable tool especially with ample repetitions, it has a facilitative effect on learning and sustaining Yoruba Language.

Keywords: Relevance, Multi-lingual, Hip-Pop Music, language and Preservation, Yoruba Language

Introduction
The proliferation of Multi-lingual music among Nigerian hip-pop musicians is undoubtedly at alarming rate. Some Nigerian hip-pop musicians seem to enjoy combining different languages to make expressions. Their native language in most cases is combined with English language. The multilingual music has gained acceptance into many homes
(home and abroad), concerts and many night clubs. There are quite a good number of Nigerian Hip-Pop musicians who employ the multilingual lyric style like Teni, Asa, Dbanj, Davido, Tiwa Savage, Wande Coal, Wizkid, 9ice and a lot more. The opportunity of listening to multilingual music in your dialects get wider as Omoljola (2006) also opines that whether live music or playing of “frozen music” the totality of a nightclub event revolves around music. According to Olusegun Fariudeen and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa (2011):

The hip hop music that is composed with multiple languages has given the music industry a growth. Since the time we started having musicians that sign multilingual music we can see that the music industry has grown bigger. People are buying more music CDs compared to when we have our old musicians who sang with one language.

Olusegun Fariudeen and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa (2011) claimed that many of the award winning singles and albums of the contemporary hip hop artists exhibit mixtures of different languages including the standard English (SE), pidgin English (PE), Yoruba, Igbo and other local dialects. It is expedient to note that the growth of the music industry and the popular acceptance of multi-lingual music in tandem with the opportunity the multi-lingual music offers to the Nigerians in diaspora. Some scholars like (Abati, 2009) believes that hip-Pop music is more of dirty language and a language of rebellion. Besides, (Nwoko, 2019) is of the opinion that hip-pop music contributes to language development because they encourage multilingualism and promotion of indigenous languages side by side with foreign ones. In an attempt to broaden the scope of the positive contributions of Multi-lingual hip-Pop music to sustainability of Yoruba language in the diaspora, this work elucidate aptly on some relationship between music, language and memory.
Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, developed by Gardner (1983) on the basis of research in several disciplines (including psychology, brain science, genetics and anthropology), asserts that human beings possess a set of relatively independent intellectual capacities that they draw on individually and corporately, rather than a single intelligence measured by traditional IQ tests. According to (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider & Gardner, 2011) Multiple intelligence include linguistic intelligence (analyzing and creating oral and written language); musical intelligence (discerning and expressing different sound patterns); and naturalistic intelligence (identifying living beings and features of the natural world) This means that musical intelligence can still be used to help Yoruba people in diaspora preserve the language as long as they listen to multi-lingua hip-pop music.

Gardner (2011) asserts that musical intelligence develops in parallel to linguistic intelligence and that both musical and linguistic competences rely on the oral-auditory system and are not dependent upon physical objects. Other scholars like Mora (2000) opines that music and language share some similar features like volume, pitch, rhythm, tone, stress and pauses. What is interesting about the development of both music and language is that in both cases receptive skills come before productive skills (Sloboda, 1989). Recently also brain imaging studies indicate that music and language are closely interlinked at the neural level and that speech and music share a large number of common functional aspects (Besson, Schön, Moreno, Santos, & Magne, 2007; Jäncke, 2012; Putkinen, Tervaniemi, Saarikivi, de Vent, & Huotilainen, 2014), this is opposed to the popular views on the brain processing that equate music with the right hemisphere and language with the left hemisphere. It is imperative to also note that findings suggest that “speech functions can benefit from music functions and vice versa” (Jäncke, 2012). This corroborates the findings by Brandt, Slevc and Gebrian (2012) concluding that “musical hearing and ability is essential to early
language acquisition.” As suggested by the findings of the study by Schön et al. (2008), which compared the efficiency of learning words from an artificial language in spoken and sung sequences, music can also facilitate learning a new language, particularly in the initial stages of learning when segmenting words. This, emphasizes the potency of music to be used as a tool for the preservation or sustenance of Yoruba language in the diaspora more so that hip-pop music have gained a global recognition and acceptance.

**Memory, Music and Language**

The challenge of having Yoruba language sustained or preserved in the diaspora where the language is not frequently spoken becomes a serious challenge especially when we consider the fact that the memory captures what is frequently perceived. (Thornbury, 2006) supports this claim that information should be frequently retrieved lest it decays and disappears. Many scholars opine that music and songs can facilitate the long-term retention of the words, phrases and pronunciations that needs to memorized (Mora, 2000; Abbott, 2002; Lake, 2002; Lowe, 2007; Kerekes, 2015). This means, to have Yoruba language preserved, it requires long term retention in the memory. (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Thornbury, 2006) claimed that long-term memory has enormous capacity and durability and stores information more permanently. To have information such as the Yoruba language retained, there has to be frequent retrieval lest it is lost and this has made music very relevant in its potentiality.

Calvert and Tart (1993) asserts that songs present content in a form that may be easily stored, rehearsed, and retrieved from memory. While the content of a song involves the lyrics and the message of the lyrics, the form of a song involves the rhyme of the words, the repetition of a verse, the rhythm and the melody of the tune (Calvert & Tart, 1993). To also note in a major feature of some of the multi-lingual hip-pop music is the simple arrangement of the lyrics which makes it very easy to master. In a study by Slobba, (1989), he
asserts that the musical structure of songs provides a schematic organization which allows the retrieval of lyric information. Apart from having a repetitive structure, songs evoke strong emotions and present the language items in a meaningful context, which considerably facilitates their memorization both inside and outside the classroom, as emotions enhance memory processes (Jäncke, 2008) and meaningfully learned material has greater potential for retention in long-term memory (Ausubel, 1965). According to Murphey (1990) music helps to retain the involuntary mental rehearsal of recently heard words, sounds and phrases. Murphey (1990) also argued that retaining words, sounds and voices does not guarantee the understanding of the meaning of content of the lyrics will last longer. However, if supported if played constantly, especially with the visual representation of the meaning, it might be retained.

**Music and Language Competence**

In addition to addressing multiple intelligences, providing a positive learning environment, increasing students’ motivation and functioning as an effective memory aid, music and songs offer a realistic context for developing all the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) and can be integrated into pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar instruction while also offering a change to the classroom routine (Failoni, 1993; Lo & Li, 1998; Abbott, 2002). As stated by Chuang (2016) lyrics in songs are “optimal language input because the input chunks provided are manageable for beginning learners, blending rhythm, stress, rhymes, intonation, vocabulary, and sentence patterns. According to Murphey’s (1992) asserts that popular songs are generally short, use conversational language, contain repetitions and display a comparatively simple vocabulary.

It means learning of unfamiliar words and idiomatic expressions through the use of songs is possible since songs provide meaningful examples presented in realistic contexts without a formal education setting.
(Murphey, 1992; Ludke 2009) corroborates that connected speech, pronunciation and intonation can be ideally practised with songs as their lyrics reflect the natural language with words presented at a slower pace than usual speech. (Griffie, 1992) asserts that songs provide a natural context for the most common structures such as verb tenses and prepositions. Nevertheless, listening is proven to play a more important role than other language skills in people’s daily life as it is used twice as much as speaking, four times more than reading and five times more than writing (Rivers, 1981). What is more, several authors consider listening as the most important skill in learning a new language by virtue of its acting as base for the development of other skills (Lacorte & Thurston-Griswold, 2001; Rost, 2013). Different sources of listening difficulty such as sound-letter relationship can be dealt with by using songs for practising rhythm pattern and connected speech (Rixon, 1986). Music can help the development of such essential skills as active listening and differentiation of sound patterns (Ludke, 2009). Language and communication are also universal and they share a connection with music. Livingstone (1973) provided anthropological evidence that Homo sapiens sang (non-linguistic vocalizations) before speaking and Jesperson (1925, as cited in Murphey, 1990) and Rousseau (1968) both postulated that song preceded speech. (Saricoban et al., 2010) comments that music contains authentic, informal language that is natural to the ear. Music tends to be viable tool then to learn and also sustain Yoruba language in the diaspora.

**Textual Analysis of Some selected Multi-lingual Music**

**Some excerpts from the song “Beautiful ”by Asa**

Beautiful is your name
Wonderful is what you are to me
It’s you I see in my dreams
Everyday and I pray for you
Queen of my life you are so beautiful mama
You’re beautiful
I’m looking for a Mother
Who sees the Mother
My Mother is never reluctant or hesitant
Because of a Child, She suffered in her husband’s house
My Mother is never reluctant or hesitant
Help me honor my Mother
There is none like a Mother
None on earth
Help me honor my Mother
There is none like a Mother
None on earth

From the above except, Bukola Elemide popularly known as Asa employed both English and Yoruba Language in the music. The music is full of phrases and expressions that will be easy for any Yoruba person to understand. Music contains a variety of vocabulary like (Kira) synonymous to (juba) which means that can easily be used by any age or level. Beside, is also the Figurative language and metaphors which is very common in Asa’s music and they are such that is often used in everyday experiences and communication. An example is the comparison of a mother (Iya) to Orisha. To note in the music is also the synonym of some words like (Iya) which can also be called (mama) or (Yeye) which is common among the Ekiti people. Through the music, pronunciations and different accents can be mastered and often recalled. The English introduction alone itself gave a clue to the message of the lyrics which is supportive as combined with Yoruba language.
Some Excerpts from *Uyo Meyo* by Teni (Teniola Apata)

*Kajo kajo kajo*  Let's dance, let's dance, let's dance

*kayo kayo kayo*  Let's rejoice, let's rejoice, let's rejoice

*Úyò meyo lé'hun osan okan mi o eh*  I rejoiced with you and now it's my time to rejoice

*Úyò meyo*  I rejoice

*Úyò meyo*  I rejoice

*O Úyò*  rejoice

*Úyò meyo lé'hun osan okan mi o eh*  I rejoiced with you and now it's my time to rejoice

*Úyò meyo*  I rejoice

*Úyò meyo*  I rejoice

*Eh Úyò*  rejoice

*Úyò meyo lé'hun osan okan mi o eh*  I rejoiced with you and now it's my time to rejoice

**What my eyes have seen eh eyeh**

*Ohun toju mi ti ri ah eyeh yea*  Don't let them tell you, "You…"

Considering the lexical features of Teni’s music, the chorus of the lyrics is in Ondo dialect, yet it’s such that a Yoruba person can understand. Ondo State is one of the Yoruba speaking State in South West, Nigeria. *(uyo meyo)* which is *moyo* in the pure Yoruba language means I rejoice. Along the line, the musician switched to English language and at a point she employed the direct interpretation of some Yoruba words to English language. Example is *Ohun toju mi ti ri ah eyeh yea* (What my eyes have seen) Later on the musician switched to pure Yoruba dialect. Repetition of words is also conspicuous in the music and this has it advantage in making the words stick.
**Some Excerpts from 9ice Song, “Ayepo Gan”**

*Aye akamara oh*  
Life is full of strange things  
Eh eh eh eh, Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

**Pre-Chorus**

*Eni binu ori, ko le ri fila de*  
Whosoever is envious of someone’s success,  
Will not be successful

*Eni soko f’agbonrin, aajo obe l’on se*  
Whosoever throws stone at an animal, does so, because of self interest

*Yema yo ada tori oku di e ka to ni suru*  
Don’t hurt another, because in no time, things will be okay

*Yema yo ada tori oku di e ka to ni suru*  
Don’t hurt another, because in no time, things will be okay

**Chorus**

*Ayepo gan, eh eh eh eh, oh oh oh oh oh oh*  
There are enough opportunities  
*Ayepo gan, e s’aye*  
There are opportunities, enjoy yourself  
*Ayepo gan, e jaye, ayepo gan*  
There are opportunities, enjoy yourself well

*Nothing like impossible, impossible be lodo esu*  
…Impossibility is of Satan

*Nothing like I can do it, Omo do it, jekan damo*  
Child, do it, let them know

*Oku losun, Oji lo gbo pe*  
What’s done is what is appreciated  
*Don’t be a talker be a doer, nothing more*  

*Gbogbo Aso, ko la n sa sorun, ko gbo*  
Not everything should be made known

*Eyara yami leti yin o*  
Quickly lend me your ears……
Eti kan o ye ri .......................... Anything done in part does not worth it
Bata kan o yese ......................... Quickly lend me your ears
Eyara ya mi leti yin o .................. Don’t do more than expected----
Sin mi lo ‘le ana, owewu etu .......
Kini koko iyawo wo lo ................

Abolore Adegbola Akande popularly known as 9ice is one of the prominent Multi-lingual hip-pop in Nigeria is popularly known for the use of Yoruba proverbs and several communication devices to convey a message. Ayepo gan is no exception of such song. Ayepo gan in Yoruba means, there are enough room for everyone to succeed on earth. The song is full of great Yoruba proverbs with deep meaning. The artiste used the song “Ayepo gan” to stir the spirit of the discouraged especially those who are already downcast because of their current unpleasant situation. He says people should keep doing their best till they get experience breakthrough. The musician used statements with deep Yoruba meaning such as Eni binu ori, ko le ri fila de to communicate to people. The literal meaning of Fila in English is the Cap and Ori is the head so the literal meaning would have been (If you are angry with the head, you will not see cap to wear) but the meaning goes beyond that giving it (if you are envious of someone’s success, success would be far from you). That is just using symbols (Symbolism; Apejuwe) to pass across messages with meaning which is beyond the physical representation. Symbol was also used to express a meaning in Ye ma yo ada, tori oku die kato ni suru. “Ada” is a cutlass. The meaning would have literally mean (Don’t be quick to bring out a cutlass, cause very soon, things would be calm) but it goes beyond that and gives it, don’t hurt another because in no time everything will be okay. He also employed Synecdoche; using a part to explain a whole or using a whole to explain a part in a statement like eyara ya mi leti yin, eti kan o yeri, bata kan oye ese. The literal meaning would have been lend me all your ears, one ear does not fit the head and one shoe does not fit the leg but lend me your ears is the central message the musician is passing across. It is crystal clear that through the lyrics of multilingual
hip-pop music, core Yoruba Language can be learnt and preserved as the music travels round and gain acceptance both home and abroad.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion to the study on the relevance of multi-lingual hip-pop music on the teaching and sustenance of Yoruba language, the explosive increase and the acceptance of multi-lingual hip-pop music worldwide is convincing on the possibility of learning and sustaining Yoruba Language. Besides, the richness of lyrics, possessing the core elements of Yoruba language and the communicative devices employed by multi-lingual hip-pop musicians cannot be undermined. Through the music, listeners become aware of the correct pronunciation of Yoruba words and tone color. The repetition of the lyrics and the music help and has a facilitative effect on learning and sustenance of Yoruba language. The didactic function of music through logical organization of lyrics and performance practice passes across the meaning of the Yoruba language used. Some lyrics that are presented in direct or indirect satire through such speech figures as proverb, simile, metaphor, alliteration, allusions and even short anecdote to convey meaning to the listeners of multi-lingual hip-pop music.

**References**


