A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PORTABLE'S ZAZOO ZEHH

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Abstract

Language is a tool for negotiating power, and every use of language exhibits this feature. More so is the use of language on a platform that reaches millions of people and is recurrent enough to become part of the repertoire of knowledge of a people, whether consciously or unconsciously, as it often occurs in popular pop songs in Nigeria. The case of Zazoo Zehh by Portable, featuring Olamide and Pocolee, is assessed in this study. The song and its music video are subjected to the methods of critical discourse analysis from a multimodal perspective to identify the features of the use of language in the song and its video, which project the ideologies of the musicians and how power is negotiated in the lyrics. Norman Fairclough's socio-cognitive approach to CDA is adopted for the CDA aspect of the study while social semiosis accounts for the modes available in the data. Findings show a firm assertion of power which is then used to indoctrinate followers into traits and characters that are more evident in society today. These support the speculation that songs like Zazoo Zehh propagate some negative traits among the youth, and language use tends to ascribe some perceived power to those who sing them. It is thus suggested that mechanisms be put in place for stronger censorship to protect the young members of society.

Keywords: *ZazooZehh, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, power, Olamide, Portable*.

Introduction

Fairclough (1992) posits that Discourse incorporates its social contexts; it is modified by power relations, and it bears ideologies. In addition, all discourses, spoken language or text, are multimodal. That is, it is unavoidably and consistently a combination of multiple modes of communication. The speech, the gestures, and other contextual phenomena, as well as every means of disseminating Discourse in physical spaces and all accompanying actions, are essential in meaning-making. (Levine and Scollon, 2004). To be precise, a multimodal approach is invaluable in decoding meaning from text. Discourses such as music and their music videos should thus be interrogated at a multimodal level to uncover the ideologies of the musician and appreciate his strategy of negotiating power or its abuse.

Music plays many roles in human society. Amongst these is its ability to communicate or reveal events in society from where the singer emanates. Such revelations are pointers to what may be needed to embrace or jettison. More critical to social cohesion are the ideologies propagated in songs, as every society is presumed to be desirous of a rational atmosphere. Music should be critically examined because popular songs reach a large section of society, and the ideologies they project could spread very quickly. Thus, the paper presents a multimodal critical discourse analysis of one of the most popular songs in 2023, Portable's Zazoo Zehoo, sung by Habeeb Okikiola (Portable) and released in December 2021. Portable collaborated with Olamide Adedeji (Badoo) and Poco Lee on the Hip hop hit song. According to Tade (2022), these songs have become an essential data source for analysing social conditions as they signpost the good, unveil the bad and hint at a gloomier/promising future. The analysis thus aims to unveil how these hip-hop singers deconstruct esoteric codes in human communication and relationships through their song's theme.

Functions of Music in Society

According to Word Press (2017), music plays the following roles in society.

- **Entertainment**- A significant function of music is to get people entertained. Get them away from depression and challenges of the society.
- **Communication**: Much communication occurs in language. Singers do give motivational messages which may uplift listeners. Messages on the realities of our times may also be communicated. However, negative messages may also be conveyed, which can affect listeners and, by extension, society negatively. As a form of communication, music can shape human behaviour as it impacts emotions.
- **Uplifting of singers' status:** Because songs travel fast, especially with the use of social media, it is not surprising that many singers become overnight celebrities and get easily known and celebrated, and some end up becoming role models in society.
- **Music and Politics**- Songs and music are employed by politicians to sway electorates. They are also used by the government that be to retain the loyalty of the citizens
- **Music and education**: - Music has been used severally by teachers to convey messages to enhance learning. We all remember our Popular Nursery rhymes and songs, e.g. "Bata Mi adu kokoka", and they can be effectively used to teach diverse aspects of the curriculum
- **Music and ceremonies:** - Music and ceremonies, most often than not, go hand in hand as feelings conveyed in songs are to be in sync or tune with the event. Proper use of songs at ceremonies, therefore, contributes to its success

Critical Discourse Analysis

Every use of language is a negotiation of power (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). The tendency for power abuse and domination through language is thus possible and often subtly explored. Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA) is dedicated to uncovering such abuse of power through language use. Three prominent approaches to doing CDA have been developed by Ruth Wodak, van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. Wodak developed the Discourse-Historical Approach which is hinged on the belief that historical information is inevitable in the analysis and interpretation of any written or spoken text (Wodak, 1995). In the view of van Dijk (1998a), CDA as a field that studies and analyses written and spoken texts with the aim of identifying the discursive sources of inequality, power, and dominance and how they are engaged in specific social, political and historical contexts.

Fairclough's CDA, which is adopted in this study aims to systematically explore opaque relationships between discursive practices, events and texts on the one hand and the broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes on the other; to investigate how they are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). This is apt to the present study as it is essentially an interrogation of how society has created the ideologies of the musicians and this has resulted in their struggles for power and domination by expressing their ideologies through music.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

A more robust means of analysing language to capture visual dimensions of meaning-making is developed in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). O‟ Halloran (2004:1) posits that MDA is a shift of focus in linguistic enquiry from isolated language use to an investigation of meaning as it arises from "the integrated use of semiotic resources‟ such as gesture, images, scientific symbols, action, sound and music. (Kress, 2009).

This model promises to provide a valid analysis of new forms of discourse that have gradually acquired popularity due to advances in technology, art, and other forms of expression. In this sense, O'Halloran (2011: 120) believes that Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) "extends the exclusive study of language to the

study of language in combination with other resources, like images, gesture, scientific symbolism, action, sound, and music. In this way, every resource intended to transmit meaning may be thoroughly analyzed. This telnet of multimodality makes it appropriate for the study which is a multimodal critical discourse analysis of a hip-hop song. Bell (2002) States that the approach provides a systematic way of studying the language and different semiotic modes like images, photographs, diagrams or graphics in a media text. To Bilig (2003), it includes the analysis of communication in all its forms. It examines the different modes of a media text and how they function together.

The Musician

The text and video of the song, Zazoo Zehh, are the focus of this study. The song is credited to Portable, also known as Omolalomi, "son of Shaku Shaku, Street Problem & Wahala Musician" (Boomplay, 2021). Habeeb Okikiola (portable) was born on March 12, 1994, in Ogun State, Nigeria, and had been into music for about ten years before his breakthrough, which was linked to his recognition by Olamide and the release of Zazoo Zehh single. The song features Poco Lee and Olamide and quickly became a hit in Nigeria and abroad. The use of language in the song is worthy of close examination as its popularity empowers it to form opinions in its listeners, mainly the youth and children. It is coded in a manner that makes the message relatively obscure to a casual listener. The title is an example.

Zazoo Zehh

According to Wikilyrics (2021), the term 'Zazoo' has a meaning related to tough lives, robbing and sex. It may mean 'to steal,' e.g. '*they don zazu my phone'* (my phone has been stolen) or *'I want to zazu that girl"* (I want to have fun with the girl). 'Zeh' also means "happen" or "make things happen", as in "Ogo Forever", another song by portable, where he sang: 'Iyanuti zeh o' (Miracle has happened o).

"Zeh" is also used as a refrain in the lines of the lyrics of the song to create a rhythm, as shown in the intro:

Ara adugbo (Zehh)
Tuntun ti de oh (Zehh)
Zazoo (Zehh)
O por l'eti (Zehh)
O ye k'eti magbo (Zehh)
Portable Baddo gbemi trabaye (Zehh)

Data Analysis

The meanings of the title of the song run through its lyrics, and its contextualisation in the video leaves little doubt that there is a call to violence in Zazoo Zehh, as exemplified in these lines of the song:

Lyrics (in Yoruba)	**English Translation**
Kala (Zehh)	Be callous
Daju (Zehh)	Be heartless
Wu'wa ika (Zehh)	Perform act of wickedness!

The dynamism of language is extensively explored in the song. The title could thus have been influenced by the preponderant use of the words in the streets. This notwithstanding, with the rise to fame of the singer and, by extension, the song, it will not be surprising to find the various uses of the word to show exclamation, depict an act of foolishness and to mean the varieties of meanings attached to them in the song. These coinages could gain enough users to become part of the list of vocabularies of Nigeria Pidgin.

Structure

The song could be sectioned into three parts, each of which is sung by the three musicians it features. The first part could be tagged "introduction"; it is performed by Poco Lee. The second part is performed by Olamide and could be tagged "Takeover Speech", while the third part is performed by Portable and could be tagged

"Zaazoo". Part 1 consists of six lines, and it is the shortest part of the song. Part 2 comprises 25
short lines, many of which are single words apart from the Zehh after each line. Part 3 is the longest part of the song, comprising 81 lines.

The Message

The three parts into which the song is divided here contain different messages.

Part 1. Introduction (Poco Lee)

This is the shortest verse of the song. It features Poko Lee, who beckons unto his audience and co–singers Portable and Baddo (Olamide) and they are called upon to listen to a trending/new song.





Image 1: (Poko Lee beckoning on the people); **Image** 2: (A crowd gathers)

Ara adugbo (Zehh)
Tuntun ti de oh (Zehh)

While doing this, he goes on to qualify the song as nice to be heard (Opor leti)
and so popular that they must have heard about it (Oyeketi ma gbo). The introductory aspect is ended by calling unto his co-singers to join him.

This introductory verse bears the semblance of a typical structure of Yoruba traditional Song performances in which

introductory songs involve singers asking the audience to come out and listen to them.

Part 2. Takeover Speech (Olamide)

This part begins with a description of the context, culminating in the declaration: "*Many many werey wa nle* "(very many mad ones abound). These (Many many werey) are described as:

Unruly (Zehh) (unruly)

Baddo Lee (Zehh) (rugged / bad)

Several coinages are also used to describe the "many many werey". They include *"Azaralilu, Mofo's, Bitch, Hacher, Gaza*", which were mentioned in different lines of this part. These are mentioned in manners that suggest they are used to refer to certain kinds of people.

This suggests that this part of the song highlights the decadence in society and that there is a need to get the atmosphere disrupted (*Ah ba'be je*). To survive in such a society, the song issues directives on what to do, as presented in the table below.

Lyrics (in Yoruba)	**English Translation**
Eje l'oju bi ti Abacha (Zehh)	Red eyeballs like Abacha (Abacha was a despotic Nigerian military dictator)
Ru'oju pa (Zehh)	Frown completely
Le oju pa (Zehh)	Harden your look
Ma rerin (Zehh)	Don't smile
Kala (Zehh)	Be callous
Daju (Zehh)	Be heartless
Wu'wa ika (Zehh)	behave wickedly

These sum up as directing all the people to toughen up and get wicked.

Part 3. Zaazoo (Portable)

This is the longest part of the song performed by Portable, who states that the song is meant to, or the singer sings to cause confusion (orinnimo fin daru). He is a scammer (yahoo boy).

However, unlike the well-known ones, he has no laptop (yahoo boy no laptop), thus referring to a pervasive evil of happenings of acts of yahoo boys in the present Nigerian society.

People are also called upon to desist from acting like fools (Ye ma shebi zule zoo) and not misbehave (malo zeze kuze o). Of course, this form of misdemeanour refers to not conforming to the negativities

Portable also calls himself the mad singer (Emini werey Olorin) who causes confusion (wey ton damuadugbo mi), a problem-causing musician (Wahala Musician).

Reference is also made to the rich young chap (Omodeolowo) who acquires his wealth through money-making rituals (won ni o ti she's ho), and the speaker recommends the need to get involved in such money making rituals (boy a ke lo se oguniseooo) and these pieces of information are repeated most likely for the sake of emphasis and the need to ensure the message sinks and further exposes the belief or state of mind of the singer.

It is interesting to note that reference was made to Jesus Christ in 'Iku to pa Jesu O' (Christ's Death) ….' Wonri settle' (the mystery or problem is yet to be unravelled). Here, one may explain this to mean that there exist several mysteries and troubles which cannot be solved in Nigerian society, and hence the problems continue. Moreso, it was said that 'Esu ole koleti Jesu' (the devil cannot co-exist with Jesus), a famous saying and song among Yoruba Christians, shows that Christ Jesus is supernatural, powerful, and so cannot be overshadowed by the devil or its cohorts. However, here, it may be interpreted to mean that the singer is referring to the fact that he is also powerful and cannot be overcome by his enemies.

Use of Language

Language use in the song reveals the multilingual nature of the singers, the audience, the creation or coining of new words, and the use of language among street boys.

Use of Yoruba

Ara- Adugbo- People in the neighbourhood
Tuntun ti de o – A new thing has arrived
Oyeke ti mi magbo – You should have heard about it
Je ka jo see o (let us do it together)
Sho gbo ko gbagidi (Listen, this does not require stubbornness). Etc. One feature of the Yoruba language in this song is the repetition of "o", e.g. Poko Tua yooo".

However, there is a need to note the spellings of some Yoruba words in a pretty different form, e.g. 'were' (mad individual) is spelt as 'werey'. This Anglicization of Yoruba words has been observed in name-calling and recent lexical words on social media.

Apart from the change in the spelling of words, there is also meaning extension from the typical Yoruba usage e.g

"Opor" – (instead of Opo)

Which is anglicized with the addition of "r" at the end "Opo"- (many, plenty.") Opor in this context is used as "Opor leti"
(beautiful to hear or containing beautiful lyrics"). "Opor" is often used as an exclamation in reference to an individual's body part, which seems bigger than usual.

There is also a preponderance use of code–switching/code–mixing. For example:

"Many, many werey wanle" (there are several mad
individuals around),
"On my way to Ilu awon wosu" (on my way to Osu town or the town of Osu)
"set awonwere ni jo" (a group of mad dancers)
"Portable le mi oo, son of Shaku Shaku: (I am Portable, the son of Shaku Shaku).

Noticeable is also the use of Nigerian pidgin, a popular street language in Nigeria which should make the song accessible and acceptable to all e.g.

"Yahoo boy no laptop" (I am a yahoo boy (scammer) but do not use a laptop).
"Pocolee a bad dancer" (Pocolee is a bad dancer)

"Wey dey damu adugbo mi (that get my neighbourhood disrupted
"who dey" who dey? (who is there ? Who is there?)
As a Popular Street Song, it is not surprising that there is the use of street language and coinages to which only the initiates or gangsters can decode
"Mofos cannot keep up" (fools cannot understand)
"chain ti mo wo is a gadun"
(the chain I use is great.)
"Ni ilu awon osu" (in the town of Osu

Coinages

The song features a dense use of coinages. This hints at the possibility that the lyrics emanated from a close circuit of street buys among whom these coinages have developed and have gained meanings with which they exclude people outside their group. Some of the coinages include "*Zazoo, trabaye, Azarailu, Mofo's,* Bizzuah bizzuah, *kolu, gawu, Koko tua, Pepe Sneh, me me me*", "Zeh" (indeed these) repetition of "Zeh" almost throughout the song create lyrics. Others are " PocoTuah; "Zazu zeh", Bizau bizau, Pocotu ah meh mehmeh"

The Video



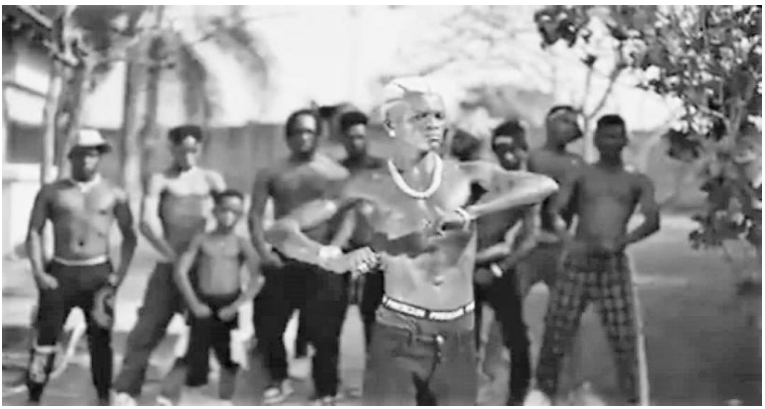
The video affirms the violence expounded in the song. The introductory part features Poco Lee driving a car fixed with two horn speakers to an empty street and climbing on it to call out to the people.He introduces the song, and the people who raced to the car gathered around to watch a broadcast of General Badoo on an old-fashioned Box TV placed in the boot of the car.

A semiotic analysis of this image from the video casts one's mind back to when Nigeria experienced such military incursion into governance. Other images of the past are found in the model of the car, the model of the Television, a box TV, the idea of gathering to watch important telecasts and the scene of a general addressing the nation surrounded by the paraphernalia of the office of the president. The scene thus suggests an announcement of a military takeover where the people are called to listen to a takeover speech. This leads to part 2 of the song, which we have tagged Takeover Speech.



In this part, Olamide is dressed in military gear with the name tag: "Gen. Badoo". He is reading a script. Behind him on both sides are two flags of Nigeria and the Nigerian national crest centred on the oak-coloured wall behind him. In this position, he sings his lines in a live broadcast as indicated at the top right corner of the screen. His dark glasses and posture remind the average Nigerian of General Sanni Abacha, who was perceived as a dictator in his time.

Unsmiling, Gen. Badoo describes scenarios which were promptly enacted by the crowd gathered with Poco Lee on the street. This scene is a strong negotiation of power in the song. A military general is powerful and the general has added the powers of the position of the president. This power and influence is demonstrated in the prompt adherence to his directives in the speech.



The rest of the video features more of dances. The dance steps continue to reflect the directives of General Badoo. No smiles, no smooth dance steps. The common posture of the characters is flexing muscles and squeezing faces. Also depicted are acts of wrestling/boxing to show the troubled nature of society and wrapped in different dance styles and dressing/hairdo, which would appeal to youths. They may imbibe some of these negative characteristics. The characters in this slide are dressed in trousers without any top wears. The pose they strike speaks of victory of the mob. Another message revealed is the need to be tough and toughened to survive in the land of Ozu and, by extension, in Nigeria.

People's Perception of the Song

In a bid to have a more straightforward interpretation of this song, the writers surveyed people's perception of the song both online and physically Sanu (2021) in Punch News wrote an article stating

how the song made Portable (Habeeb Okikiola) rise from grass to grace for indeed from December 2021 when the song was released, little less to nothing was known about the singer. Indeed, someone said it is a message of 'Hope' as someone can rise from oblivion to fame as a result of a happening, event or song.

Online reviewers in Linda Ikeji's blog also spoke about the singer's rise to fame. Someone specifically said Yorubas assist in making their singers rise as they ensure they listen to such songs and promote them. Tade (2022), in his article "Money Ritual in Nigeria's Zazoo Republic", stated amongst others that the song presents to us a sad tale of Nigeria's contemporary reality in which the ruler "General Badoo Lee, whose body language encourages deviant and criminal behaviours. He admonished the need to incentivize positive values and clear our airwaves of morally bankrupt songs. Also, some online critics and our interaction stated that the song was just lyrics without any message.

Implications of The Song

As earlier stated, song lyrics have several implications/functions in society.

Moral `Implications: - The song has been able to celebrate diverse negative aspects that may further worsen Nigeria's moral situation. As earlier discussed, the song celebrates acts of ritualists, yahoo boys, wickedness, and unholy acts, which may make the society worsened noticeable, is the nonverbal aspect of the song revealed by the dressing of the key singer Portable and others.

When the youth imbibes these negative traits, our culture and values will be further eroded. Hence, it is recommended that there should be proper censorship of songs before they are allowed to be released.

Linguistic Implications: - A lot has been said about the use of language in the song. Apart from revealing the use of language in the society (Yoruba, code–mixing/code–switching pidgin), which makes the songs true to life, we have also observed a change in the

spelling and meaning of Yoruba words like "Opor" (Instead of Opo) and "Werey" (instead of were)- This further reveals the dynamism of language and a projection to the fact that the orthography of Yoruba language is changing. The use of Patois or street language is also observed, which can only be easily decoded by the initiates. It may be necessary to do further analysis of such usage.

Implications of Collaboration: As already known by many, this present song shot up/brought up Portable, the relatively unknown singer, to the limelight. It goes to show the importance of collaborating with well know singers like Pocolee and Badoo.

Conclusion:

In this paper, we have done a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Portable's Zazoo Zehh. The concern of the study is the power to spread the ideologies of the musicians through the use of language on a platform (music) that reaches millions of people. As a hit song, listening to it could be recurrent enough to make the lyrics become part of the repertoire of knowledge of the people, whether consciously or unconsciously. During the creativity of the musicians in language use and their exploration of the dynamism of language through coinages, code-mixing, code-switching and other linguistic features, Findings support the speculation that songs like Zazoo zeh propagate some negative traits, especially among the youths. While it might be argued that there might be a positive message encoded in the lyrics and video of this song lend itself to easy interpretation.

While creativity is encouraged among the youth, they must be sensitized into understanding that attaining stardom places powers in their hands which must be guided by civil responsibilities. In addition, the effort of television and radio stations to cut down the spread of songs with the potential for negative impact by giving them little or no airplay is being defeated by internet resources and cable television and radio

stations. Mechanisms should thus be put in place for stronger censorship to protect the young members of society.

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