

A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of the Feminine Gender in Nigerian Hip-Hop Music

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Abstract. Hip-hop music has become a popular trend in Nigeria, with it enjoying a high level of acceptance among the Nigerian youths. It is characterised by the construction of different themes woven around vibrant styles and rhythmic patterns. This paper examines the linguistic and non-linguistic choices in hip-hop music and the messages that these choices convey about the feminine gender. Excerpts from the lyrics of randomly selected hip-hop music serve as data. These are analysed in line with the multimodal critical discourse analysis approach which combines both Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Approach – an exploration of the relationship between texts and wider socio-cultural processes - with the investigation of meaning arising from the integrated use of semiotic resources and visual images within the text as expressed by O' Halloran and Kress. These are based on Halliday's systemic functional theory. It is evident that females play major roles as characters in hip-hop music videos. The use of vulgar expressions in the description of these female characters portrays them mainly as sex commodities and this questions the dignity of the African woman and the virtues she is expected to project to her fellow female folk, home and abroad.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminine Gender, Hip-hop Music, Socio-Cultural Processes, The African Woman

1. Introduction

Hip-hop is a popular music genre in Nigeria, sung and popularly enjoyed by young people. It explores various themes drawn from social, cultural, religious and political contexts. Its vibrant beat and systematic rhythm lend it to a higher level of acceptability by the Nigerian youths. As expressed by Adedeji (2017:76):

The global influence of hip hop and its accompanying urban cultural manifestation from America is undisputed and this music genre has found itself in the forefront in many countries'.

This shows that hip hop originates from a cultural context different from that of Africa. Its central theme was known to be marginalisation. The thematic contents of hip-hop become very necessary in discourse due to the wide range of acceptability it enjoys, the world over. The advancement in science and technology has helped greatly in facilitating the popularity that hip-hop, particularly Nigerian hip-hop, enjoys today. This popularity is also marked by the increasing number of artistes who emerge daily on the scene and whose musical videos are displayed on television screens, you tube, and other social media platforms.

Every community has its cultural beliefs and practices which distinguish it from other societies. These beliefs and practices form the identity of members of the community. Due to the dynamic nature of hip-hop music, it readily becomes an avenue through which the socio-cultural values of a people are propagated and publicised. The implications, therefore, are that the contents of hip-hop music portray the identity of a people and this music genre can serve as a vehicle for the sustenance of the African culture for onward transmission to oncoming generations and its conveyance to communities or contexts beyond the shores of Africa.

2. Hip-hop Music in Nigeria and its Socio-Cultural Implications

Over the years, hip-hop music has thrived greatly in Nigeria. This is due to the multilingual and heterogeneous nature of the country. Very many hip-

hop brands have emerged, ranging from linguistically-tied hip-hop (especially based on English language and the three major languages in Nigeria – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), religion-based hip-hop, drawing materials from the two major religions in Nigeria – Christianity and Islam, culture-bound hip-hop, drawing materials from folklore, to other forms of performances by freelance artistes with no specified pattern of categorisation. Again, Adedeji (2017: 76) submits that:

It is an undisputable fact that one of the major cultural exports from Nigeria today apart from Nollywood is music and the genre is Hip hop. This is indexed through the arrays of artistes that can be termed as the country's hip hop ambassadors representing Nigeria's cultural identity on the national, continental and international scene.

Adedeji (2017:75) earlier explains that:

In Nigeria the popular music scene is vibrant and dynamic parading various music styles and genre among which is hip hop - a product of global cultural flow. Hip hop enjoys greater acceptability and popularity among youths and the genre's new wave artistes are now using its popularity and the vibrancy of the music industry to push their Nigerian identity agenda and express their Africinity to the fullest.

At this point, it is pertinent to ask: 'How well, how frequently and how accurately is this music genre daily expressing this 'Africinity to the fullest'? The lyrical features of Nigerian hip-hop and the pictures communicated in them speak volumes about the norms and values of Africans, particularly Nigerians.

Issues about moral values are fast fading in Nigerian hip-hop music. Values of dignity, decency, discipline, contentment, consideration for others, etc. are undermined in the lyrics and visuals in this music genre. There seems to be a move from serious socio-political and economic issues identified with the hip-hop of the earliest times to loose talks hinged on sex and sexuality, with the feminine gender acting as a key player. This is confirmed in the words of Endong (2016: 63):

As a popular genre, the Nigerian Hip-Hop musicians capitalize on themes that are of burning interest to various audiences, particularly the youths. Such themes appeal to listeners' emotions of surprise, romance, sexuality and the like. Of all these themes, sex and sexuality seem to be the most dominant. In fact, most popular music makers in Nigeria have been capitalizing on humanity's sustained interest in sex, romance and sexuality to feed the public (especially their fans) with heavily prurient songs. Such songs,

according to conservative Nigerian critics, may be equated to obscenity and immorality. And on such an appreciation, they (these songs) are condemnable.

Adebanjo (2011) submits that 'when the morals of a people break down, the people have sacrificed their culture and devalued their world'. In addition to the loss of culture, there is identity crisis. While Ojukwu *et al.* (2016:117) assert that 'popular music is a very powerful process of socio-cultural and inter cultural communication and strong source of economic growth of a nation', the perversion in the music industry, occasioned by the consistent parading of lyrical contents wound around the thematic preoccupation of sexual promiscuity and immorality calls for concern.

3. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Multimodal Discourse Analysis Approach

Language is a very important phenomenon in human life. It is a means of social exchange in any given communicative context and by it, certain ideologies about the world we live in are explored. Fairclough (1993:135) describes critical discourse analysis (CDA) as:

...discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

He perceives language as a phenomenon which is inextricably connected to other aspects of social life so that any analytical exercise on social life and research must consider language use as a very important resource.

vanDijk (1998a) describes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field that studies and analyses written and spoken texts. This is with the aim of identifying the discursive sources of inequality, power, dominance, etc. CDA examines how certain ideologies are explored by means of linguistic components. It addresses how these discursive sources are engaged in specific social, political and historical contexts. Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics forms the basis for this critical analysis of discourse, particularly due to his perception of language as a social act, and his identification of the three metafunctions of

language which are the textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions.

For a more robust analysis of discourse, the multimodal discourse analyses combines means other than the linguistic components to explore meaning in a given text. As explained by O' Halloran (2011:1),

Multimodal discourse analysis (henceforth MDA) is an emerging paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music and sound.

O' Halloran (2004:1) further describes it as the investigation of meaning arising from 'the integrated use of semiotic resources'. According to him, MDA marks 'a shift of focus in linguistic enquiry' which de-emphasises language use as 'an isolated phenomenon'. Kress (2009:1), in his submission on the essence of MDA, proffers a three-dimensional resource for investigating meaning by illustrating with a traffic sign showing the way to the car park of a supermarket. He explains that a combination of 'writing', 'image' and 'colour' will provide an all-round meaning of such a text. Linguistic strings used in isolation of other meaning-reaching resources such as visual images and signs, will only provide a lean resource for meaning investigation. Again, Halliday's systemic linguistics becomes relevant as it accommodates semiotic resources in the analysis of language in use.

4. The Dignity of the African Woman

Omer (2018:31) discusses women and sexual morality as a cultural component. The practice of nudity is not a common phenomenon in the lifestyle of the African woman who represents strength and virtues that describe her as an epitome of morality and dignity and a propagator of the African culture. How true is this, particularly with regard to the African woman in this modern era? How well is the Nigerian hip hop music portraying the African woman and the ideals she represents 'on the national, continental and international scene' going by the trends we see in the lyrical and pictorial features of Nigerian hip hop music? How are we telling our stories to the world?

5. The Representation of the Feminine Gender in Nigerian Hip-Hop Music

Females' body parts form the focus of hip-hop music

Slangy Expressions Suggesting Sexual Overtures

I wannatwerk twerk twerk twerk twerk
den go dey on deck deck deck deck
na who say something 'bout speck speck speck
Na cash you want abina check check check check
(FalilaKetan, Olamide, 2014)

The way she dey wine
Make me want mess up my mind.
the way you dey roll your behind
you fit make a man to go blind
Me love the beat o the way she wine make my music
sweet oh
The way she dance it oh everybody them are loving it
oh.
Yeah shake all your bum bum everybody rump
hump hump yea

The way you wine wine they make me go down low
The way you wine wine they make me go down low
(Bumbum, Timaya 2012)

The action words *-to wine* and *to twerk* exemplified above, depict the deliberate shake of the bombom to arouse the sexual interest of the opposite sex. It is quite a shameful thing to see our glorified African women in this debased form, twerking and shaking their God-given buttocks seductively (to entice men) in the name of dancing for whatsoever reason. This further questions the dignity and virtue that a typical African woman should represent in our society. This case of media libertinism needs to be addressed urgently.

Den want to sample
Den wan do collabo (Wanted, Tiwa savage, 2016)

Sample and *collabo*, as used above, are verbs indicating the intention of men to share sexual intimacy with the opposite sex.

Sentential Forms:

Exclamatory Forms

Yoruba: Aseopotoyi, Aso le fi bo! (*O po to yi*, Naira Marley, 2019)

English: What a great backside, covered in clothings!

Metaphorical Constructions Describing Females' Buttocks

Yoruba:

...ileke to n ro yen maje koja

Ki leleyi okesuna

Ki leleyi okekpokpo

Ki leleyi oshodi okè

ki le leyi okesuna (Okesuna, Olamide, 2018)

English: Do not allow the rolling beads to break into pieces (beads tied around the waist)
 What is this? suna mountain
 What is this? kpokpo mountain
 What is this? Oshodi mountain

The lines above are used to describe the size of the female breasts and buttocks.

Other forms of Metaphorical Constructions

Turkey nla, want to follow Wande
 Onion booty want to make man ke (*mofeke*) (*Totori*, Olamide, Wizkid, and Id Cabasa, 2019)

In this excerpt, the Nigerian female is likened to turkeys and onions.

d. Vulgarity at its Climax

Yoruba: *Awonomo* soak away, *won niki n suck am well*

O nwo mi o, o da bi enipe o fedo mi o
O fegbenus'enu, baby girl can you gbenu...
Ayakinkini, bi obo Tiger,
 Sexy girl, *je kin gborisi e laya...*
La nkan to fe la, je ka mope aiye la bola

English: The rotten girls ask me to suck it well... ('It' here means the woman's breast)

You keep looking at me as if you want to have sex with me

Your chest like that of the vagina of a tiger
 Sexy girl, let me place my head on your chest
 Lick what you want to lick, let them know that you came to this world to enjoy

(*O po to yi*, Naira Marley, 2019)

Pidgin: ...*Idi nlala* hey idi nlala anyhow I will give it to you hey. (*Bumbum*, Timaya, 2012)

English: Big buttocks, hey big buttocks. Anyhow, I will give it to you.

Yoruba: *Okoti le ta lo febami sun?* (eh)
 Wake up please do not sleep (*Pumpum*, Naira Marley and Dayo Chino, 2018)

English: I am feeling horny. Who will satisfy my sexual needs?

Female body parts are frequently mentioned in hip-hop music as seen in the excerpts above. Some of these include *breast, chest, vagina,*

Women as Promo Materials for Hip-Hop Music

Me love the beat o the way she wine **make my music sweet** oh

The way she dance it oh everybody them are loving it oh.

Yeah **shake all your bum bum** everybody rump hump hump yea (*Bumbum*, Timaya, 2012)

Lodun to yi omo lo dun toyi, Lodun to yi orin lodun toyi (*Pumpum*, Naira Marley and Dayo Chino, 2018)

The excerpts above conceptualises females as means of promoting hip-hop songs. People are attracted to these songs as a result of the presence of half naked females. Such hip-hop songs can therefore sell fast in the market.

Women as Sexual Stimulants

Your hair smell like the tropics, your body look nice

One fuck cyaan hold me, we gotta go twice

I'm here for you, **just tell me what youlike**

I wannaputyou in my life

...Everything I want, she gimme

She tell me everyday she wanna see me, ooh-yeah

Bad-boy Wizzy, Star BoyWizzy-boy

I make her dance, I give her mwaan (*Come Closer*, Wizkid and Drake, 2017)

Oya totori mi one time (*tor*)

Totori mi two time (*tor tor*)

Totori mi three times (*tor tor tor*)

Totori mi four times (*tor tortor tor*)(*Totori*, Olamide, Wizkid, and Id Cabasa, 2019)

In Nigeria hip-hop music, females are made to act as objects of sexual arousal in men. They are seen as sources of sexual pleasure, and they seem to be rated as best suited only for this purpose. *Totori me one time* means arouse me, put me in the mood, awake in me, the passion, feelings or desire for sexual pleasure.

Repetitive Forms Suggesting Sexual Intentions

I want to *roma, roma roma roma*

I want to *fisi, fisi fisi fisi*

I want to *debe, debe debe debe*

I want to *panke, panke panke panke* (*Wanted*, Tiwa Savage 2016)

'I want to *roma*' means 'I want to engage in romance'

'I want to *fisi*' means 'I want to insert it' (having to do with the manhood)

'I want to *debe*' means 'I want to get in there (into the female private part)

African female hip-hop artistes seem to have come to accept the roles imposed on them by their male counterparts as sex workers, sex objects and sex 'commodities' or sex toys. These lines from Tiwa Savage, *wanted*, illustrate the continuous thematisation of women in this light. This emphasises the superiority of men over women.

Females as Mere Edibles

Yoruba: *Odun bi ti suya.* (Okesuna, Olamide, 2016)

English: Sweet like the barbecue

I'm a fisherman

Are you a fish?

Girl I hunger hunger

I want to eat (*Agege* by Tekno, featuring Zlatan, 2019)

Mo ko e je bi ...alata sue sue

Isalejollof to ta o snesnesne...

O dun bi ti abode (Totori, Olamide, Wizkid, and Id Cabasa, 2019)

English: I devour you like a peppery meal

Like the burnt peppery jollof rice

Delicious as the offals (most-preferred parts of the cow meat)

There are people who savour the taste of the burnt jollof rice which is usually at the bottom of the pot. In fact, most children struggle to get this portion of the rice. It is unfortunate that the Nigerian hip-hop artistes liken the Nigerian females to mere edibles.

Pictorial Representations of the feminine Gender in Nigerian Hip-hop Music

Visuals or images that accompany most Nigerian hip-hop music display females who are almost nude. They are featured at different times in the music video.

Lyrical-Visual Conflicts

In some instances, the lyrics of some hip-hop songs have nothing to do with the pictures or images projected in the music videos. In such music videos, females are used as 'promo' as earlier explained.

Lyrical-Visual Agreement

In most of the hip-hop songs, females are paraded in such a way that they provide the viewers with the pictures that illustrate the lyrical contents (being most often, on sexuality) in such a way that there is a blend of visuals and lyrics. Examples are shown below:



(*Pumpum*, Naira Marley and DAYO Chino, 2018)



(*O po to yi*, Naira Marley, 2019)



(Falila Ketan, Olamide, 2014)



(O po to yi, Naira Marley, 2019)

6. Conclusion

The African woman is known for her dignity and virtues which she wields in the training of her children and in the care of her husband. She teaches moral values to her children and upholds same by her exemplary living. It is sad that today, most Nigerian hip-hop songs present a scenario that displays Nigerian females in a sense that suggests a complete departure from this lifestyle. The vulgar words used in describing the secret parts of the woman body, the unrestricted display of these sensitive parts, the reference to women as sexual objects and stimulants for the arousal of sexual pleasure in men, the description of females as mere edibles to be devoured by men, all indicate that the woman exists only for the sexual pleasure of man. This is not the case. The Nigerian woman has major contributory roles, other than sex or sexual tendencies, for the development of the world around her. Since hip-hop is a universal phenomenon enjoyed by most people home and abroad, the way her story is told in the Nigerian hip-hop songs should reflect her dignity and essence in the home, the nation, and the world at large. It is high time artistes moved away from the increasing thematisation of sexual feelings and the parade of half naked females in Nigerian hip-hop music videos. There are better attributes of the Nigerian female to showcase, there are greater values in the African woman to propagate.

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