
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Code Shifting or Code Switching as a Style in Simi's and Adekunle Gold's Songs

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ABSTRACT

Adekunle Kòsókò and Sìmisola Kòsókò (nee Ogunleye) are married singers, both born and bred in Lagos known by the stage names Kunle Gold and Simi respectively. They are among a group of young, popular, and successful songwriters, composers, and singers. Their music has gained the hearts of Nigerian people, especially the youth. The focus of this paper is to examine critically how they make use of code-switching or code-shifting in their respective music as a 'style' in order to differentiate their songs and also to make a unique identity. It is observed that they alternate between two or more languages to pass information to the target audience in order to showcase their fluency in the languages hence showing their level of literacy and flexibility. The data for analysis and discussion are songs from 'Duduke', 'Sade', 'No forget me', 'Selense', 'Promise Me', and 'Joromi'. Sociology Theory is used to drive home the point of discussion to reflect the effect of the songs on society.

KEYWORDS

Code-switching, Code-Shifting, Code-mixing, Audience, Artist, Style

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1. Introduction

Style is a particular procedure by which something is done, a manner or distinctive way of singing or writing to create awareness. That is a distinctive manner of expression. Many scholars like Osoba (2016), Ayodabo, and Butari (2014) see style as the unconscious and sometimes a conscious selection of words or a group of words. That is, a selection of words that makes an author or artist different in the way he/she expresses his/her song/music. The style can be in the manner of expression through language and bodily expression (body language).

According to Osoba (2016), a language is a reliable vehicle for communication and it influences style just as style influences language. He concluded that every writer uses language to communicate in a different type. Likewise, Crystal and Davy (1969) see style as some or all the language habits of one person. They all concluded that the word 'style' refers to the manner of expression in writing or speaking that one deliberately or unconsciously uses to convey a message(s) to the listener (òsùnsùn afò –the audience) or linguistic idiosyncrasies which characterize the uniqueness of a writer or language user (Olateju 2016, Ajibade 2016 and Kehinde 2016).

Music and song have been part and parcel of Yorùbá society (Alaba 2002, Kehinde 2014). Every event that is special is celebrated with songs and dance. Music is a vocal expression. In recent times in Nigeria, some prominent musicians have emerged like Davido, Simi and Adekunle Gold, and prominent in their style is the use of code-switching and code shifting. While many enjoy their renditions, not many academic papers have been written on their work. In this paper, we are going to examine Simi's and Adekunle Gold's styles, especially their use of code-switching or code shifting in the songs.

2. Code-Switching or Code Shifting

Code-Switching or Code Shifting is a process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting (www.britannica.com). It is also called style-shifting and code-mixing.

In the linguistic circle among social linguists, it is commonly referred to as code-switching while to literary critics, it is known as code shifting. Bilinguals make use of code-switching or code shifting or code-mixing depending on the context. To Akinseye (2016), it is the alternation of languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituents. It is a well-known fact that bilingual speakers normally use two languages within one conversation context as an individual behavior norm (Gumperz 1967). The question is, why do bilingual musicians switch or code shift? In what form do they code-switch? Is code-switching used to create a style or to create rhythm in music for creativity? Some scholars have agreed that the main reasons for code-switching or code shifting for an artist is a love of particular words or the inability to find words to express one. In this paper, we argue that the result of code-switching or code shifting is not just for the love of expression but for social functions; like the expression of self-identity or distinct identity, or of expression of emotions, to relay the theme of the songs and at times, to create humor and to reflect the fact that they are well versed in the languages used.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework to be adopted in this paper is the Theory of Sociology. Sociology Theory is a set of ideas that provides an explanation for human society (www.historylearning.com). It sees society as a system of relationships that creates the structure for that society. It emphasizes the symbolic explanation of some issues in society. Also, it brings to the limelight social reality like relationships, social behavior, and social reaction to certain issues pertaining to society. This is the framework we intend to use for the analysis of the songs by Simi and Adekunle Gold for a fuller understanding and the reason for the use of code-switching or code shifting as a style.

4. Biography of Simi and Adekunle Gold

Adekunle Kòsòkò, professionally known as Adekunle Gold or Kunle Gold, is a Nigerian highlife cum hip-hop singer, songwriter, composer, and graphic designer. He was born on 28th January 1987 in Lagos Island to a royal family, Kòsòkò of Lagos State. He studied Arts and Design at Lagos State Polytechnic and holds Higher National Diploma. He has many musical awards to his credit and has produced about twenty-six songs on his own and collaborated with many other popular musicians. He came to prominence in 2015 with the release of his album, "Şadé".

Simisola Bolatito Kòsòkò (nee Ògúnlẹ̀yẹ) is known by a stage name, Simi. She was born on 19th April 1988 at Ojuelegba in Lagos. She studied Mass Communication and graduated from Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State. Her musical career started in 2008 when she released her song, "Ogaju". She has many awards for her name. She became prominent in 2014 with the song, "Tiff".

Simi and Adekunle Gold started their career as gospel singers in the church choir. They are into highlife, pop songs with rhythm, blues, and hip-hop songs. They got married in January 2019 after dating for about five years. Now, they are blessed with a beautiful daughter –Jare.

5. How Simi and Adekunle Gold Employ Code-Switching or Code Shifting in Their Songs

Songs composed by Simi and Adekunle (Gold) Kosoko are code switched to create rhythm and to, give credit to the theme, and ensure proper projection of information and other artistic purposes. They make use of sentential code-switching, word code-switching stylistically to create a distinct diction for themselves through coinage thus bringing or foregrounding the language in an aesthetic way. For example, in "Dùdùkẹ" by Simi, a song composed when she was pregnant with her firstborn, there is a coinage about the movement of the foetus inside her womb, the inconsistency of the pain, and at the same time, of mixed feeling of joy with pain. The song began with the description of the heartbeat of the unborn child. She used it to express her emotion and expectation about the child.

I deh pray for the day	(I'm praying for you)
When I can finally kiss you	
You know say every day	(you know that every day)
I deh pray for you	(I pray for you)
In my heart too there is a permanent place for you	
That is why my heart deh beat like	(my heart is beating like)
Dùdùkẹ, dù dù kẹ	

The hope of how she will kiss the child is expressed through the code-switching of pidgin, English, and Yorùbá and this expresses the multilingual nature of the singer and ensures proper acceptance of listeners of diverse linguistic backgrounds and small wonder why the song became popular both in Nigeria and internationally:

I <u>dey</u> pray for the day	(I'm praying for the day)
When I can finally kiss you	

You know say (You know that)
 Every day I dey pray for you... (You know I pray for you daily)
 ‘Cos na you I chose oh, (You’re the one I choose)
Àyànfé mi, Àyànfé (Baby, you’re my chosen, my
 beloved)

Furthermore, the philosophical idea of the Yorùbá beliefs shows that a child is cherished and called Àyànfé (the one I chose and love) is revealed. Here, she puts greater value on the child and, at the same time, portrays the belief that the child or foetus hears. Thus, interact with it. She code-switched at the interval to say exactly how she was feeling and referred to the foetus as a guardian angel. Thus, the coinage, “Dùdùké”, is a vivid description of the movement of the baby in her womb.

Baby I go be for you (Baby I will be for you)
 Mo fẹràn rẹ o (I love you)
 I sing for you my baby
 Dùdùké
 Dùdùk
 é
 Mo fẹràn rẹ o (I love you)

Likewise, the sounding of the drum at intervals is a style she stylistically used in this and some others.

Adekunle Gold in “Sade” expressed his feeling about falling in love with a lady despite her failure to reciprocate his love. He further states that his parents were waiting to behold his child; therefore, he begged her. He switched to the second language (Yorùbá) in order to express the deepest feeling about the urgency of getting married.

I deh beg you oh	(I’m begging you)
Qjọ ní lọ	(Time is running out)
Ọsẹ tó lọ ni mo pé thirty o, Šadé	(I turned thirty last week, Sade)
I deh beg you say pé make you marry me	(I am pleading that you marry me)
You tell me say you no ready	(Yet you tell me you aren’t ready)
O ò dẹ jọjọ	(I beg of you)
Omọge dákun gbọ tẹmi	(Young lady, please yield to my plea)
Mummy ní retí omọ	(My mother awaits a grandchild)
Bàbá mi ní retí omọ	(My father awaits a grandchild)
You know I love you	
Omọge wá fẹ mi	(Young lady, please marry me)
But time no deh, answer mi on time	(Time is running out, answer me speedily)
Má jẹ kí n commit o	(Don’t let me commit suicide)
Please come be my wife	(Please accept to be my wife)

We can see the interface of the culture of how the Yorùbá view the marriage institution as noble and how he expressed himself to create a style for himself. He switched the language at an interval, not as a result of incompetence in the other language but deliberately to create style and further convey his deep feelings for “Sade”, the young lady.

Simi and Adekunle Gold switch to create a social class for themselves in the music arena. That is, to announce a specific identity for their songs. Everybody is now aware they code shift in their songs to convey meaning and to have a wider audience for their music, thereby making more youths and indeed adults embrace and accept their songs. (Nowadays, most corporate advertisements on television and radio are contracted to them hence making them more popular).

In Simi’s “Sẹlẹ́nsẹ́”, she sang thus:

Lọla geti work oh (Lola is employed)

Entrepreneur international	(International sole proprietor)
But na so so sleep Lọla deh sleep	(But she sleeps rather than work)
Chima no gree open shop	(Chima doesn't open his shop)
He say na hangover	(He says it is hangover)
Na every day oga deh shayo	(It is every day the boss drinks to stupor)
Na so so sleep	(He would rather sleep)
Oga sayo	(He is a drunkard)
Gbọ̀ tẹ̀mi o	(Listen to me; hear counsel)
Time na money.	(Time is wealth)

Here, the song reveals the importance of the dignity of labour. It describes the state of laziness and drunkenness using *şáyó* (being drunk always) to describe vividly the style of drunkenness of a young man, who refused to work and she further exhorted society that time is equivalent to money. She advised that we should be careful of how we spend our time just as time does not wait for anyone.

The musicians in this paper used code-switching (diction) to create a style for their music. There are selections of figurative items in the songs, phonologically in a stylistic way. They employ words that give credence to their songs. For example, the video of "No Forget" started with a mini drama where a mother questioned her daughter's boyfriend. She chased him away and threatened him to desist from following her daughter.

Your mama say omọ mi no follow I never chop	(Your mother asked you not to follow a poor man)
Make you find correct guy no be love we go chop	(Get a rich guy, not a poor man who claims to be in love)
Na me she dey talk about	(I know she's talking about me)
Ọ̀rọ̀ yẹ̀n ká mi lára o jẹ̀ n bẹ̀sẹ̀ mi sọ̀rọ̀	(I understand her, let me find my way)
Make I go hustle o	(I must go and struggle)
I want to take care of you baby	
So jẹ̀ n lọ it won't be long o	(Allow me to leave, I'll soon be back)
I want to take care of you baby	
So jẹ̀ n lọ mi ò ní pẹ̀ dé òlòò mi	(Allow me to leave, I'll soon be back, my love)
Şọ̀rá fáwọ̀n boys yẹ̀n o	(Be careful with those boys)
Tí n bá lọ wọ̀n máa tàn ẹ̀ o	(If I leave, they will deceive you)
Má şe gbàgbé bí a ti n bá a bọ̀ o mi o ni pẹ̀ dé	(Don't forget how we started, I'll soon be back)
Şọ̀rá fáwọ̀n boys yẹ̀n o	(Be careful with those boys)
If I go dem go toast you	(If I leave, they'll woo you)
No forget how far we've gone o baby mi o ni pe de	(Don't forget how far we've gone, I'll soon be back)

Aesthetically, code-switching of Yorùbá, Pidgin, and English is done to artistically convey the love of the young man and his desire to yield to the instruction of the lady's mother by going to struggle to get wealth. He further pleads that she waits for him and not get deceived by other boys, since they started their love affairs long ago.

In Simi's "Joromi", there is the use of coinage e.g. Joromi (a form of blouse or embroidered popularly worn by socialites). Myth has it that in the old Benin Empire, there was a warrior known as "Joromi" who battled and defeated all his rivals. It is usually played with high-life and thus embraced by the younger generation. "Joromi" further became popular with the song of Simi that everybody almost forgot that it was first used by an older musician, Victor Uwafo in his song "Joromi".

Simi used it to connote "the fine one" –a beautiful lady or handsome boy. Someone who a lady/boy is speaking to through body language that he/she is in love with but does not give a damn.

There is also the sentential use of words to create style:

Omọ́ kí ló n bubble o (Joromi)	(Baby, what is happening?)
Make you no dey fumble o (Joromi)	(Please, don't fumble)
I go shoot my shoti i o Joro	(I will try my luck, Joro)

Line one is a rhetorical question to which one does not expect an answer. The use of "omọ" is a direct address to a particular man who had reached marriageable age. Aesthetically, she repeated the question to the boy who she refers to as Joromi. Later, she called his name "Fọlábí" showing that she knows the boy by name.

Kí ló dé, kí ló dé o ?	(What is happening?)	
Why you no dey call me ee	(Why aren't you calling me)	
Ki lo de baby	(What is happening, baby?)	
(Ki lo de Joro)	(What is happening, Joro?)	
I dey give you signal (Joromi)	(I am beckoning at you)	5
Why you no dey see me ah (Joromi)	(Why don't you see me)	
I give you green lighti tire	(I am using body language to show my love)	
(Joromi Joro)		
Omo ki lo n bubble o (Joromi)	(Baby, what is happening?)	
Make you no dey fumble o (Joromi)	(Please, don't fumble)	10
I go shoot my shot i o Joro	(I will try my luck, Joro)	
So Joro baby take my number	(my dear baby take my number)	
(Take my number)		
You know you can call me later		
(Call me later)		15
Me I want to be your lover	(I want to be your lover)	

She code switched in lines 1, 3, 8, 10, and 11 and made use of repetition in lines 3-4, 12-13, and 14-15 to prove the point that someone told her that he is in love but now, he had despised her. The climax of the song is:

I go shoot my shot i o Joro	(I will try my luck, Joro)
So Joro baby take my number	
(Take my number)	
You know you can call me later	
(Call me later)	
Me I want to be your lover	
(Be your lover)	
Oh baby call me later	
(Call me later)	

Psychologically, this song means a lot to her as she expressed to herself that she really wanted to be his lover. She fully expressed her heartfelt desire for Joromi through the use of code-switching of 3 major languages (Pidgin, English, and Yorùbá) in the song.

Simi and Adegunle Gold employed the same style in the song titled "Promise".

Adegunle:	Tí wọn bá ñ bà mí jẹ o, ọ ma ń'ègbè lẹyin mi? (If I'm badly portrayed, will you support me ?)
	So Promise me
	You'll grow old with me

Simi: Mo fẹ bímọ méjì, will you be the father? (I want to have two children)

It is worthy to observe that their background is reflected in their songs.

6. Conclusion

The study was undertaken to identify the use of code shifting and codeswitching using some selected songs of Simi and Adegunle Gold a popular Nigerian singer couple.

Our findings revealed that the singers employed codeswitching of languages to differentiate their songs, make a unique identity and showcase their fluency in the languages hence revealing their level of literacy and fluency.

Thus, this study has contributed to an expansion in the sociolinguistic study of songs. A major limitation of this study is the inability to interview the artistes. Hence, we suggest related studies may be carried out that will ensure songwriters are fully interviewed thereby bringing to limelight their views on why they employed code shifting of languages in their songs.

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