

Discursive Strategies in Senegalese Rap: The Case of Y En a Marre

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with discursive strategies in *Y en a marre* rap texts. These rappers use a certain argumentation which justifies the validity of their discourse. The study aims at analyzing discursive strategies to understand the pragmatic aims. The study involved a sample of twelve political songs which were released throughout a period starting from 2011 to 2013. Its results revealed that the discursive strategies used by the rapper are mainly rhetorical figures and ungrammatical structures. However, these rhetorical figures have a persuasive force aiming the adhesion of the audience and through which the rapper is as well denouncing, sabotaging and dramatizing the politician or the political system. As for the use of ungrammatical structures, it is just a way of communicating but the importance focuses on a message to convey. Thus, these results enable to highlight the intentions of the rapper in his/her discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Hip Hop is a cultural movement that appeared in the United States in the 1950s, more precisely in the populous ghetto of Harlem. Its creation aimed at struggling for the integration of blacks within American society. This black minority community used hip hop as a weapon against the discrimination of which they were confronting in a society dominated by whites. It as well allowed the youth to seek their true identity. Moreover, according to Abdoulaye Niang :

le hip-hop est, pour les jeunes qui y adhèrent, un espace d'enracinement aux valeurs locales, d'affirmation différentielle et d'ancrage à une ouverture à l'autre, marquant par cette hybridité, leur volonté d'appartenance à une culture monde apprivoisée, qui n'annihilerait pas leurs attaches identitaires locales. ¹(Niang, 2010: 91).

This hip hop movement that has always been based on a dress code and rites develops another component such as rap music. It is a powerful verbal means for the youth of the world to criticize, denounce and dictate its law in a language which is sometimes bellicose. After the United States, the movement migrates to Europe, more precisely in France, then in other African countries. In Senegal, according to Mamadou Dramé, the hip hop movement appeared “dans le courant de l'année 1988 caractérisée par les élections législatives et présidentielles très controversées. Mais il y a surtout l'année blanche qui a jeté des milliers de jeunes dans la rue²” (2010 :2). Moreover, it is from these social and political disturbances that the actors of the movement decided to be spokesmen of their people and assigned themselves a mission to denounce bad political practices, to rebel against the enemy (the man political) and to make people aware of certain abuses.

Our objective is not to explain the aesthetic or identity character of their rap lyrics, but to study discursive strategies to understand their pragmatic aims. Indeed, in the field of discourse analysis, it happens that the speaker in order to achieve his/her

¹Hip-hop is, for the young who adhere to it, a space of rooting to local values, differential affirmation and anchoring to an opening to the other, marking by this hybridity, their willingness to belong to a culture world tamed, which would not annihilate their local identity ties. (my translation).

² During the year 1988 characterized by the very controversial legislative and presidential elections. But there is especially the lost year that threw thousands of young people on the street. (my translation).

communication successfully uses generally a set of discursive strategies. Patrick Charaudeau and Dominique Maingueneau define them as:

*Le fait d'un sujet (individuel ou collectif) qui est conduit à choisir (de façon consciente ou non), un certain nombre d'opérations langagières ; parler de stratégie n'a de sens que par rapport à un cadre de contraintes qu'ils agisse de règles, de normes ou de conventions(...) il faut un but, une situation d'incertitude et de calcul.*³(2002:549)

As for the sociolinguist John J. Gumperz (1982), he defines three essential elements for a discursive strategy. It is the communicative competence that allows the participants to make a better choice of strategy in a situation of interaction, the principle of strategic coherence that regulates the coordinated exchanges between the participants in an interaction and the process of interpretation based on conversational inferences, that is, the inference is in the response of the receiver to the speaker during the interaction.

For Patrick Charaudeau, he bases his reasoning on the meaning of a statement and he considers that for the construction of meaning, we must take into account three essential conditions such as: the situational condition that makes it possible to understand the speaker, the discursive condition which makes it possible to understand and the cognitive condition that makes it possible to perceive meaning through language. Indeed, all these conditions allow the interpretation of meaning and so that the recipient can understand the meaning of the message contained in the statement, there are linguistic choices to make between the actors of the language exchange. Moreover, it is these linguistic choices that enable the receiver to interpret and analyze the message through language mechanisms used in the discourse. For the linguist, the construction of meaning results from a set of processes; the transaction process, meaning the exchange of information between the enunciator and the receiver; the process of interpretation that focuses on the mutual recognition of communication partners in a co-construction of the social meaning of the utterance and finally the process of transformation

from which the enunciator builds meaning by proposing its construction of the world to the speaker. The linguist also adds that in order to convey the discourse and achieve the desired objective, the interlocutors use linguistic phenomena classified in strategies of appropriation, legitimation and credibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the studies about *Y en a marre* are sociological analyses and concern its socio-political dimension. It is the case with Ousmane Ngom (2016), Marame Gueye (2013), and Baye Makébé Sarr and Vieux Savané (2012). In *From BulFaale to Y'en a marre: a Semiotic Analysis of the Discursive Mutations of Senegalese Hip-hop* (2017), Ousmane Ngom is explaining that *Bulfaale* and *Y'en a marre* are two Senegalese movements sharing a common ideology, that is to say a same lifestyle, philosophy, and state of mind. He considers that the only mission of rappers is to criticize severely politicians in order to solve their problems. In *Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y'en a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal* (2013), Marame Gueye focuses on the capacity of awareness of the movement during the 2012 presidential elections. According to her, the musical production such as the songs *Faux! Pas Forcé!*, *Daas Fanaanaland Doggali*, constitutes a powerful means of communication that had weakened President Wade's political system. In *Radioscopied'une jeunesse insurgée au Sénégal* (2012), Baye Makébé Sarr and Vieux Savané evoke the genesis of the movement and its main role during the demonstrations to denounce the power cuts, unemployment and the flooding. The present literature review deals with important parameters that enable to understand better the *Y en a marre* ideology, but we noticed that there has not been so far a study dealing with the linguistic dimension of their discourse and it is the case of discursive strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Corpus Building

The corpus of data used for this research is composed of twelve political songs released throughout a period starting from 2011 to 2013. The list of rappers and songs is in attached as an appendix to the work. In the constitution of this corpus, it appears that some rappers are more often cited than others. This selection was inevitably motivated by the precision of works and still remains representative of the recurrent discourse of rappers. However, *Y EN A MARRE* is a citizen movement created on 18 January 2011. It was created during a pre-electoral period and is mainly composed of rappers. At that time, Senegal was

³ Le fait d'un sujet (individuel ou collectif) qui est conduit à choisir (de façon consciente ou non), un certain nombre d'opérations langagières ; parler de stratégie n'a de sens que par rapport à un cadre de contraintes qu'il s'agisse de règles, de normes ou de conventions(...) il faut un but, une situation d'incertitude et de calcul.

facing the problems of youth unemployment, power cut, costly living and corruption.

Data Treatment

For the transcription of the corpus; I had to buy a CDs from a Didier⁴ and for the rest of songs, I downloaded them via youtube. After this job, I transcribed all of them using a walkman. Foreign words are in bold print. We emphasize that our study focuses on a textual analysis of rap, but we took into account the clip-video, to the extent that the image displayed by rappers is however inseparable from their words.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study presented in the following sections show that rhetorical figures and ungrammatical structures constitute discursive strategies for the rapper. However, the rhetorical figures used in this work are metaphor, irony and hyperbole. They aim at convincing or persuading the audience for an adhesion. In the texts, they are also techniques through which the rapper denounces, sabotages and dramatizes the politician or the political system. As for the use of ungrammatical structures, we specify that the rapper is just communicating and he is much more interested in the accessibility of the delivered message than the grammatical form of his discourse.

The use rhetorical figures

The discourse of the rappers of *Y en a marre* movement has an argumentative dimension. The latter acts on language using a set of linguistic tools allowing him to attract the attention of the audience. Moreover, for Reboul: "*la figure n'est rhétorique que lorsqu'elle joue un rôle persuasif*"⁵ (1991). The purpose of this discourse is the indestructible adhesion of the audience through the message they deliver. In this analysis, we intend to focus on the metaphor and thought figures such as irony and hyperbole that are most frequently used by these rappers.

Metaphor

Metaphor is usually defined as a kind of comparison through which the word or phrase establishing this comparison relation does not appear. In the linguistic dictionary, Jean Dubois explained that:

*Engrammaire traditionnelle, la
métaphore consiste dans l'emploi d'un mot*

*concret pour exprimer une notion abstraite, en l'absence de tout élément introduisant formellement une comparaison ; par extension, la métaphore est l'emploi de tout terme auquel on en substitue un autre qui lui est assimilé après la suppression des mots introduisant la comparaison (comme, par exemple) [...]*⁶ (Dubois, 1973:317).

With this metaphor, it is clear that the rapper makes a transfer of meaning. This means that words do not mean exactly what they are but something else. It represents a defensive weapon allowing the latter to denounce or criticize the politician without being prosecuted. Its use often does not pose a problem of understanding insofar as the references of the discourse are common to the rapper and his audience. It is the case in the following example where the rapper uses a lexicon belonging to agriculture: "*Bey* (to cultivate)" and "*Suf* (ground)". The rapper seems addressing farmers who represent the majority population in Senegal. His intention is to better achieve his communication. Here, President Abdoulaye Wade is presented as a farmer who is totally unable to farm ground (Senegal) in order to feed his population. Through this rhetorical figure, the rapper is disparaging the political management of President Abdoulaye Wade. And according to him, Senegalese people are disappointed that the President they had elected in 2000 is still unable to carry out the responsibility entrusted to him.

(1) "May lebbayaa fay
Yorsuf way munosi bey

Translation

I borrow and you pay
Get a ground and you can't cultivate it
Taken from the song title: espoir bi fila
"*the hope is here*"

It's the same in the following example. Here, the rapper uses the word "*caïman* (Caiman)" to describe the collaborators of President Macky Sall. Indeed, the rapper describes the Senegalese political space as a jungle where animals like caïmans do nothing but look for prey to eat. Through this metaphor, the rapper is denouncing the hateful or clumsy behavior of politicians when they are in power. This comparison of a human being to an animal is also an indirect

⁴ Somebody who works with music in selling cassettes.

⁵ The figure is only rhetorical when it plays a persuasive role (my translation).

⁶ In traditional grammar, metaphor consists in the use of a concrete word to express an abstract notion, in the absence of any element introducing formally a comparison; By extension, metaphor is the use of any term to which one substitutes another which is assimilated to it after the deletion of the words introducing the comparison (as, for example). (my translation).

insult allowing the rapper to protect himself from any legal prosecution on the part of the politician.

(2) “**Entouré de caimans et de maîtres chanteurs
Il a trahis partisans de premières heures**
Translation

*Surrounded by caimans and blackmailers
He betrayed his first supporters*
Taken from the song title: Bañba dee “*be resistant*”

Irony

Irony is defined as a figure which consists of saying the opposite of what one thinks. Its objective is to denounce, criticize something or someone. However, the addressee can interpret the ironic statement as meaning the opposite of what is said. For Henri Suhamy,

[L]’ironie la plus élémentaire et qui donnel’impulsion à toutes les autres formes consiste à faire semblant de louer ce qu’on veut blâmer, à exprimer ses intentions par antiphrase, en disant l’inverse de ce qu’on veut laisser entendre. Par extension on applique la notion d’ironie à toute forme de moquerie froide et analytique, aux sarcasmes énoncés sur un ton paisible et faussement détaché⁷ (Henry SUHAMY, 1981 :115)

Indeed, the analysis of the corpus reveals that when the rapper uses this rhetorical figure, he seeks to devalue or minimize the one to whom his message is intended. This can be noticed in example (3) where the rapper addresses President Abdoulaye Wade and his collaborator. The latter is sabotaging the financial management of the government team. In this example, *lamb ji* (wrestling), the national sport of Senegal, is judged by some to be a practice that unleashes unnecessary passions and is characterized most by violence and delinquency. So, the fact that the rapper orders to finance this sector to the detriment of others much more productive, means that the state has miserably failed its mission to provide solutions to problems like the case of education and health.

(3) “**Lifidessonsixalissngenjëllñu financé
lamb ji
Fattewacitedeffolenafucksinjang mi**

⁷ Irony is the most elementary irony and which gives impetus to all other forms is to pretend to praise what one wants to blame, to express one’s intentions by antiphrasis, by saying the opposite of what one wants to imply. By extension we apply the notion of irony to any form of cold and analytical mockery, to sarcasms spoken in a peaceful and falsely detached tone. (my translation).

Translation

You have to take the rest of the budget to finance wrestling
At the University, you did nothing for education
Taken from the song title: “Do to ñumoy “*we will never do bad things*””

The rapper can also use this rhetorical figure to make a false eulogy to his interlocutor, as it is the case in example (4). For mocking at President Abdoulaye Wade, the rapper uses the appellative *njomboro* (hare) to describe him as the most intelligent politician. Then, the Senegalese culture considers this animal as the smartest of the jungle. As for *Fara Wade Ndiack*, it is a terminology which is commonly used in Senegal to praise Wade’s family. The rapper also describes President Wade as a stock that can only make tasteful the Senegalese political system. Actually, these words expressing a feeling of affection towards this President are nothing but falsity.

This means that the rapper is teasing President Wade by making him believe that the population regrets bitterly his departure from power, whereas this is really a feeling of relief among the Senegalese citizens.

(4) “**Njomboronjomborocomeback!
On a la nostalgie de Fara Wade Ndiack
Le Sénégal sans Wade
Et la vie politique est fade**
Translation

Hare, Hare come back!
We have the nostalgia of Fara Wade Ndiack
Senegal without Wade
Politics is tasteless
Taken from the song title: hymne “*hymn*” ”

Hyperbole

Contrary to what it is said previously with euphemism. Here, the main objective of the speaker is to dramatize an ordinary situation or a fact in order to produce more impression towards his/her audience. According to Clara Romero (2001: 217), hyperbole is a central figure of intensive in contemporary French:

Il y a hyperbole chaque fois que ce qui est dit va au-delà de la réalité factuelle ou potentielle, quelle que soit la forme linguistique empruntée. Tous les procédés intensifs étudiés (...) sont donc susceptibles d’être employés hyperboliquement⁸.

⁸ There is hyperbole whenever what is said goes beyond factual reality, regardless of the linguistic form borrowed. All intensive processes studied (...) are therefore likely to be used hyperbolically. (my translation).

According to Evelyne Ertel: “‘l’hyperbole est une figure d’exagération, très fréquente dans le langage courant, qui tend à accentuer l’expression pour la rendre plus énergique et lui donner plus de poids”.⁹(Ertel, 1995: 712).

Indeed, the rapper who uses it seeks to exaggerate reality and at the same time speaks of the enemy (politician) by exaggerating its nuisance in order to present him/her in a depreciative way. In example (5) the rapper could use another word less soft like *to discourage* to describe the feeling of Christians, but being aware of the importance that Senegalese citizens devote to religion, he decides to use the word *joylo* (to make something or someone cry) in order to make President Abdoulaye Wade in bad terms with the whole Christian community which is minority in relation to Islam to which the President belongs. As for example (6), the rapper, instead of using *to pillage*, uses the word *mande* (to drink excessively) to describe how Senegalese politicians are abusively plundering Senegal’s resources at the moment their people are suffering a lot. In Senegalese society, this word is generally connoted to alcohol. However, he considers these politicians as drunkards who use the sweat of citizens to quench their thirst.

(5) “Foy wottewollu
Joylonga **Eglise** bi

Translation

Where are you going to get help
You make the church cried
Taken from the song title: Faux pas force “do not force”

(6) “Ñaxaskanwilañuymande
Lebseniborkalsilosuneewsi bole yi

Translation They get drunk with people’s sweat
They get into debt and oblige the poor citizen to pay it back
Taken from the song title: Yewekuamna “to get free”

Ungrammatical Structures

In analyzing their texts, we noticed some constraints in the grammatical functioning of the French language insofar as these rappers omit some elements in the sentence structure. These elements are usually the auxiliary *être* (*to*), determinants, prepositions and the additive conjunction. However, the symbol \emptyset is used to show that a particular element does not appear on the surface in that position.

Deletion of auxiliary

The deletion of the auxiliary *est* (to be) can often be noticed between Nouns-Complements or Nouns-Adjectives. It as well permits to express the action or the state of the subject. To confirm, there are statements (7) and (8).

(7) “Ma carte \emptyset mon arme
(Ma carte **est** mon arme)

Translation

My card is my weapon
Taken from the song title: daasfananaal “sharpen the weapon”

(8) “Farba¹⁰ \emptyset con
(Farba **est** con)

Translation

Farba is stupid
Taken from the song title: goutte de trop “too drop”

Deletion of determinants

The use of determinants is completely deleted before nouns or nominal groups. This can be noticed with the indefinite article *une* (a or an) in (9) and the definite article *la* (the) in (10).

(9) “**Jeunesse sacrifiée** togjommi
(*Une Jeunesse sacrifiée* togjommi)

Translation

Sacrificed youth is worried
Taken from the song title: yeneku am na “to get free”

(10) “**Démocratie** sax di law
(*La Démocratie* sax di law)

Translation

Democracy forever
Taken from the song title: goorgi “the old man”

Deletion of prepositions

There is a deletion of prepositions before cardinal numbers specifying the periods of the Senegal’s political history such as *en* (in) in (11), *de* (of) in (12) and *à* (to) (13).

(11) “**68** peuple bi di **manifeste**
(*En 68* peuple bi di *manifeste*)

Translation

In 1968, people were protesting
Taken from the song title: mea culpa”

(12) “**Assassinat maître Seye**¹¹
(*Assassinat de maître Seye*)

Translation

⁹ Hyperbole is a figure of exaggeration, very common in everyday language, which tends to accentuate the expression to make it more energetic and give it more weight. (my translation).

¹⁰ He was President Wade’s right-hand man.

¹¹ He was the President of Senegalese Supreme Court was assassinated during the Presidential election in 1993.

The murder of Lawyer Seye
Taken from the song title: *mea culpa*”

(13) “Bobu ma ngipoursuivreGrenoblesamathese
université

(Bobu ma ngipoursuivreà GrenoblesamaPhD
université)

Translation

At that time I am doing my PhD at the University of
Grenoble

Taken from the song title: *mea culpa*”

Deletion of adjective conjunction

The additive conjunction *et (and)* which permits to
link two words or clauses of a same nature and of a
same function, is generally deleted. Indeed, it is the
case statements (14), (15) and (16).

(14) “**Démocratiepatriotisme**

(*Démocratieetpatriotisme*)

Translation

Democracy patriotism

Taken from the song title: Nouveau type de baolbaol

“a new
guy of
Baolbaol”

(15) “**Corruption injusticekuëpp dole why not**

(*Corruptionetinjusticekuëpp dole why not*)

Translation

Corruption injustice kuëpp dole why not

Taken from the song title: doggali “to finish”

(16) “**ElèveEtudiantsñugrève**

(*ElèveetEtudiantsñugrève*)

Translation

Pupil students to strike

Taken from the song title: *Mea culpa*

CONCLUSION

Finally, we noticed that rap has become a tool
enabling actors to contest, to denounce, to stigmatize
and even to raise awareness. This mission they have
voluntarily accepted aims to defend the interests of
their people. The analysis of these discursive
strategies allowed us to question their aim and
purpose in the communication of these rappers.
However, the rhetorical figures are only techniques
expressing the intentions of the rapper; namely the
adhesion of his audience while denouncing,
sabotaging and dramatizing politics and its actors. As
far as ungrammatical structures are concerned, it is a
way of communicating but the essential is the given
message.

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Sénégal*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

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PUF, “Que sais-je”

APPENDIX

Songs used for the study

Simon, Xuman and Kilifeu (2011): Faux pas forcer

Keur GUI (2011): Daasfanaanal

B ONE X (2011): Nèk

FouMalade and Bat' Blin D (2011): Soxla
Fuk N Kuk (2011): Yewekuamna
Djily Bagdad, Xuman, Keyti(2012): Hymne
Simon (2012): Espoir bi fii la
Keurgui(2012): Goutte de trop
Rifou(2012): Do to ñumoy

DjTaf, Gainde Fatma, Makaloloy crime rime, Xpress,
Khilifa crew, Lil anas(2012): Nouveau type de
BaolBaol
Keurgui(2012): Mea culpa
Ñagass(2012): Goorgui
Pacotille (2012): Bañba dee