Indigenous Languages and Literatures in African Music in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined indigenous languages and literatures in African music in Nigeria. It is impossible to sufficiently emphasize the importance of language for communication and the ways in which people use it to communicate their ideas, feelings, thoughts, culture, and identities. The English language now enjoys the distinction of being the universal language, utilized in every aspect of life on a worldwide scale. Languages used in administration, education, commerce, trade, music, and entertainment all use the English language. Given that Nigeria is a multilingual and multicultural nation, English is well-positioned to serve as the lingua franca that unites speakers of the numerous indigenous languages. The multilingual environment in Nigeria has caused many speakers to switch between speaking English and at least one native language when interacting. Nigerian musicians, in particular, and African musicians in general, heavily utilize this sociolinguistic phenomenon. This paper therefore, focuses on the positive attitudes of African culture and identity by Nigerian/African music entertainers through the process of mixing of the indigenous languages with literatures in African music in Nigeria. The study investigates the trend in the music industry where almost all the young artistes use the indigenous languages alongside the literatures in African music to express the positive values and principles inherent in African culture. In fact, this creative trend in language use has greatly impacted the global media. Language and culture are interconnected. Language is an instrument of thought and helps to explore, discover and record the experiences in

a culture. Significantly, it is observed that the blend of two codes (two languages) in music helps the artistes and their listeners alike to emphasize their identities; and for us as a people to forestall the death of our indigenous languages vis-à-vis the growth and expansion of indigenous languages.

Keywords: Indigenous languages, sociolinguistic code mixing, Nigerian/African music, lingual-cultural identity

Introduction

Although Africa is the cradle of humanity and has contributed much to the literature and history of human life on earth, not much attention has been paid to the literary texture of African music in Nigeria. It is within this context that scholars are required to conduct research on literary activities in music to demonstrate the influence of oral literature on African music. The situation has been so dire that severe neglect even greeted the research on the music of elites in the period of colonial rule, well known as school composers. This neglect is quite surprising because the colonial approach to the composition of music became the nucleus for demanding nationhood from the colonial government. Similarly, current discourse on composition taught in our tertiary institutions directs students to scripts of Western musical notations, thereby giving the impression of African music as mere sound that lacks cultural background Omoniyi (2006).

This seeks to demonstrate a link between music and literature, which can enhance an improved status when it comes to literature. The main thrust of this work is to explore the relationship between African music and indigenous African languages and literature and to show that the texts of a sizable proportion of the repertoires of music in Nigeria depend on oral literature. Davies & Bentaliha (2008) posited in the past suggested that the bulk of the thousand songs of folk literature are from other people of the world and not far away from us, which makes much in the music of their own people. The question one asks is: why do Nigerian composers of Western classical music, especially school composers of the 40s, 50s, and 60s, compose very little for instruments other than the piano, violin, and organ, and why is it that our present-day composers of Western classical music prefer to write sound music rather than the musical texture of the rich cultural landscape of their

environment? Thus, the purpose was to show that literature is present in every kind of music in Nigeria but has been greatly neglected. The relationship extends from classical to the light music of created present-day Nigerian music in its popular forms. The literature of the different groups in Nigeria is reflected in their music. In other words, Nigerian music of various kinds is part of the universal system of oral literature, utilizing varied texts to communicate specific sound ideals Weinrech (2006).

Background of Indigenous Languages and Literatures in Nigeria

The importance of knowing and understanding one's indigenous language cannot be overemphasized. A dead culture breeds knowledge loss. It is not surprising, therefore, that indigenous languages and literatures have been venerated and sung in prose, drama, poetry, music, dance, and even viewed in major philosophical works. This treatment must simply be a response to the problems confronting indigenous languages and literatures, a response shown by any nation that appreciates the salutary impact of indigenous cultures, languages, and literatures on national growth and profitability and, also, on human development. In Nigeria, as in the case of many African countries, each ethnic group has its indigenous language and traditional culture. In Nigeria as a whole, English and Hausa are used as national languages, while the vernacular is encouraged within the various ethnic groups. Nevertheless, due to language contact, many Nigerians can speak more than one language, their local languages included.

Similarly, in the context of indigenous literature, different linguistic and cultural communities have their own unique oral tradition that promotes and reflects a highly developed and complex system of philosophy, illustrating what is, valuing what if, and driving people's behaviours and interactions through practices and modes. It is sad to notice that civilization does more to kill than to safeguard indigenous languages and literatures, which promote critical thinking, integrate knowledge, live in the community and learn through experience, address important issues, solve problems, heal emotional and psychological wounds, and preserve the heritage and traditions of indigenous communities. The European educational system was introduced to Nigeria through colonial rule and ensued the suppression and neglect of indigenous languages and literatures. Adding salt

to injury, the colonial masters, obscurely or otherwise, represented us negatively, while they presented themselves as superior (Ayeomoni (2006).

Significance of Music in African Culture

The music of Africa's indigenous populations is known as traditional African music. Africa's music can be divided into geographical categories, however the emphasis is frequently on the individual artist rather than on particular ethnic groupings. African cultures are rich in musical traditions that have been passed down through the decades. Africans have historically and now used traditional music to convey messages, tell tales, and give events perspective and meaning. Examples of this include song and dance, as well as poetry and narrative set to music. Religious rituals, marriages, and funerals are among the unique occasions when traditional music is frequently played.

Historical Overview of Nigerian Music

Nigerian music history dates back to the early days of human civilization, with conventional people and tribal music playing a major part in different ceremonies. Over time, it has advanced from these impacts to incorporate an assortment of classes, counting hip-hop, R&B, reggae, jazz, and Afrobeat. Within the 1970s and 1980s, artists started to join more universal styles into their music, making a interesting sound not at all like anything. Nowadays, Nigerian music is one of Africa’s most prevalent and persuasive sorts, with craftsmen like Wizkid, Davido, and Burna Boy driving the way. The evolution of Nigerian music could be a confirmation to its inventiveness and remaining control because it proceeds to rehash itself with each era (Noh, 2024).

Conventional music in Nigeria

A vital component of Nigeria's social legacy is traditional music. It has evolved over many ages and has been around for centuries. Nigerian traditional music is distinguished by its intriguingly rebellious, unique rhythms, and strong vocals.

Conventional music was once used to transmit wisdom, morals, and anecdotes from one generation to the next. These days, it's still a helpful means of communication and is frequently used to commemorate important events like marriages, anniversaries, and funerals.

Nigerian traditional music mostly features vocals, intricate rhythms, and powerful harmonies. Well-known rebellious items include bells, shakers, and talking drums. These disobedient are frequently mixed together to create a convoluted and enthralling sound.

The verses of conventional melodies are regularly soaked in imagery, with each word carrying a profound meaning. These songs regularly bring communities together, share stories, and celebrate critical minutes in life.

Conventional music in Nigeria may be an energetic and ever-changing craftsmanship frame. As the nation proceeds to develop and create, so as well does its conventional music. Through its music, Nigeria has been able to specify its culture's lavishness and keep its special history lively.

Nigerian music has changed a lot from its old folk style. Over time, Nigerian musicians have tried using Western instruments and styles in their music. This created a new type of music called Afrobeat in the 1960s. In the 1970s, musicians like Fela Kuti started adding social and political messages to their music, which created a new type of music called Afrofunk.

In the 1980s, musicians from Nigeria started to use more electronic music and mix in other types of music like hip hop, highlife, and R&B. This made Nigerian music sound even more different, creating a special style that is now famous worldwide. Today, music from Nigeria keeps changing and mixing different styles to make something fresh and cool. Even though Nigerian music is still influenced by tradition, the musicians are now trying out different styles, which is making Nigerian music more varied than ever. Nigerian music has changed a lot over the years, from Afrobeat to hip-hop and R&B. Now, it's very popular and has a big influence on music all over the world.

Globalisation, Global Media and Nigerian Music

Globalisation involves the multiple linkages and interconnectedness that surpass the nation states and builds up to the modern world system. The advancement in technology and the social media has offered a lot of people a window into exploring people's diverse music and culture. According to

Giddens (1990), globalisation is ―the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa‖. Similarly, Akindele (2007), defines globalisation as the process of intensifying economic, political, and cultural relations across international boundaries.

The global media has been equipped to transmit information, entertainment, music and general knowledge across territorial boundaries and the entire world. Through the engine of globalization such as computer/internet communication, satellite cable television programmes and so on, Nigerian music and entertainment is steadily gaining global recognition.

The Nigerian music is making a remarkable inroads on the international scene and has increasingly attracted the admiration of the global media. The music has become more attractive to larger audience. For instance, the song ―Ojuelegba‖ by Wizkid can be mistaken for a street in the UK judging from the number of times it is being played in club houses. In fact, it is a common occurrence seeing Nigerian music entertainers perform in international concerts, festivals and shows.

In a bid to relive their lingual-cultural identity, Nigerians in diaspora interact and interrelate through the instrument of music rendered in blends of English, Nigerian Pidgin English and the Nigeria's indigenous languages during traditional/cultural events such as Marriage ceremony, Naming ceremony, New yam festivals, Cultural Days and so on. These group of people have sustained their interest by listening to Nigerian music as well as propagating it in the global media.

Conclusion

Nigerian music has had several transformations throughout its lengthy and vibrant history. Ancient folk music has given way to contemporary genres including Afrobeat, Hi-life, Fuji, Juju, and others. Despite the fact that music has improved over time, many labels are producing lower-quality music because more people are requesting it and because streaming services are growing in popularity.

This has made it more difficult for music lovers to identify and locate their favorite songs. To address this issue, record labels ought to focus on producing higher-quality music and offering it on streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+, much like they do with films. This will guarantee that listeners may enjoy music that lives up to their expectations while remaining authentically Nigerian.

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