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Multilingualism and Hip Hop Consumption in Nigeria: Accounting for the Local Acceptance of a Global Phenomenon

Olusegun Fariudeen Liadi

Abstract: Hip hop music has enjoyed global popularity and patronage on a level that has transcended that of most other music genres. It is perhaps due to the genre's worldwide popularity that many forms of hip hop have sprung up across the globe. The Nigerian version of the music has been overwhelmingly accepted by a good number of youths in the country irrespective of class, religion and social status. However, there is some speculation as to what factors are responsible for the recent sudden boom in the popular consumption of this genre among the youth, since hip hop has been a feature of the Nigerian musical landscape since the 1980s. With the aid of qualitative data collection instruments – thirty in-depth interviews and six key informant interviews among hip hop fans and club DJs, respectively – the study establishes the centrality of multilingualism as a primary reason for the acceptance of hip hop among Nigerian youth.

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This paper examines the salience of multilingual lyrics in the widespread acceptance of hip hop among Nigerian youth. Hip hop is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria (Adeyemi 2009); however, since the turn of the twenty-first century the popularity and widespread acceptance of the genre among youth has soared to an unprecedented height, causing scholars and commentators to seek to elucidate the factors that may underlie the popular consumption of this genre among youth. While some scholars have attempted to locate the answer in demographic (Omojola 2006; Onyeji 2002) and technological (Babalola and Taiwo 2009; Omojola 2006) changes, Abati (2009: 35) offers a postmodern explanation involving the “deconstructionist tendencies” of youth to reject traditional material culture. These works have contributed to our understanding of the development and level of sophistry attained by the current version of hip hop in Nigeria. Yet, a research gap remains. This gap relates to scholars’ limited knowledge of how multilingualism in localized hip hop may or may not contribute to its appeal and consumption. Indeed, early studies on multilingualism and hip hop in Nigeria and elsewhere (Agbo 2009; Babalola and Taiwo 2009; Zagoria 2007; Omoniyi 2006; Sarkar, Winer, and Sarker 2005) overemphasized the linguistic input and primarily focused on the artists and the production of the music. Empirical studies that analyse how multilingualism influences consumption of hip hop, however, are scarce.

Consequently, this paper aims to contribute to filling this gap by examining how the creative appropriation of various Nigerian local languages (including Nigerian Pidgin and English) in the performance of hip hop has come to account for the success and widespread acceptance of the music among Nigerian fans. The study is therefore focused on the relationship of the fans – rather than that of the hip hop artists – to multilingualism in the music. The primary objectives of the paper are to examine how multilingualism has impacted hip hop consumption in Nigeria; to ascertain the acceptance of Nigerian multilingual hip hop vis-à-vis American hip hop; and to evaluate other elements of the music that specifically appeal to Nigerian youth.

Hip Hop as a Globalized Culture

Generally, hip hop music has enjoyed popularity and patronage on a level that transcends the acceptance of most other music genres. From its roots in the Bronx in New York City (Suddreth 2009; Lighthouse 2004) the music has grown beyond the United States to capture the imaginations of youth around the world (Sullivan 2003). Though an American cultural product, hip hop has increasingly dominated the musical scenes in countries and com-

munities that bear no affinity with American people or history. The global status assumed by hip hop has largely transformed it into a transnational cultural product that manifests the globalization trends of (post-)industrial society. To a large extent, it is increasingly becoming a truism that due to globalization,

young people in different parts of the world are consuming the same types of materials and these patterns of consumption are breeding 'a borderless youth' culture (Grixti 2006: 106).

This is why several scholars, including Martinez (1997) and Bennett (1999), quite rightly explain that hip hop can no longer be simply viewed as an expression of African-American culture. Indeed, today there is hardly a country in the world where the influence of hip hop music has not been felt, particularly by burgeoning youths. From Johannesburg to Jakarta, the popularity of hip hop, according to the postmodernist argument,

exemplifies the deterritorialization of cultures and emphasizes how the rise of a particular cultural commodity is primarily a commercial phenomenon (Connell and Gibson 2004: 342).

As Haynes (2005) argues, the phenomenon of hip hop takes people across arbitrarily ascribed boundaries, challenging normative racialized identities meant to provide a fixed set of cultural values, musical tastes and social attitudes. In fact, Zagoria describes hip hop as the cultural product with the most "globalizing force on culture" (2007: 86).

Within the global consumption of hip hop culture, various forms of hip hop exist in different countries, and local forms and content are often fused with globalized elements. For example, Arthur (2006) explores the globalization of hip hop in Australia, where American hip hop culture has been transformed to fit local culture. Though Australian hip hop shares the basic activities such as rapping, DJing and modes of self-expression that originated in the South Bronx, it has created its own unique identity through local interpretation of these essential practices. In Germany much of the attraction to rap music has centred on break-dancing and graffiti (Pennay 2001). Bennett (1999) provides insight into how youths of immigrant origin adopted, reworked and utilized hip hop as a form of media to agitate for equality. Many East German youths adopted hip hop practices, perceiving hip hop as a medium through which they could express themselves and discover their true identities (Bennett 1999). Bennett argues that, to appeal to local audiences, German-language rap entered the mainstream in 1993 without any significant influence from the United States.

In the case of Nigerian hip hop, studies by Liadi (2010), Agbo (2009) and Omojola (2006) have shown that the contemporary Nigerian version of

hip hop is a product of transformations that involve a unique localization process. To be sure, it appears that the practitioners of hip hop imported an African-American musical form only to transmute it into an indigenized and localized version – a version that has been overwhelmingly accepted by a large number of young people in Nigerian society irrespective of class, religion or social status (Babalola and Taiwo 2009; Onyeji 2002).

According to Omojola (2006: 79), the “invasion and domination of the Nigerian popular music by energetic Nigerian youth” impacted the music industry in numerous ways by transforming the content, style and appeal of the music; the genre evolved out of a relative state of obscurity to occupy international market space (see also Adeyemi 2009; Babalola and Taiwo 2009). In transforming the content of the music, Nigerian hip hop artists innovatively adapted hip hop performance to align with local contexts and social realities along with appropriating multiple local languages to convey their messages. Central to the localization and transformation of the music is, as Agbo (2009: 36) has described, the adoption of multilingual lyrics, while other elements of hip hop are kept intact:

At the turn of the twenty-first century a change began to emerge in the Nigerian music landscape. Nigerians localized the American hip hop brand. They maintained the fast, strong rhythm and fast talk (known as rap) but changed the language from Black American English to Nigerian languages and Nigerian English. This brand of music is variously called *naija* or *gbedu* in Nigerian hip hop parlance.

Similar to Agbo’s conclusions, Omojola (2006) has shown that the practitioners of hip hop in Nigeria did not discard the global elements of hip hop in the process of localizing the music. For Omojola (2006), the Nigerian artists combined the artistic style of Afro-American percussion with local content in order to provide a somewhat hybridized musical genre. The global elements of hip hop, such as DJing, break-dancing, rapping (Sudreth 2009; Bennett 1999) and a fast rhythm are combined with the various local languages of the multilingual society of Nigeria.

In any case, the phenomenon of multilingualism in Nigerian hip hop appears to be a marketing strategy to either reach and unify the numerous audiences who are of different ethnic extractions, or to attempt to break the apparent language barriers experienced by other ethnic or regional popular genres such as those sung in only one language. Irrespective of the diverse motives of the artists in adopting multilingual lyrics, the phenomenon appears to be imaginative on the part of the artists. The *Africa Hip Hop Review* (AHR, 2005) observes that

by the innovative fusing of local languages with English [...], hip hop artists are creating wholly new vocabularies and languages. But they also revive and incorporate old traditional languages, bridging the generational gap through the combination of fresh, new sounds with traditional language. Language preference and language usage among African artists reveals not only the underlying philosophy of an artist, but also which audiences they want to attract, and how they view themselves within the larger society. Likewise, the lyrics allow us to understand who the message is targeting and the issues and realities of a given country (AHHR 2005: 3).

The creative use of multiple languages in hip hop performance, as submitted by the AHHR (2005), has been acknowledged by several studies on code-switching in hip hop music since the 1990s, when the use of code-switching first appeared in the popular music industry (Androutsopoulos 2007). Fenn and Perullo (2000), for example, present and discuss the dynamics of language choice in hip hop music in Tanzania and Malawi. The authors show that Tanzanian hip hop musicians mediate between English and Swahili, relying on both languages to construct a unique landscape for their music. While Swahili dominates the country's hip hop scene, English continues to play a significant role in rap. The authors suggest that the historical process that allowed Swahili to be the most widely spoken language in Tanzania and English to be the dominant political and economic language created a unique environment for such a dual-language hip hop culture to develop (Fenn and Perullo 2000: 457).

This construction of a musical landscape through the use of languages is not limited to Tanzania, as shown by Bentahila and Davies (2002) in their study of the glocalized nature of Algerian *raï* music. These scholars base their examinations on the intriguing dynamics of globalization forces, which interact with local tendencies to switch between French and Arabic in Algerian *raï* songs. Bentahila and Davies state in categorical terms that code-switching in the lyrics of songs is quite distinguishable from everyday conversational code-switching. In music, according to them, code-switching is neither spontaneous nor an intimate phenomenon – *unlike* when applied in a conversational context. In specific terms, they conclude that Arabic is inset in otherwise French *raï* texts, simultaneously performing two important functions, “globalization” and “localization” (2002: 21). In the researchers' estimation, these switches enable *raï* musicians to demonstrate their links with a global culture outside the local context of their music.

In a 2009 linguistic study of Nigerian musical artists by Agbo, the skilful use of code-switching by hip hop artists to enhance the aesthetic and rhetorical qualities of their music is demonstrated vividly. Agbo reveals that

these language-alternation patterns involve major Nigerian languages and English. The artists' use of language(s) interacts with elements of the lyrical structure itself – lines, rhymes and stanzas – which he says enhance the musical quality of the artists' work. Agbo observes that language-switching by Nigerian artists also has other connotations: It is perceived as a marker of the artists' linguistic identities and preferences. In this sense, Agbo (2009: 5) argues that the code-switching that occurs in the lyrics of Nigerian hip hop is particularly significant when certain lexical items – like “contrastive and expressive code-switching as well as reformulations and repetitions” – are used to highlight the code-switching occurrences.

In the context of the meaning and identity constructed out of multilingual hip hop, Zagoria (2007) explores and considers the ways songwriters and musicians of African and non-African language backgrounds who are involved in producing original and traditional African songs in Perth (Australia) demonstrate their multiple cultural identities in the process of making music. Using an evidence-based method derived from in-depth interviews and discussion groups with band members, as well as clips from live performances of three songs, Zagoria (2007: 84) explores key themes related to the performance of glocal identities through code-switching in songs. Analysing the code-switching in the song text and performance of a Zimbabwean musician, Zagoria (2007: 90) suggests that

the code-switching in this song enables the Zimbabwean singer to express a complex contemporary notion of multinationalism for himself which is possibly also felt by many of the mostly African migrant members of this particular audience.

As such, “the code-switching enables the singer to subvert and appropriate this nationalistic chant in the song to serve his own purposes” (Zagoria 2007: 90).

One of the purposes to which this author is alluding is to evoke a nostalgic memory of far-off Zimbabwe, the longing for which is expressed through the code-switching between Australian English and a Shona language. Doing this allowed the musician to manage his multiple identities in a multi-linguistic community. This phenomenon has been further explored by Sarkar et al. (2005) in their seminal paper on multilingual code-switching in hip hop from Montreal, Canada. The authors observe that an examination of code-switching, as it is pre-meditatively employed by poets and songwriters, can yield insights into the ways two or more languages may interact with one another or index a particular speech community's collective linguistic and cultural identity. Montreal, as the writers indicate, has an urban youth community with a multilingual orientation, and hip hop groups mirror the ethno-linguistic diversity salient in this urban scene. In their analysis, the

authors identify lexical and phrasal code-switching in hip hop music from Montreal and observe that code-switching draws on more than two languages. In fact, code-switching between Standard Quebec French, Non-standard Quebec French, European French, Standard North American English, African-American English, and Caribbean Creoles enables Montrealer youths to negotiate multiple identities.

Multilingual Lyrics and Hip Hop's Popularity among Nigerian Youths

Data for the study was gathered through qualitative methods. An initial pilot study was conducted and this revealed a passionate adherence and attachment on the part of Nigerian youths to multilingual hip hop. The actual primary data were based on thirty in-depth interviews and six key informant interviews conducted among Nigerian hip hop fans and club DJs, respectively. Most of the interviewees were between the ages of 24 and 27 and were either students or working. All of the respondents stated that it was not their first time visiting a nightclub. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit responses on

1. issues relating to factors responsible for hip hop's popularity among youth in Nigeria;
2. the effect of these factors on the acceptance of international versions of hip hop; and
3. the specific issue of message communication in the music. The respondents were selected purposively during the author's visits to nightclubs and recreation centres in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The invasion and domination of Nigerian popular music by Nigerian youth (Omojola 2006) has impacted the music industry in numerous ways, transforming the content, style and appeal of the music from a relative state of obscurity to the international market space. A principal localism introduced and absorbed into hip hop by young people that gives Nigerian hip hop its distinct flavour, and certainly contributes to its popularity, is multilingual lyrics. This phenomenon seems to serve different purposes and it impacts the consumption of hip hop in diverse ways. So central is the phenomenon of multilingualism to the increasing acceptance of Nigerian hip hop that even the unlettered and some adults are not left out of the frenzy created by the music. In the words of a 26-year-old male hip hop fan at one of the nightclubs I visited:

The hip hop music that is composed with multiple languages has given the music industry a growth. Since the time we started having musicians that sing multilingual music we can see that the music industry has grown bigger. People are buying more music CDs compared to when we have our old musicians who sang with one language. Now we have people that sing with different languages: Pidgin, Yoruba, English, and that really motivate[s] the young people [...] to listen to hip hop music (male/student/26 years old/9 January 2010).

Hip hop has the potential to attract into its fold youth of different races, classes, ethnic backgrounds and beliefs (Price 2007; Bennett 1999). In Nigeria, the music appears to have encapsulated the life of the average urban youth (Omojola 2006) and increasingly also the lives of rural youths across the country. The inclusion of music multilingualism in the performance of hip hop appears to have provided youth the much-needed impetus to embrace a “made in Nigeria” product. The data suggest that adopting multilingual lyrics is an important factor in the widespread success and popularity of the music. As a result, the music industry has experienced unprecedented growth as more people, including the unlettered, appear to have also embraced hip hop. A female graduate student described the influence of multiple languages in the consumption of Nigerian hip hop this way:

The impact is just that it has been able to annex the interest of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. The hip hop now make[s] use of different languages that are present in Nigeria and even the universal language of the literate and illiterate that is Pidgin English. So, that captures the interest of the people because there is no way you would not find your way into it through one of the languages. That is why you see that even market women, bus conductors can sing the hip hop songs today because they can flow along with it and understand the languages (female/student/25 years old/15 January 2010).

The above quote suggests that the “tide” of multilingual lyrics, the major mover of hip hop music in Nigeria, allows the music to penetrate so deep into the musical culture of the Nigerian people that even market men and women are now dancing to it. The music, having adopted different languages (various local dialects, Pidgin English and Standard English) domiciled in the country, has allowed people – educated and uneducated, religious and agnostic, rich kids and poor wards – to readily identify with and experience the global culture of hip hop through localized multilingualism. The multilingualism has enhanced the spread and acceptability level of hip hop among people in Nigeria. They can now identify with the music as they are assured that they will be able to understand at least one of the languages

used in the lyrics. From every indication, the data suggest that language is an important element in the acceptance and consumption of music.

This is not surprising, given that Nigerian society is still very culture-bound and music is believed to be a vehicle of communication of social values. As fans consume the music, they not only understand the lyrics through the various languages used, but also create meanings in order to develop or even perpetuate an individual or group identity. In this way, everyone “flows” with the rhythms because the Nigerian hip hop artists employ multilingualism to create a community of music lovers that understands and shares in the meanings of the languages and issues articulated in the music. An important issue here is that, although writers like Zagoria (2007) have described hip hop as the cultural product with the most globalizing force in the world, the acceptance of hip hop in a society with less of a connection to the American origin of the music apparently requires the inclusion of local elements such as language. Therefore, the global exportation and popularization of hip hop has not led to the rejection or disruption of the music culture in most countries.

Acceptance of Nigerian Multilingual Hip Hop vis-à-vis International Hip Hop

The emergence of multilingual hip hop in Nigeria has been described as revolutionary (Liadi 2010: 76). The justification for this assertion is simple. Hip hop music has been a feature in Nigeria since the mid-1980s (Omojola 2006; Onyeji 2002), represented by artists such as Felix Liberty, Danny Wilson, Evi Edna-Ogoli, Dizzy K. Falola and Chris Okotie (now Pastor Chris Okotie). Due to several complex factors, the popularity of these musicians and the patronage of local versions of hip hop at that time were seriously rivalled, if not undermined, by international hip hop artists whose music was apparently preferred at parties and by the few radio and television stations in the country. However, from the late 1990s and early 2000s on, a new trend came about in the Nigerian music landscape: the gradual decline in popularity of Western pop music (Agbo 2009), as evidenced by the number of times such music was played on the airwaves (Adeyemi 2009), at parties, and in the various nightclubs that adorn the major cities in the country. Indeed, during this period it appears that there was an apparent loss of taste for foreign entertainment, encouraged by the rise of Nigerian home videos popularly known as Nollywood films. This was put into perspective by a middle-aged male hip hop fan (at a nightclub) in Mokola, Ibadan:

Looking at the music industry today one will definitely see that the music being sung in Nigeria [... is] really captivating to the people of Nigeria compared to the international music. Because if you look at the market today people are buying more of the records of the local artists compared to the international ones. So I will say it has gone a long way to make the listeners, as in the entire people now, to really appreciate their local music through the use of all these languages mentioned (male/entrepreneur/41 years old/9 January 2010).

This same pattern of responses emanated from a focus group discussion session at Apete in the Iddo local government area, Ibadan:

Compared to the local hip hop music that we have presently, the international music, the international aspect of the hip hop music focuses on the formalized language. It is like it is meant for some special class of people who understands the language and the speech or words used in the music. But the local aspect of hip hop is not specified to a particular class. It combines every class, whether at the social level or within the immediate environment or even amidst adult[s], the young ones, male, female, it captures the language of everybody. So that is why local hip hop has been able to generate more interest than the international hip hop music that centralized on formal English (males/students of polytechnic/25–30 years old/4 March 2010).

As expressed above, there is a high appreciation of local hip hop by Nigerian youth. This is exemplified by the increased CD sales of local hip hop artists. The local hip hop musicians appear to be aware of the market needs and are delivering that to their audiences, while the listeners reciprocate through consumption of the music. The market need, in this case, is music that combines the international or Western flavour with local content – a kind of hybridized musical object with glocalised features. There is no denying that the average Nigerian youth is inclined toward “modernized” or Western cultural influences. At the same time, a local object that does not portray the youths as *ara oko* (“uncouth”) is readily embraced and appreciated. Nigerian hip hop music combines these unique features, hence the “captivation” and “appreciation” expressed toward the multilingual hip hop as reflected in the high consumption of the music. A young male fan explained it this way:

Currently the indigenous hip hop artists have really made the Nigerian listeners [...] look inward, to appreciate their own thing. Instead of what we used to have then where Nigerians listen[ed] to foreign artists, the multilingual hip hop music has made Nigerians [...] look inward and really concentrate on the Nigerian form of hip hop music now (male/student/22 years old/12 February 2010).

Nigerian hip hop makes use of the repertoire of languages available in the country combined with the elements of global hip hop, which gives it a local flavour that the people can identify with. According to a club DJ, the inclusion of various languages that can be readily identified with, even though Nigerian hip hop borrows considerably from the global features of hip hop, is what engenders the high level of support for and appreciation and consumption of multilingual hip hop at the expense of international hip hop. Specifically, many fans pointed to certain difficulty in understanding the language of international versions of hip hop, even when English is used:

Though they [the foreign artists] use English to sing, we do not even understand most of what they say in terms of their rapping. In their songs, you hardly hear what they are saying or the pronunciations. But unlike the foreign artists, the Nigerian artists adopt both English and other local dialects in their songs and we can understand anything they say. There is no way Psquare [a local hip hop band] will rap that I will not understand one or two things they are saying. But let 50 Cent [a popular American rapper] start rapping, before I could get a word out of what he is saying I have to go on Internet to search for the lyrics and print it. This is much *wabala* [trouble] to enjoy music. So I can say this is why we are not so much keen on international hip hop again since we can get what we need here (male/banker/27 years old/22 January 2010).

The above data suggest that the very source from which the “appreciation” of Nigerian hip hop music emanates is the simplicity of the multilingual lyrics, making it easily understandable and enjoyable for everyone. As the hip hop fan quoted above emphasized, international hip hop music is not easy to understand. The lyrics, accents and messages articulated in the music are alien to music listeners in Nigeria. 2Pac’s rapping and other hip hop produced internationally, for example, are produced with an American accent and slang that Nigerian people are not connected to. Consequently, it becomes difficult for consumers to identify with the music as there seems to be a disconnect between the issues or messages in the music and the lived experiences of the listeners. Thus, the arrival of music multilingualism fills a gap that was created by international hip hop (that of understanding the lyrics). Music multilingualism makes use of languages that are easily understandable to the people without much *wabala*. The lyrics are clear, and the issues, whether social or political, articulated are ones that the people connect with easily. The music speaks particularly to Nigerian society, which makes the local audience more likely to be interested in it and consume it. Also, the multilingual lyrics create meanings for the audience that are constantly used in the social production and reproduction of daily group exist-

ence. Thus the local artists are appreciated for their insight, creativity and doggedness in the music industry. The music flows with the fans through the use of multilingual lyrics combined with the global rhythms and beats of hip hop, hence its popularity and consumption among the young people.

Other Success Factors in Nigerian Multilingual Hip Hop

Considering this seemingly overwhelming acceptance and high consumption of multilingual hip hop music by the Nigerian youth, the author sought to find out some of the other specific attractions of the music to its fans. According to one of the interviewees:

What I really enjoy mostly about the music is just the sound, the [beat] and the multilingual slangs in the music. You know they say [the beat] owns the music. So it is the sound that I really enjoy, then the lyrics as well. Like when you listen to musicians like 9ice, Asa, and em Dbanj, they sing with different languages and I tell you I listen to them and I love listening to them [...], the lyrics are moveable. They are something you can dance to, they are something that will make you feel happy. They are not slow music, they do not kill the spirit. They make the spirit come alive (male/student/30 years old/13 March 2010).

According to these data, the high level of consumption of multilingual hip hop music is connected to the lyrics, the beat, and the sound of the music. Again, this brings to the fore the glocalized tendencies of the music. Though the beat, sounds, rhymes and style of the music are oriented toward Western hip hop, the lyrics are localized through the fusion and use of Pidgin with some of the local dialects across the country. Multilingual musicians such as Dbanj adopted this blending to produce a contemporary music that provides an enjoyable sound and beat that respondents reported make them feel happy:

What the present age needs is fun because the way things are going in the country today is bad, that all you need is to wile away the time, catch your fun and that is it. The multilingual hip hop is music of fun and dance. I as a person listen to it to enjoy myself and lift my spirit (male/student/30 years old/13 February 2010).

It is no surprise that people are attached to things that serve as sources of happiness to them. Because of that appeal, repeated and enthusiastic consumption of the music is self-evident.

What is more, within the totality of the music (beat, sounds, lyrics, rhymes, etc.) are other elements that appeal to the sensibilities and desires of the youth. By and large, appealing to the youth by reinforcing their fantasies is a *sine qua non* in the increasing and continued consumption of the music. A DJ in a key informant interview supports this idea, saying:

As a musician, if you want to make money in Nigeria you would sing songs that will appeal to the youths' desires [...] this is the market strategy for the fans to like you and buy your CDs (male/DJ/35 years old/22 January 2010).

When the author asked about what “appeals to the youths’ desires”, the discussant said:

The youths are more receptive to sexual music. They are more receptive to music that appeal[s] to sex, appeal[s] to seduction, love, abandonment, etc. So if you watch now, the contemporary Nigerian music [is] all geared towards this direction and the artists are making their money (male/DJ/35 years old/22 January 2010).

Another interviewee explained: “The only message we hear is about love, love, love. If not that, it is the description of the body shape of a lady” (female/student/22 years old/22 January 2010). Whereas in some other countries, such as Senegal, politics (see, for instance, Benga 2005) rather than love and seduction plays the most important role in hip hop and rap music, in Nigeria it is the latter that drives the music.

In fact, contemporary multilingual hip hop is geared toward projecting the image of love and seduction in both the lyrics and the video representations of the music. Consequently, to sustain youth consumption of the music, the multilingual hip hop artists’ marketing strategy is to address youth issues. Nigerian youth, like youth all over the world, enjoy and identify with seductive and emotional music. In music, as in other cultural elements, sex and love connect with the youth mentality. Therefore, as the above data suggest, one of the core elements in multilingual hip hop that ensures increasing consumption by the youth is the identification of the music with erotic lyrics and seductive vibes in the video. An examination of selected video clips for this study reaffirmed this. All of the videos show scenes of eroticism, seduction, and sex role play, to mention but a few. Hence, as the data gathered for this study have suggested, the messages in multilingual hip hop are of utmost interest to the youth. The rise of the music is therefore predicated on the fact that it expresses what the youth can identify with.

In addition to the fact that the consumption of the music is predicated on the ability of the music to appeal to the desires and fantasies of the

youth, the study also found that multilingual hip hop slang is an essential element of the sustenance of the consumption of the music by youth:

As a musician, I think it is essential for you to come out with your own slangs if you really want your music to move in the market. Those slangs are things that just come along with the music. And mind you, that is the “in” thing, that is, it is one of the characteristics of the youths. Youths love slangs and any musician that can bring out new slangs will have more followers. Slang is hip hop and hip hop is slangs. They go hand in hand. The slangs bolster the fans’ level. If you are going to sing hip hop and you do not put your own slangs, you are unlikely to be popular. Even if it is going to be gospel hip hop you have to put your slangs into it. The slang will probably have good meaning. It is not all slangs that have terrible meanings (male/banker/35 years old/13 March 2010).

Another fan says:

The slang is one major thing I love about the music. I love to try to memorize the slangs and when [I] am in the midst of my friends, you know, I would like to be the first person to use the new slangs in town. Like, ah, *orietifokasibe; anu e semi, wa kan loja bututu ni; omo see bomber; omo close up your bomber; oo ni fete o, ginger your swagger* and stuff like that. The slang is one major reason why people love to listen to the multilingual hip hop (male/student/22 years old/9 January 2010).

Young people’s attachment to, identification with, and desire to consume the music has a lot to do with the multilingual slang in the lyrics. This appears to be yet another flavour added to hip hop in Nigerian musical parlance. The above data suggest that youth derive satisfaction from learning multilingual slang in the music and using such slang in conversation with friends. Because multilingual hip hop music provides the latest slang, young people are always ready to consume this music. Therefore, the multilingual slang in the Nigerian version of hip hop music is one major reason why the youth (continue to) consume the music.

Conclusions

The infusion of multilingualism with the global elements of hip hop has led to an increasing popularity and consumption of this music among Nigerian youth. In fact, multilingualism in Nigerian hip hop music, as examined in this study, has allowed the music to penetrate deeper into the musical fabric of the Nigerian people in such a way that more people now consume this music. The consumption level of hip hop in Nigeria is high and increasing.

Indeed, the major shift observable in the Nigerian music industry – and the entertainment industry in general – can be attributed to the increasing consumption of hip hop. The music industry is today larger than it was two decades ago when hip hop emerged on the Nigerian music landscape. Unlike in the 1990s, when Nigerian pop artists could not record more than a couple thousand album sales, present-day multilingual hip hop artists sell albums to the tune of millions. A major driving force in the increased consumption of the Nigerian hip hop and the attendant high volume of CD sales is the multilingual lyrics.

Owing to the fact that the Nigerian youth consume hip hop and have come to greatly identify with the values that the multilingual music represents, hip hop could serve as a springboard for the government, NGOs, etc., to reach out to youth in ways similar to corporations, which are already tapping into the overwhelming adoption of the music to promote and sell their brands to young people by using the artists in advertising and by sponsoring concerts. The government and NGOs could also appropriate the music to address the youth in the country. Programmes that are targeted toward the youth (such as those related to self-employment, health and healthy living, as well as education) could be channelled through well-known or popular artists. The artists can reach youth/fans more easily and can serve as role models for today's youth; whatever the artists say or do could potentially become more acceptable to the youth. Thus, the government would do well to co-opt multilingual hip hop stars into some of their programmes that are meant for young people in Nigeria.

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Hip-Hop und Mehrsprachigkeit in Nigeria: Zur Erklärung der lokalen Akzeptanz eines globalen Phänomens

Zusammenfassung: Hip-Hop-Musik ist weltweit in einem Maße populär, das die meisten anderen Musikrichtungen übertrifft. Vielleicht hat diese weltweite Beliebtheit dazu geführt, dass rund um den Globus unterschiedliche Formen des Hip-Hop aus dem Boden geschossen sind. Die nigerianische Version dieser Musikrichtung wird von einer überwältigenden Zahl Jugendlicher im Land angenommen, unabhängig von sozialem Status und Religionszugehörigkeit. Es wird jedoch darüber spekuliert, welche Faktoren den jüngsten plötzlichen Boom in dieser Musikrichtung erklären, denn Hip-Hop ist schon seit den 1980er Jahren Teil der nigerianischen Musiklandschaft. Mit Hilfe einer qualitativen Datenerhebung – 30 detaillierte Interviews sowie sechs Interviews mit Schlüsselpersonen unter Hip-Hop-Fans und Club-DJs – kann der Autor die Mehrsprachigkeit als wichtigsten Grund für die Akzeptanz des Hip-Hop unter nigerianischen Jugendlichen ermitteln.

Schlagwörter: Nigeria, Jugendkultur, Mehrsprachigkeit, Hip-Hop