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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
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A África e os desafios do Século XXI

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(M)Other Tongue, Popular Music and Being Retrieval

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Introduction

English was not just a means of communication between the colonialists and the various peoples that would become part of an amalgamated Nigeria in 1914, it was also a sign, more appropriately, a social semiosis of both acceptance into the dominant world of British rule and all it promised as well as a mark of superiority over the indigenous population. The English Language was in this sense part of the technology of colonial domination, a social practice that was employed as a means either of inclusion or exclusion depending on the colonial's competence or lack in the Language. The central role being played by the English Language in Nigeria as the primary means of official communication has come with damaging consequences for the peoples and languages of Nigeria as are the languages of many other parts of the world where British rule became dominant at the turn of the last century. The evil wrought by the imposition of English in Nigeria was above its political and cultural manifestations deeply psychological, as it meant a loss of psychic prestige for users of the indigenous languages thenceforth called vernaculars, the consequence of which was the pervasive lack of confidence in many things indigenous to the Nigerian nation-space. This has continued into the period of "flag" independence when Nigeria as were other former British colonies gained political independence without commensurate economic and cultural independence. Thus one of the more obvious implications of the imposition of English outside its use in official government circle and the educational system is its dominant use in the mass media, particularly print and broadcast journalism, in addition to its use in other aspects of mass culture- popular music (hip-hop, rap and gospel, etc) foreign or indigenous, advertisement, graffiti art, fashion, cartoon and new age Pentecostalism.

The use of English in official/formal communication and thus its deployment in the mass media has led to a bifurcation of cultural behaviour into "high" and "low"² culture where English represents high culture and the indigenous languages low culture. In Nigeria where ethnic rivalry among the various ethnic groups has thwarted any attempts to make any of the indigenous languages the country's lingua franca, the situation was further compounded such that English has assumed a significance that is inversely correlational/proportional to the significance of the indigenous languages in the everyday activities of the people. After a long period of subjection to English the indigenous languages are, in the last few years, gaining cultural relevance and are being re-inscribed into mainstream social practice, creating a border zone of linguistic creativity in which English, English-based pidgin and the indigenous languages compete for cultural space and relevance. Much of the confidence that

led to the acceptance/resurgence of the indigenous languages among Nigerians and the challenge they are posing to English as the dominant language of mass communication is due to the prominence accorded local music practitioners, especially hip-hop musicians and other categories of oral artists, by the mass media. This paper is therefore an exploration of this phenomenon, detailing the rise of English in Nigeria, the simultaneous relegation of the indigenous languages and the decanonical role of hip-hop in the discursive practice of oppositionality that the vernacular languages now pose to English.

The English Language in Nigeria

The development of English as the dominant language of communication in Nigeria preceded the formal imposition of British rule by a couple of centuries. While full British rule would not begin until the start of the twentieth century, specifically 1900, English had been used either in its standard or pidgin forms for mercantile reasons along the coastal parts of what would later be constituted by imperial design as Nigeria since the 13th century. Awonusi (2004) periodises the development of English in Nigeria into the time preceding the advent of missionary education (1400-1842), through the advent of missionary education to the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria (1842-1914), the period beyond the amalgamation to the introduction of self-rule and independence to the period of civil and military rules (1914-1990), up to the present (beginning of the 21st Century). The development and spread of English in the second half of the century preceding the formal constitution of Nigeria as a British colony was largely a task undertaken by missionaries who needed native converts with a sound knowledge of the Bible and who could also serve as interpreters. At this time, the indigenous languages flourished without hindrance while English was taught as dictation, reading, writing, grammar and composition. The first act of violence against the indigenous languages would, however, come by way of an Ordinance enacted in 1882 which made English, to the complete exclusion of the indigenous languages, the language of instruction in schools, thereby inaugurating a condition of linguistic alterity, one of binary categories in which English, now displaced from the centre into exilic existence on the imperial periphery, nevertheless assumes a position of superiority to the indigenous languages that had been forced into subjection in the face of their putative inadequacy for the civilisational/universalist claims of the colonial world.

In addition to the hegemonist effort of the missionaries during which the colonials more or less acquiesced in their own subjection, what immediately came into play in the wake of the

1882 Ordinance was the opening up of space for the “hybridization of power and discourse.” The colonial administration tied funding in schools to the use of English as the medium of instruction. Anti-colonial agitations would in the following years force some concession out of the British, starting with the 1887 Ordinance that gave leg room to the indigenous languages and thereby cleared space for them to be used alongside English as means of instruction in schools. The Phelps Stokes Commission of 1925 and the Grievances Report of 1962 were among other steps variously initiated to strengthen the hands of the indigenous languages against the hectoring claims of English over the education of colonial subjects. It was a measure of the effectiveness of the missionaries’ assimilationist approach to the teaching of English that northern emirs in 1940 attributed the relative backwardness of their region to the lack of instruction in English, while, in 1945, protesting students in Ogoja withdrew en masse from school in anger at being taught in their indigenous language which they thought a waste of time (Awonusi, 2004:). Finally the wheel had turned full circle and the sympathiser now wept more than the bereaved: the English language, formerly an imposed language had become the unquestioned means of entry into the gains of the British/colonial world, a point well made by Wa’Thiongo (1986) in his averment that achievement in spoken and written English was highly rewarded even as English became the measure of intelligence and ability in both the arts and sciences as well as in other branches of learning. Indeed, proficiency in English was *de rigueur* both for colonial education and diverse categories of clerical jobs which were the only kind of positions open to natives in the colonial civil service. This increased the social and political relevance of English vis-à-vis the indigenous languages. In spite of nationalist agitations for the promotion of indigenous languages, English would assume what seemed like an irreversible position and continue to rise in significance as the dominant language of communication and eventually gained constitutional backing, respectively in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions, as Nigeria’s official language alongside Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, the three largest indigenous languages in the country which were first adopted for political reasons in the National Education Policy of 1977 (revised in 1981) (Awonusi, 2004; Omoniyi, 2004; Adeniran, 2004 among others) .

The adoption of English, a second language, as one of Nigeria’s official languages and its use, *ipso facto*, in official/public domains as opposed to the restricted use of the indigenous languages in mainly cultural/private domains would make English the preferred language of both social prestige and official recognition (Bamgbose, 2004). In the absence of a *lingua franca* based on any of the country’s indigenous languages, English would assume a

pervasive role in virtually every aspects of interpersonal communication in Nigeria. The vernacular languages, in a zero-sum position with English, would lose their prestige and relevance in the very domains in which English was dominant, including, sometimes, those cultural domains that were hitherto their locus of operation. This situation has remained the case until the last couple of years when, in a space-clearing, postmodernist temper, various categories of verbal artists, especially hip-hop musicians, began the equally transgressive and decanonical process of employing the indigenous languages, including the fast creolising Pidgin English, in their art and praxes. This phenomenon, indexing the transition from what might be called a post-Nigerian to a pan-Naija² (Abati and co 2009) phase, and achieved through the instrumentality of the broadcast media (i.e. radio and television) (see Ofulue, 2004), was tremendously enhanced with the liberalisation policy of the government that allowed for the privatisation of the mass media in the mid 1990s. Many of these media houses prided themselves on the American-influenced hip-hop (the most dominant musical form in Nigeria in the last one and half decades) and the western-oriented musical contents of their programmes. It is, perhaps, both apt and ironic that the reconstitution of national identity should come via the appropriative vehicle of hip-hop culture, a counter-hegemonic discourse and social practice embracing (rap) music, graffiti art, fashion and break dancing that started in the Bronx among mainly black inner city youths in America (Appiah and Gates, 1999). The status of hip-hop as the means for the recuperation of indigenous Nigerian culture is apt for reasons of its long history as both a counter-culture and a hitherto marginal form even in its native America. But it is nevertheless an imported form that is foreign to Nigeria, which explains the irony of its position. The hip-hop musicians of the 1990s and the 2000s, however, had their forerunners in local musicians who performed in local languages and dialects. The most notable of these was Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the creator of Afrobeat music. His centrality to the art of contemporary hip-hop musicians, influencing their use and promotion of indigenous languages and Pidgin, deserves a close look.

From Fela to Hip-hop: Re-inscribing the Indigenous Languages

The indigenisation/domestication of the linguistic space in Nigeria did not begin with Fela. There were the initial efforts of such indigenous music practitioners as Mojola Agbebi, Fela Sowande and Akin Euba among others (Olorunyomi, 2005; John Collins and Richards, 1982) who made conscious attempts to 'nativise' Nigerian musicology. Aside purely musical considerations, language was a factor in this battle. While some artists achieved widespread national popularity even while performing mainly in the indigenous languages, their fame

was, except in a few cases, limited to speakers of their languages. English was still in these early years of post-independence, the language of prestige, interpersonal relations and mainstream culture. Although the distinction between high and low (mass) culture in music as in other aspects of the performative and plastic arts can in Africa be regarded as non-existent, an invention predominant in domains with a large body of Western-trained artistes (Appiah, 1991), there was/is a sense in which English, even in its largely instrumental role, can be regarded as the language of high culture, at least as a social attitude in colonial and/or post-independence Nigeria. Fela, the Afrobeat icon, whose music would in later years serve as the anthem of political opposition in Nigeria, indeed, started out in the early 1960s like most of his Western-trained contemporaries singing in Yoruba and English. Fela's linguistic predilection according to Olorunyomi (ibid) went through three discrete stages: an initial period of overt western, modernist influence during which he sang in English; followed by a "reactive ethno-nationalist stage" marked by his use of Yoruba, and an ideologically-inflected Pan-Africanist stage which saw him singing in pidgin. Such discrete taxonomisation as Olorunyomi provides here is debatable. For one, Fela's discography, even as provided by Olorunyomi, reveals that the musician started out singing in Yoruba. His earliest documented recording, "Onifere/Bonfo" was produced on his personal label between 1958 and 1963 during his student days at the Trinity College in London. "Aigana" (1960), "Yeshe Yeshe" (1966/7), and "Mr. Who Are You?" (1966/7) followed. It was not until 1969 during his Koola Lobitos years, nearly a clear decade after his first releases in Yoruba, that he would release what may be called his first song in English, "Keep Nigeria One", (a patriotic song, whose title is a clone of the Federalist slogan, obviously composed to support the Federalist effort to "Keep Nigeria one (is a task that must be done)" during the Nigerian Civil War³) to be followed by other songs like "Everyday I Got My Blues", "Great Kids", etc.

All through the period he made these English recordings/releases, his linguistic preference could still be largely described as bilingual as he simultaneously sang in Yoruba, in fact, mainly in Yoruba. It should also be noted that Fela at this time engaged in what might at best be described as a promotional strategy, a branding devise, common today among indigenous music performers, especially juju and fuji musicians. This was the preference for English titles to songs performed in the indigenous languages. Thus, although, several of the songs Fela composed in the early part of his career bore English titles, they were in fact performed in Yoruba, as is the case with the popular song, "Monday Morning in Lagos". Indeed, his first major releases in pidgin would come but only after his ideologically transformative trip

to the United States of America in 1969. As Fela himself states it, "My American tour was a turning point in my way of thinking, and my approach to life" (Idowu, 1986: 36). It was after this trip- but after this trip, from 1970 onwards after his band had been renamed "The Nigeria 70", that the world would have the pleasure of such path-breaking songs as "Jeun K'oku (Chop & Quench))" (1971), "Na Fight o"(1971) and "Why Black Man Dey Suffer"(1971) among others. In the period predating his US trip, however, Fela's use of Yoruba, then at once a subaltern and subjected code, was a natural outcome of his background rather than a conscious ideological project. In a television interview, he explained the rationale for his use of pidgin, and by extension Yoruba, in the following terms:

Everything was European background. The upbringing, the teaching, the school. My father was a pastor and everything had to be English. We were not even allowed to speak our country's language in school. They called our languages vernacular...I was thinking to myself that if I want these Africans to hear (sic) me well, I can't speak in this language because they won't understand. So I have to speak in the language that they all understand and that is the broken English⁴.

Fela did not stop with himself; he went on to theorise on the possible reasons Africans prefer the indigenous languages to English which he saw as divisive and therefore harmful to African unity:

When the English language came, the Africans subconsciously felt the language was too stiff. Africans have very virile language models. That is why in Africa there are over two thousand languages. So they have to find the language that could make them feel that they still wanted to be together and not allow this English to divide them among themselves.

The need for social identification, informal bonding and solidarity, has been given as one reason Nigerians, even the highly educated, speak English-based pidgin in domains where Standard English would have been the normal language of communication (Adetugbo, 1992; Adegbija, 2004). Fela went beyond this. Linguistic solidarity translatable into political unity is the other reason he gave for his choice of pidgin over English. His music became highly political, critical of and opposed to the country's leadership from about 1970 onwards, and he needed a means of communicating his political concerns to the majority of the Nigerian people who spoke the indigenous languages but were not proficient in English. Pidgin English became the vehicle for this. Thus followed a convergence of theme and language. In

effect, Fela's linguistic trajectory followed a pattern of Yoruba-English/Yoruba-Pidgin/Yoruba. Which is to say that he started singing in Yoruba not for any nationalist and/or political reason but as a matter of linguistic habit and upbringing, a consequence of his being Yoruba; moved on to the use of English under the Anglo-European influence of the period, and returned to Yoruba as an adjunct to pidgin, now his major code of artistic expression, for ideological reasons. Olaniyan (2008) makes more or less the same claims in his identification of three distinct stages at the level of both style and ideology in Fela's creative development. He is careful to state that these stages are not without their blurry edges with one stage meshing into another. Nevertheless, he identifies what he respectively calls "the apolitical hustler", "the Afrobeat Moralizer" and "The Political Afrobeat".

At the first stage which spanned the period of the late 1950s through his return from studies abroad to the late 1960s, Fela was a happy-go-lucky youth content to play the prevailing music of his time. He had no overt interest in politics and played what he called "Highlife Jazz" as many of the songs released during this period will show: "Ololufe", "Mi o fe", "Obinrin", "Fine Fine Boy", "Araba's Delight", "Bonfo", "Onidodo", "Wa Dele" "Highlife Time" "Omuti ti de", "Mo ti Gborokan", "Laise Lairo", "Everyday I Got My Blues", "Wakawaka" and "Home Cooking". Between 1970 and 1975 which was the period of the second stage during which Fela released no less than 50 songs which Olaniyan classifies into metro songs, racial/cultural nationalist songs and appropriated folksongs, Fela sang mostly in Yoruba or Pidgin English with a gradual tilt towards more Pidgin English than Yoruba as he reached out to more audience. This reaching for wider audience would be reflected in the change in the name of his band from "Nigeria 70" to "Africa 70" or "Afrika 70". He developed new themes and devised new modes of presentation which were theatrical and full of sarcastic humour, even as his music assumed a class-partisan character and got more revolutionary. Some of the songs from this highly prolific period include the highly popular "Jeun Ko Ku" and "Monday Morning in Lagos". Others are "Trouble Sleep Yanga Wake Am", "Na Poi" and "Shakara". The third stage in this period of creative development started from 1976 onwards. Here the musician had become a full-grown pop-culture figure and counter-cultural icon having gained full maturation both artistically and ideologically. Although "Alagbon Close" his first anti-state composition according to Olaniyan had been released in 1974, it was not until 1976 that Fela's music would take on the overt political colour that has defined it ever since.

In addition to Pidgin English and Yoruba, Fela made occasional forays into languages from other parts of Nigeria and Africa. As his popularity increased so did Pidgin English attain more prestige as a mainstream language of the arts. His example would be followed by many more musicians, Afrobeat, highlife, reggae and above all, hip-hop artists, in whose works he is increasingly referenced twelve years after his passing. There is perhaps no section of contemporary Nigerian music where the use of the indigenous languages has had more salutary effect than among practitioners of indigenous music such as fuji and juju, particularly the former who were seen as mostly illiterate practitioners of a marginal art form that appeals to mainly fringe groups of traders, butchers and artisanal types. Today they have become mainstream artists whose works are appreciated beyond their immediate linguistic base and have been adopted by corporate organisations and multinational companies for reasons of brand extension and other forms of promotional services. This has had confidence-boosting effects, such that it is no longer an embarrassing thing to sing in the indigenous languages. As his first son, himself a highly successful Afrobeat musician in his own right and two-time Grammy nominee, Femi Kuti, maintains in an interview with *Afropop's Banning-Eyre* published in the *Guardian* (Nigeria), August 9, 2009, Pp56-7 "...most of these (sic) hiphop boys of today are trying to be very much like my father. They try and be a bit direct, but not in a very subtle way. If you understand the language, you will know they are trying to be a bit critical of the government or the environment."

Hip-hop, Vernacular Languages and Twenty-first Century Nigerian Music

While Pidgin is far from attaining the prestige of English to say nothing of its being accorded the treatment of a language, it is nonetheless Nigeria's unofficial lingua franca having attained the status of a Creole in certain parts of the country particularly the South-south where it is the first language of many. It is widely spoken in other parts of the South especially among urbanites. In the North where it is less widely spoken, it is the major code of communication among non-natives who speak neither Hausa nor Fulani. Even here speakers of Hausa or Fulani wishing to reach beyond the confines of their indigenous languages resort to the use of Pidgin English. Considering therefore its socially marginal status vis-à-vis English, the adoption of Pidgin by the emergent youth culture of hip-hop is both a transgressive and decanonical act. It is increasingly an act of will power and exclusion, a deliberate rupturing of the master narrative that English represents, and an attempt at re-representation and meaning-making that reflects agency within a local economy of signs which tie in with the postmodernist regime of the nonce. The

vernacularisation of English (*indigeneity* for Wilson, 2010) or “text multilingualism” as Awonusi (2004) calls it in a different but related context, through the mixing and switching of codes, encompassing the use of Pidgin and the indigenous languages by Nigerian hip-hop performers, erases the hierarchical dichotomies of local and global indexicalities, low and high culture etc, even while it is employed as a mark of authentication for a local music industry that is determined to chart a course different from that hitherto considered prestigious. Such dislocation, questioning and rejection of an assumed truth that is absolute in operation is the very heart of postmodernist thought/discourse with its valorisation of discontinuity, displacement of absolutes and the denaturalisation of truth, meaning and thus identity (Bhabha 1994, Hall 2000, Davies 2007).

In more than one sense postcolonialism shares many of these features of postmodernism particularly in its rejection of the absolutist presumptions of the European metropole relative to the periphery (See Davies 2007). Linguistic resources are in the context of Nigerian hip-hop thus employed to present a social identity, set boundaries linguistically and resist the forces of conquest (Gumperz 1982; Blot 2003). Rather than being a sign of deviance as it was heretofore viewed, it is those who use English that are getting socially alienated while the use of Pidgin and the indigenous languages of Nigeria represents acceptance of position, demonstration of choice and construction of social and/or ideological identity by their users (Tawake 2006, Gargesh 2006) in a manner that negates previous representation of users of these marginal codes. This is more so when it is considered that many of these performers are not only proficient in English but are also relatively well-educated, some either dropped out of university or are in fact university graduates who chose to be musicians than pursue other professional callings. As 9ice, one of the foremost proponents of this new counter-discourse avers in a verse of ‘Street credibility’, a song in his chart-bursting, eponymously titled work,

“Originality work for me/Why I no go show/*Asa wa, ede wa/Ko sohun to da to* (Originality works for me/Why won’t I show it/*Our culture, our language/There could be nothing better than them*)”.

Commenting further on his preference for the indigenous languages, particularly Yoruba and Pidgin English over and above English in his music, 9ice (pronounced naiz) has this to say in two recent interviews, “What I do is that I try to go back to the good old days and

weave my lyrics around the beauty of the language...I don't have to sing in English before people listen or like my song, if it was that way, then a person like Youssour Ndour would not have won a Grammy." (Demola Adesina "9ice Sounds Breaking New Grounds", Bubbles: Bubbles Publication Enterprises, Onipanu, Lagos), nd. In similar vein he says, "I feel like there is no way we can use English Language to sing better than those who own the language. I know that by using our indigenous language, we will be able to express ourselves better".

Another singer, "Ruggedman", in "Ruggedy Baba", a song featuring 9ice that can be considered an encapsulation of the new hip-hop credo, proclaims his task in the following words, "Atewo la bala/A o meni to o koo/We (sic)spit in Pidgin, our mother tongue/ You better show where you belong...(We were born with the lines on our palms[i.e. ignorant]/We do not know who wrote them/We spit (read speak) in Pidgin our mother tongue/You better show where you belong..." *Showing where you belong or where you come from* is now both a fad and artistic shibboleth for authenticating the local and indigenous in a music industry once dominated by James Brown, Michael Jackson, Tina Turner, The Beatles, Kurtis Blow and MC Hammer imitators/wannabes. This has resulted in the phenomenal growth of the indigenous music industry, complemented by even more phenomenal growth in the filmic/home video industry called Nollywood, reputedly the third largest in the world, after Hollywood in America and Bollywood in India. One remarkable outcome of this growth is captured in the fact that it is now possible to attend a party or listen to the radio or watch television in which the music content is almost, if not, 100% Nigerian. There can be no better evidence of psychic-cum-psychological confidence and recuperation in a postcolonial nation space. This would be a confirmation of Patridge's (1981) observation that "the final stage in establishing a new culture, which often coincides with the shaping of home-made legends, is acceptance of- and pride in- the resources of local language." But more than just being a reproduction of dialect or display of archaic vocabulary, such a process of mother tongue reclamation is in the words of Briere (2000) an "allegory of national rebirth" and means of fashioning congruence between language, geographic space and time.

Time and again therefore Nigerian hip-hop performers in their art and praxes explain their vernacularisation of English or resort to indigenous languages, or both, in terms of the imperative of connecting with their audience. Asked what he thought could be done to raise the standard of the Nigerian music industry to a level comparable to foreign ones, Nyanya

Mbuk, winner of the 2009 MTN-sponsored Project Fame says music should be a universal language that should be understandable to all irrespective of their country of origin. But, he goes on to say, “*You have to show where you come from* (my emphasis) and I don’t have anything against anybody who sings in their local dialect. The basic thing is that you have to be able to connect with your audience...I have to make sure that I connect with my people, even if it means playing a ‘Galala’ (a local musical style/dance) track just to please my audience.” (Morezine!April 2009 Vol.2www.mtnonline.com). This same point is echoed in a verse of ‘Naija Hip-hop Part 1’, a song in the same “Ruggedy Baba” CD by Ruggedman referred to above. Singing of what he calls the “Ten Commandment” of a good hip-hop song, Ruggedman lists the need to sing in the mother tongue as the eighth commandment. As he puts it, “Add your mother tongue to represent where you are from”. In ‘Naija Hip-hop Part 2’ he states the point in almost identical words: “Add your mother tongue to tell them where you are fromYou can’t do rap the American way better than Americans...That’s the way to tell the world straight where we are from”.

Egbe (2004) identifies three domains of Pidgin English use in Nigeria, namely, a situation where the speakers’ interlocutors can neither speak nor understand Standard English; when either the speakers or their interlocutors do not have a common indigenous language and where the speakers themselves cannot speak Standard English. Irrespective of the reason Nigerians resort to the use of Pidgin English, what should be noted is that their choice of English is more than a fortuitous act. It is a deliberate choice that is informed by no less a reason than the closeness of Pidgin English to the indigenous languages which are the first languages of most Nigerians except for the very young from middleclass background whose increasingly early exposure to western education simultaneously leads to their acquisition of English which is the language of formal instruction in schools and Nigeria’s lingua franca. Put differently, the Pidgin English in Nigeria as with other languages that came out of contact situations is oriented to the indigenous languages. This accords with the linguistic fact which sees language as characterised by its inner structures and grammar than by its lexicon that is subject to both change and accretion (Adetugbo 1989-92). To this end, Nigerian Pidgin English, like other pidgins and creoles, is oriented to its substratum languages with which it shares structural patterns as opposed to its lexifying superstrate (Banjo 1996). This point, it will be restated, makes Pidgin the favourite means of communication for Nigerians among whom hip-hop musicians belong. The meshing of Pidgin English with the indigenous languages as a manifestation of local-global tensions creates a *metissage* of languages, a

dialogically constituted border zone and cultural-in-between or “third space”, as Bhabha (1994) and Bhatt (2008) put it, that is neither local nor foreign. Which is the situation of Nigerian hip-hop musicians who despite their attempts at so-called nativisation of hip-hop are, nevertheless, assessed in terms of their postmodernist tendencies that are read through the refracted lenses of the commodification of musical content and blind apathy of western or, more appropriately, American pop culture with its slang expressions, thick neck chains (bling-bling), trouser sagging, adoption of stage names or corruption of indigenous words and names, emceeing and song miming—all of which are increasingly viewed as factors in the diminution of musicianship among contemporary performers with little or no formal musical education or training in instrumentation. What follows next are examples of how English is vernacularised among Nigerian hip-hop performers. Typical of bilingual speech, the pattern for these speakers, either code switching or code mixing, is to use the L1 or pidgin as matrix language while the L2 functions as embedded language:

CODE SWITCHING

9ice: Gongo Aso

Verse 2 (Yoruba/pidgin)

You be government worker

You collect salary

Ka mari, kin ma gbomi gbin

Kin ma jaiye ori mi

Before I play lotto

Bachelor (English/Yoruba)

I'm a bachelor

Apon ni mi

Mi o l'aya nle

All the girls for my area

Ni mo nba sere

I'm a bachelor (4x)

Wedding Party: (English/Yoruba/pidgin/Hausa)

On our wedding day

Ma gbe su le'na

Ma f'ona ro'ka

Gbogbo awon e still de de
This time around
Omo sai gobe
Na you I go marry
(Aya wa ni)
To God be the glory
(Iyawo wa ni)

Street Credibility: (Pidgin/Yoruba)

We are the most incredible
Out of Naija
Straight from Naija
Street credibility
We get am
Check my fans
Walahi!
Aya e aja
No be lie- hear am (2X)
Eyin mu jabe lo
No be lie
Kinihun l'oba eran

D'Banj: Olorun maje (Pidgin/Yoruba)

Some people dey want make I cry
Some people dey want make I die
Why?
Olorun maje o
Some people dey pray make I slow
Some people no want make I grow
No!
Olorun maje o
Help me sing it louder
Olorun maje (4x)
Ko ni le baje o

Koni baje fun wa
Olorun maje (4X)
Koni le baje o
Koni baje fun e...

Tosin Martins: Olomi (Yoruba/English)

Verse 1:

Morountodun
Mo reni keji mi
Girigiri lo n se mi
Like butterflies in my belly...

Chorus 2:

Olomi, sweetheart, onitemi
Ore mi, lolufe
Oju kan, sha la da n ni
Lola Oluwa, ko soun tio yaw a...

Verse 2:

I have found a good thing
A favour from above
I've got that feeling
That's in the touch of love
After so long
Ebun ife wa mi ri
Now that you are here
I see the difference so clear

Kween: Jebele (English/Igbo)

She called the house today
Telling this, telling me that
Where you both slept last night...
I just can't help but wonder
Honey mo!

Gini ka mere gi
Esigwa yin mo
Tell me what I've done wrong
Can you give me one reason...

Faze: Faze Alone: (English/pidgin)

And in case you don't know it
This na true story
Though there's a little misunderstanding
Going between us
If we break up...

2 Face: See me so (Pidgin/Yoruba/English)

As you see me so
Edumare don bless me oh
But that one no mean say
I go come to start to pose oh
See we are all gifted and unique
In our own different ways
But we are all one in the same struggle

Olu Maintain: Yahoozee

Ewo awon boys yi
K'ama kazee on the kentro level
Yahoozee e jami si

Hook:

Ti n ba hammer
First tin na hummer
One million dollars
Elo lo ma je ti n ba se si naira

CODE MIXING (Language Interlarding)

X-Project: L'Orile (Yoruba/pidgin)

Sisi ologe, kilodi saya
So fun mi kilofe
Mo wa on fire
To ba foju dimi
Ma je o lose your temper
Wa binu demonstrate pelu tumba
Igba yen lo ma mo pe awa loko tumba

Sasha: Adara (Pidgin/English/Yoruba)

Wey di hits?
Wey di album?
...Confessing to the audience
Only one video?
...Emi ni mo wa ise
Won de make sure pe
Emi ni mori ise...

D'Banj: Mobolowo won (Yoruba/English)

Nigba ti mo de London
Emi o ri ise se- ah!
Awon guys won so wipe skibanj
Ole ma wo'ke
Won ni ti n ba se dada ma pa ju be lo ni one day

Tongolo: (Yoruba/English)

Listen, listen
Mo wa talented
Yes mo wa gifted
Shori kini mi, oma gbe e lifted
Shori hips e
Ma f'ile shifted

Igo oju e
Ma f'ile tinted
Boyfriend e gan
O wa evicted
Se ko mope
D'Banj is addicted
To ba sope no
Ma wa persistent
Don't get me twisted

Why Me: (English/Yoruba)

First when I met her
She said koko master
Come test her
We can do it once, twice
May be meta
Wanna test my skills...

Mo Hit All Stars: Close to You (English/Yoruba/Pidgin)

Faze: Tatto Girls (English/Yoruba)

Baby Girl! There's something about you
The first thing is that
I gbadun your tattoo
You smell well...

9ice: Photocopy

Photocopy ko easy
You can never be like me
This is my identity
Teni n teni, takisa n tatan
Apalara, igunpa ni yekan
Oba ara, Adigun ni bale
Alapomeji

Erinlakatabu bale

Alapoplenty

Hook to verse 1 (Pidgin/English/Yoruba):

If I no dey your party

You know you are missing

You know omo ele no go plenty

2 Face: If Love Is A Crime (English/pidgin)

...They said she is a fool for being uptight

But all that she wanted was good love, no be fight

Special kind of girl, hard to come by

Dis kind of girl, hard to come by

Dis kind of girl na in I want to make my wife

You're the one, say no more

Don't worry about what the people say

Cos I say

Wande Coal: Bumper to bumper (Yoruba/English/pidgin)

Two years ago when I was in Mushin

Some of dem dey yinmuyinmu

Eh, ni sin yi mo ti lowo

Mo flashy

Mo classy

Won mo pe mo lenulenu

Slang expressions and contractions

Tile tile (wife)

Lasgidi (Lagos)

Kokolet (a damsel)

Naija (Nigeria)

Conclusion

This paper examined the transgressive use of English-based pidgin and indigenous Nigerian languages, so-called vernaculars, in the carving of a national/linguistic identity among Nigerian youths. While mapping the rise of English as an official language in Nigeria, the paper highlighted the input of the cultural/musical icon, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, in the quiet transformation that was lent traction by the emergent culture of hip-hop music among other oral genres- a transformation that has led to the use of relatively marginal languages in mainstream social practices. In its prospective and retrospective examination of the place of English among other less prestigious codes, the paper further made the point that a careful and well-considered appropriation of the counter-culture represented by the 'vernaculars' is a morale booster that could be of positive value for overall societal development.

This paper addresses an issue which is conceived as part of a larger research project to explore emerging trends in oral/literary/cultural discourses in Nigeria. In this particular article, I have addressed myself to the phenomenon of national/cultural identity implicit in the grafting/incorporation of indigenous languages and cultural patterns onto/with imported youth/mass culture in the oral genres in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. Both primary and secondary sources are still being compiled.

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