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## Between Text and Texture: An Exploration of the Socio-Stylistic Imports in Selected Songs of Ololade Asake

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### Abstract

*It is no doubt that aside the peculiarity of melody and sound instruments in music, the formal and linguistic aesthetics of music are also associated to its markedness as a genre of spoken discourse. Apart from this, the artistic deployment of both text and texture in lyrical components creates a musical brand. The aim of this study is to examine the socio-stylistic imports in selected songs of Ololade Asake so as to evaluate how the artistes' linguistic identity has contributed to his entertainment brand. To achieve the aim of the study, five purposively selected songs of Ololade Asake were analysed using a blend of theoretical and conceptual approaches of Tajfel and Turner (1986); Social Identity Theory and Critical Stylistics of Jeffries (2010). From the data analysis, it has been found that Asake employs clear narrative structure, figurative languages and repetitive phrases, which enhance musicality as well as the poetic quality in the songs, create vivid and evocative images in the listeners' minds, emphasise the artiste's themes, and enable the creation of coherent and engaging lyrics. Asake also pragmatically illustrates thematic issues of social concern so as to create a positive and uplifting atmosphere for listeners. In conclusion, while the artistic aesthetics of Asake's songs conform to entertainment, a closer look at the underlying lyrical texts and textures situates Asake's music within the purview of social advocacy.*

**Keywords:** Text, Texture, Socio-stylistics, Social and Linguistic Identities

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### Introduction

The simple descriptions of the term, music as "the art of ordering sounds into meaningful patterns through the harmonisation of pitch and rhythm" (*New Webster International Dictionary*) and "the expression of feelings through an organised sequence of sounds in alliance with words (*song*) and

physical movement (*dance*)" (Harvard World Encyclopedia), mirror the creative and artistic attributes of music. A profound assessment of musical texts communicates beyond the senses conveyed literally. As a product of artistes' linguistic manifestations situated within the poetic genre of literature, music mirrors the human society by connecting people with





the values of their communities, and enables identity formation and expression (Petrušić, 2021). This attribute of identity expression is more characteristic of the popular music, which values include the establishment of subcultural group identities.

According to Krnić (2006), the trend in technological advancement has brought about the overriding impact of the new media on information dissemination; this development has a negative implication on the entirety of entertainment industry, including musical production. One of such adversities is the importation of mass culture into musical production, such that meaning became something of the past. A remarkable impact of the popular music, which lessens this problem, is that it creates and communicates cultural meanings and symbols. The objectives of this study are to examine the socio-stylistic imports in selected songs of Ololade Asake so as to evaluate how the artistes' linguistic manifestations convey his cultural identity and to validate the assertion that popular music plays an important role towards the maintenance of the cultural values of the people through the production, dissemination and preservation of Nigerian/African indigenous culture.

### **Demystifying the Concepts of Text and Texture**

Prior to the evaluation of the perceptions of text and texture in music studies, it is important to examine the description of the two

concepts from arrays of related disciplines. The conceptualisation of text as a grammatical string, either spoken or written, deployed for effective communication, represents an interpretation of the term in formal linguistics (Gobir, 2019). Texture is however perceived by scholars in the fields of language study, the likes of Carrell (1982), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday and Mathiesien (2004), as semantically and pragmatically created structures in terms of function and situation, which also involve some degree of coherence in the actual meanings expressed. In simple terms, texture can be regarded as "register" and "context" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 9).

From the stylistic perspective, the text and texture can simply be described in relation to the notions of idiosyncrasy and choice. This is possible if style is approached from the view of authorship attribution and stylometry because idiosyncrasy is an unusual feature of a person, which makes the person use language in speech or writing, directly from his/ her psyche. Idiosyncrasy is an embodiment of personal images, obsessions, archetypes and icons (Marta, 2013), which reflect the special characteristics that distinguish a person's language manifestations at the level of structure from another. Text therefore is an idiosyncrasy, an authorial fingerprint; a distinction; a variation; and a technique of expression peculiar to an individual (Mey 2009). According to Oyeyemi (2011), the language user's





preference for one feature rather than another is simply attributive and not inherent in the system of the language, as the language user's choices are based on his level of competence.

### **Socio-stylistics, Critical Stylistics and Identity Construction**

Apart from text and texture in musicology, other concepts that constitute the thematic concerns of this study are style (musical style), socio-stylistics and critical stylistics. Socio-stylistics is one of the types of stylistics that bridge the gap between stylistics and related disciplines such as discourse studies, pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Moshood & Gobir, 2019). Like pragmatic-stylistics, also regarded as pragma-stylistics, which focuses on the identification, description and interpretation of context-related language use, such as speech act, conversational maxims and politeness in varieties of texts, written or spoken, monologue or dialogue; socio-stylistics studies the elements of textual and contextual triggers of linguistic variation in both spoken and written discourses (Gobir & Ajepe, 2019).

Critical stylistics emerged as a result of an increasing need to establish the link between language, power and ideology (Alabi, 2024). To achieve this, critical stylistics investigates how social meanings are manifested through language and how human experiences and world view are represented through language. Jeffries (2010) coins the term critical stylistics, in an attempt to investigate feminist ideologies in

hegemonic discourses. According to Jeffries (2016), critical stylistic utilises the linguistic features and tools to uncover the ideologies hidden in texts. Even though critical stylistics as a method of linguistic inquiry unveils linguistic tools with which a text or a series of texts could be evaluated from the ideological standpoint, earlier approaches to stylistics are capable of better demystification of the ideological underpinnings behind specific linguistic choices, which are simply indicative of identity construction. Among those approaches are the historical, cognitive, multimodal and feminist approaches to textual stylistics.

In historical stylistics, diachronically changing styles of particular linguistic phenomena in literary text are investigated from diachronic and synchronic point of view. Cognitive stylistics combines the linguistic analysis of literary texts with a systematic and theoretically informed consideration of the cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language (Semino & Culpeper 2003). Cognitive stylistics as a branch of cognitive linguistics also analyses the language traits of individuals in relation to the mental processes involved in language production and comprehension (Gobir, 2021). Multimodal stylistics analyses the semiotic modes such as typography, colour, layout, and visual effects in printed texts by demystifying the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings behind the use of the semiotic



resources within the text (Norgaard, 2010). Feminist stylistics examines feminist ethos as it underpins ideology in given texts, with the aim of creating awareness on the way gender issues are handled in texts (Mills, 1995, p.1)

From the foregoing, it has been established that the manner of language use of an individual is the first representation of the individual's identity, and the various types and approaches to stylistics are diverse ways of evaluating identity construction. An individual or group identity therefore, can be contextually equated to the idiosyncrasy of the person(s). Idiosyncrasy is an entity, which is shaped by individual/ group's belief system— ideology. Similarly, an individual's ideological stance dictates his identity construction. As a driver of identity, an individual's ideological posture is conveyed through his linguistic manifestations (sounds, words, grammar, semantics and pragmatics), be it in written, verbal and non-verbal forms.

## Methodology

This study adopts the purposive sampling method for the selection of five songs from the 2023 Album of Ololade Asake titled: "Work of Art". The selected songs are *Olorun* (God), *Awodi* (Falcon), *Lonely at the Top*, *Peace Be unto You* and *Great Guy*. To examine the socio-stylistic imports in the selected songs of Ololade Asake, the qualitative approach is adopted. More specifically, the analysis of the musical lyrics is based on the

evaluation of how the artistes' linguistic manifestations (style) convey his cultural identity towards the preservation of his indigenous culture. Emphasis is placed on the identification, description and analysis of the preponderant linguistic and literary tools deployed in Ololade Asake's lyrics which illuminate his socio-cultural orientation. In this study, the prominent levels of stylistic analysis; the graphological, phonological, syntactic, and, the lexico-semantic features are drawn altogether to subject selected Asake's songs to a thorough analysis. Gaining these ends, a series of literary and linguistic tools are used on an equitable basis to arrive at an aesthetic yet comprehensive ends. More crucially, three of Asake's songs are designated for analysis, these are; *Lonely at the top*, *Great guy*, and *Peace be unto you*. This is because these three songs were trending Afro-pop songs on various websites by Nigerians and other people outside Nigeria.

## The Artiste and the Songs

Ololade Asake Ololade Asake, otherwise known as Mr Money is an Afro pop and Afrobeat musician from Nigeria. He was born in the late 1990's and brought up by Yoruba parent in Lagos Nigeria. He is a singer and songwriter. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the Department of Theatre and Performing Art of Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile- Ife, Osun-State. The data constitute five selected songs of Ahmed Ololade, also known by the



stage name, *Asake*— *Olorun* (God), *Awodi* (Falcon), *Lonely at the Top*, *Peace Be unto You* and *Great Guy*. The five selected songs are tracks from *Asake's* album, "Work of Art".

### **An Exploration of Ololade Asake's Linguistic and Social Identities**

The linguistic identity of the Nigerian artiste under consideration in this study, Ololade Asake, is reflected by his importation of linguistic (style) elements which are illustrative of his artistic manifestation and prowess. Markers of the artiste's linguistic identity can be categorised into morphological variation through the use of borrowing and coinages; lexico-syntactic variation through the deployment of slangy words and expressions, lexical and structural parallelisms, narrative structure, as well as question and answer form; and pragmatic variation through rhetorical tools such as analogy, allusion, metaphor and simile.

A structural analysis of selected Asake's songs has revealed that the artiste utilises a relatively informal style, characterised by pidgin-based expressions such as "you no go know," "I no dey do jelly," and "no be me you fit follow play," which are common features of everyday conversations among the Nigerian youths. These expressions contribute to a relaxed and relatable tone, making the song more accessible to a wider audience. In Asake's song, "Lonely at the Top", he predominantly uses informal language, which aligns with the contemporary genre of afrobeat/

afropop. Informal language reflects the everyday speech and slang used by the artiste's target audience. However, there are instances of formal language when it comes to describing emotions or deep reflective thoughts. Talking about informality, Asake's lyrics heavily rely on colloquial language to connect with the listeners and create a sense of relatability. Colloquial language includes phrases like "bad belle," "no cap," "for real," and "na only you I dey feeling," which are commonly used in informal conversations. There is minimal usage of literary language since the song aims for direct communication and emotional resonance. In the lyrics, Asake employs literal language to express his emotions and thoughts straightforwardly. However, there are a few instances of figurative language, such as metaphor and simile, to enhance the lyrical impact. For example, Asake compares the feeling of loneliness to being on the top alone, conveying the message that even success can feel empty without someone to share it with.

Apart from the use of pidgin-English, colloquialism and other informal language attributes, informality in the language of Ololade Asake is also marked by the use of slang words and expressions. For instance, phrases like "*Na you get the fire*," "*kpawo*" (meaning "grab" in Yoruba), and "*say na me bad pass*" are examples of casual and region-specific vocabulary. The inclusion of these informal language features enhances the song's appeal to



listeners who resonate with the local culture. At the phonological level the lyrics of the songs reflect foregrounding of repetition. For instance, in the song, Olorun (God), the artiste repeats:

Emi ko, Olorun ma ni",  
(It is not my might, but God's  
grace)...

Ta lo gbon t'olohun?  
Ko si anybody t'ogbon t'olohun (who  
is wise like God?

There is no one as wise as  
God)

The utterance, "Emi ko, Olorun ma ni", meaning, it is not my might, but God's grace is repeatedly uttered in the lyrics in Yoruba language, not only to emphasise the theme of the song but to appreciate God. The utterance simply portrays the African philosophy and belief system, their conception of God's divinity, as well as God's omnipotent and omniscient attributes. The artiste at some point in time varies the utterance to illustrate, "Awa ko, Olorun ma ni", meaning "It is not our might, but God's grace" to emphasise this belief system. He goes further adopting the question and answer approach in the lyrics to sermonise and emphasise the might of God:.

The repetition of the word "lonely" as instantiated in lines (1 and 2) are very clear phonological foregrounding at the segmental level. Another example of this is the repetition of the word "money" in lines (3, 4, 14, and 43). There are also instances of phrasal and clausal repetitions as in the ones written in Yoruba language "ko kan mi x3"

which means "It's none of my concern" thrice, and the phrase "Mr. Money ginger" which is repeated throughout the lyrics.

The effect of repetition in this context is for the purpose of emphasis, musicality, and memorability. These captivate listeners' attention. Alliteration, a tool of phonological repetition, which refers to the frequent appearance of a consonant sound at the initial position of a word, is repeatedly used in the text of the songs. An instance of this is the phrase "money on my mind" in line 3. The effect of this, is the production of musicality and memorability.

There is also a preponderant use of lexico-semantic features in the selected songs. Some of the lines have heavily foregrounded lexical choices which are used for creating special meanings, or portraying the sociolinguistic background of the artiste. Instances of these include the use of simile. Simile is as a figure of comparison which refers to the act of evaluates phenomenon or entities using the lexical choices of "as" and "like". A notable finding across the selected songs is the use of metaphor and analogy to describe phenomenon. In this analysis, we will divide the linguistic features of Asake's song "Great Guy" into two binary categories – formal/informal and simple/complex is evident in "You go dey fine like fine wine" as used in lines 31 of the song. The effect of simile here is for emphasis and memorability. A further analysis



of the linguistic features of Asake's songs reflects notable the use of metaphor and analogy to describe phenomenon. In this analysis, we will divide the linguistic features of Asake's song "Great Guy" into two binary categories – formal/informal. Literary versus colloquial and simple/complex

In "Lonely on the Top" Asake uses vivid imagery and metaphors to convey the theme of loneliness despite achieving success. For example, he sings, "I'm lonely on the top, I'm the king of the hill, but the hill is all mine." These lines represent the artiste's presentation and expression of the feeling of nostalgia. The idea of loneliness juxtaposed with the notion of success and being "king of the hill, furthermore emphasise the fact that solitude characterises life after several achievements. Asake employs representation of experience and knowledge in "Lonely at the top," to convey his feelings and experiences of loneliness and isolation despite his fame and success. He uses vivid imagery and metaphors to describe his emotions, such as "I feel like I'm living in a mansion made of sand" and "Lonely nights, cold tears like precipitation." This imagery and metaphor convey Asake portrayal of his inner world to evoke empathy. The irony of the situation is that despite his state of solitude, Asake still craves additional wealth, "its lonely at the top", "money on my mind". This is a true reflection of the reality of the society where man keeps trying, till he takes the last breathe.

## Socio-cultural Frames

One of the key indicators of Ololade Asake's sociocultural orientation, which is enormously deployed in the lyrics of the selected songs, is Yoruba Language. Two of the songs selected from the "Work of Art", *Olorun* and *Awodi*, are entitled in Yoruba language. Also, the use of Yoruba language in the entire text of the chorus abounds in *Olorun*, *Awodi* and Introduction. This emphasises the centrality of the Yoruba language to the socio-cultural identity of Asake among other musicians of the popular musical category in Nigeria. In datum one, titled *Olorun*, the first indicators of the artiste's sociocultural orientation deployed in the lyrics of the song is, the indigenous language, Yoruba language. This identifies the artiste's socio-cultural background as of Yoruba descent.

In the utterance, "*Emi ko, Olorun ma ni*", meaning "It is not my might, but God's grace", which is repeatedly uttered in the lyrics in Yoruba language, the artist reckons with the might of God, not only to emphasise the theme of the song but to appreciate God in his native tongue. By so doing, the artiste showcases his socio-cultural orientation through the utterance, which simply portrays the African philosophy and belief system, their conception of God's divinity, as well as God's omnipotent and omniscient attributes. This belief system is also held by the Yoruba people, who refer to the Supreme Being, *Olorun*- God synonymously as *Eledumare*, *Oluwa*





or *Eledu'a*. The artiste at some point in time varies the utterance to illustrate, "*Awa ko, Olorun ma ni*", meaning "It is not **our** might, but God's grace" to emphasise this belief system. He goes further adopting the question and answer approach in the lyrics to sermonise and emphasise the might of God as well as the belief system of his descent: "*Ta lo gbon t'olohun? Ko si anybody t'ogbon t'olohun*" meaning, who is wise like God? There is no one as wise as God".

Another notable indicator of Ololade Asake's socio-cultural identity is the adoption of the mechanism of code-switching in his lyrics. Asake switch codes to create poetic texture while portraying his thematic concerns. The switch in codes which takes the pattern Yoruba-Pidgin (Eng.)-English-Yoruba-English, showcases his linguistic culture and illuminates the sociolinguistic realities of his environment as well as his targeted audience. The effect of this is to create an avenue for a general and more explicit comprehension of the song in the society of fans who are largely speakers of diverse codes.

### **Ideological Construction in Ololade Asake's Music**

Ololade Asake, in his musical lyrics deploy symbolism as a means of constructing his ideological stance. For instance, in *Olorun*, *Awodi* and the other songs under evaluation, he conveys his religion ideology. Asake uses the generic concept of *Olorun/Oluwa*— meaning God, which is not situated within the confines of any of the popular religion divides in

Nigeria, Christianity, Islam and the traditional religion. The implication of this is to convey his unbiased notion on religion. In some instances, aside using the generic concept of "God", he alludes to different beliefs by importing concepts of those beliefs in his lyrical composition. In his song titled: *Sunshine*, Asake sings:

I be Celestial,  
handles my situation, all my pains, all  
my struggles lighting  
my candle...

Also in the selected songs, Asake describes himself, occasionally as "*Omo Olorun*" meaning, God's child. This concept epitomises a particular faith, Christianity. In *Great Guy*, Asake repeats this concept several times and adopts a Biblical allusion:

Jesus Christ, won fe  
Judas mi...

These illustrations reveal Asake's conveyance of his religious ideology, which is indicative of positive alignment towards the belief systems he illustrates in the lyrics. His ideological disposition is further conveyed in other songs outside of those selected in this study which portray the Islamic religion, another religion category.

### **Findings**

The results derivable from the evaluation of the stylistic imports in Ololade Asake's music are discussed under two headings. First is the discussion of the findings from the exploration of Ololade Asake's linguistic and social identities; as



well as the discussion of the results deducible from the evaluation of the mechanisms of Asake's Ideological Construction. Evidences of Asake's linguistic and social identities that abound in the songs under consideration are morphological variation (borrowing, coinages), lexico syntactic variation (slangy words and expressions) and pragmatic variation.

Switching of codes between English language, Pidgin-English and Yoruba language abound in the songs. The songs are heavily foregrounded with switching of codes which reflects the artiste's multilingual identity and prowess. Asake is a Nigerian musician; hence he grew up in heterogeneous milieu. This inevitably has made him prone to multilingual competence. This heavily manifests in his linguistic prowess to switch from one code to another. The effect of this, is to create an avenue for a general and more explicit comprehension of the song in the society of the fans who are largely speakers of varying languages.

## Conclusion

This study has evaluated Ololade Asake's selected songs from the socio-stylistic point of view. The analyses of selected lyrics of Asake's songs through a blend of approaches have unravelled the myth behind Asake's linguistic choices as well as the social constructs and ideological undertone behind his language use. Asake showcases his sociolinguistic prowess through the deployment of marked stylistic resources with

underlying ideological disposition. Asake predominantly relies on informal, colloquial, literal, and non-standard language to connect with the audience and convey the emotions and experiences depicted in the song. However, there are sporadic instances of formal, literary, and figurative language to add depth and impact to the lyrics. The study concludes that while the linguistic and artistic aesthetics of Asake's songs conform to entertainment, a closer look at the underlying messages conveyed through the lyrical texts and the artiste's ideological stance, situates Asake's music within the purview of social advocacy towards social integration.

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