

## **A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF COME AND SEE MY MODA BY MZ VEE AND YEMI ALADE**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is a sociolinguistic analysis of the lyrics of Come and See My Moda by Mz Vee and Yemi Alade and the aim is to explicate the lyrics of the song toward identifying some sociolinguistic features used in the text to indicate social identity. The paper is anchored on Social Identity Theory. The lyrics of the song served as primary source of data and the linguistic features which the artistes called together to express aspect of social identity were identified and analysed one after the other. The paper observed that the various linguistic variables in Come and See My Moda, used to indicate the speakers' social factors are; discourse particles, dislocations of words, repetition of words, pidgin and code mixing and the artistes have creatively used them to demarcate and to show the interplay of gender identity. Besides, gender is an important social variable for a better understanding of the structure of language because it improves language through choice of codes, discourse particles, repetition and other linguistic communicative features. The paper concluded that Sociolinguistics investigates the relationship between language and society, and within any given society, there are social variables like family, age, gender, occupation, class and so on. Being that no society exists without a language; certain linguistic variables are used in discourse to reflect these social variables. Mz Vee and Yemi Alade have exploited these linguistic features through the medium of song in order to indicate their social identity.*

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, Identity, Lyrics, and Language

### **Introduction**

Lyrics of songs by most contemporary African musicians contain registers which denigrate the female folks in relationships. For example, Dagrín's use of *kondo*, Timaya and Machel Montano's use of *all my ladies shake yuh bum bum*, and Dareystel's use of *shake ya Booty* have shown that the lyrics of contemporary artistes are characterised by amorous registers which under-represent the female folks. Just as no writer writes in a vacuum, no artiste sings in a vacuum too. It is the practical social life that influence and manifest in their lyrics in order to satisfy societal demands. However, using the same sociolinguistic features, Ghanaian Mz Vee and Nigerian Yemi Alade (2018) have rebutted in *Come and See My Moda* by implying that although women possess qualitative and scintillating

structures to the admiration of men who in turn desire to have a feel, this can only be achieved by first seeking the consent of their parents. Furthermore, this paper examines how language use and features of language such as code mixing, pidgin, dislocation of words, discourse particles and repetition of words reflect social identity using the lyrics of *Come and See My Moda*.

According to Dunbar (1996), music and language help humans knit together in social groups. Music has an extraordinary power not only to evoke emotion, but also to bind people into a social group. When we think of our feelings at times of group singing such as the National Anthem, singing in church, mosques, campfire, carol, etc., it is not the music that we sing, it is the words –lyrics that we voice and the message they convey that propel us to become patriotic, repentant, and happy. This means that music **contain socio-political, socio-religious as well as sociolinguistic contents**. It is against this background that this paper explicates the use of language in *Come and See My Moda* in order to examine the interplay of gender as a social variable.

### **A Brief Background of *Come and See My Moda***

*Come and See My Moda* is a song by Ghanaian Mz Vee and Nigerian Yemi Alade, produced in Ghana in 2018 by Kuami Eugene and Richie Mensah. The lyrics address the theme of love affair generally alongside other social issues which characterise the Ghanaian and Nigerian contemporary societies. These are issues that have negative impact on these societies whereby the male folks are desirous of the female folks yet not willing to observe the necessary traditional obligations rather, they prefer to offer money to ladies in exchange of their bodies only to dismiss them afterwards. Sometimes the outcome is unwanted pregnancy leading to abortion and death, or projection of unwanted babies who later constitute social problems like kidnapping, armed robbery as well as other social vices. The lyricists advise the male folks to always make relationships official by meeting the parents of any lady they profess love to as money is not everything. The second important concern of the lyrics is the virtues of mothers as well as the underlying supremacy of wives over their husbands in choice of partners for their children. In addition, the text emphasises the religious degree with which daughters uphold their mothers' instructions toward relationships and marriage as women of quality.

## **Methodology**

Data were drawn from the lyrics of *Come and See My Moda* which was downloaded from the internet and the framework for analysis centred on the explication of linguistic features such as code-mixing, pidgin, discourse particles, repetition and dislocation of words to indicate social identity among the various social variables in Ghana and Nigeria. The song, *Come and See My Moda* exists in musical and lyrical forms. The musical form is rendered through the medium of organised sound with such common elements as pitch, melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, meter, and articulation performed with instruments and vocal techniques; while the lyrical form is textual. Songs could be analysed either musically or lyrically. This study is not about the sound pattern of the song; therefore the musical aspect which includes pitch and articulation is not the concern of this paper. This paper is delimited to the lyrical aspect of the song.

## **Review of Related Literature**

**Sociolinguistics** is the interface between language and society since it studies the sociological aspects of language. It is concerned with the part language plays in maintaining the social roles in a community. Influences on the choice of words, sounds, grammatical elements, and vocabulary items may include such factors as age, sex, education, occupation, race, and peer-group identification, among others. Holmes (2008) avers that sociolinguists are interested in explaining why we speak in different social contexts, and they are concerned with the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and all the way people signal aspects of their social identity through their language. Certain social factors are important in accounting for language choice in many speech communities. These social factors in code choice include Participants, setting, and function. For example, an American English speaker may use such forms as “He don’t know nothing” or “He doesn’t know anything,” depending on such considerations as his level of education, race, social class or consciousness, or the effect he wishes to produce on the person he is addressing.

The particular dialect or language that a person chooses to use on any occasion is a code, a system used for communication between two or more parties. It is usual for a speaker to have command of, or use, only one such code or system. Command of only a single variety of language, whether it is a dialect, style, or register, would appear to be an extremely rare phenomenon, one likely to

occasion comment. Most speakers command several varieties of any language they speak, and bilingualism, even multilingualism, is the norm for many people throughout the world rather than unilingualism. People are required to choose a particular code whenever they decide to speak, and they may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes even within sometimes very short utterances and thereby create a new code called code-switching. Code-switching, also known as code-mixing can occur in conversation between speakers' turns or within a single speaker's turn. In the latter case, it can occur inter-sententially or intra-sententially. To alternate codes can arise from individuals' choice or be used as a major identity marker for a group of speakers who must deal with more than one language in their common pursuits.

Gal (1998, p.247) says "codeswitching is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligation." In multilingual countries like Nigeria and Ghana, the ability to shift from one language to another is accepted as quite normal even in music. In linguistics, code-switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Multilingual, speakers of more than one language, sometimes use elements of multiple languages when conversing with each other. Thus, code-switching is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of each variety. Code-switching is distinct from other language contact phenomena, such as borrowing, pidgins and creoles, loan translation (calques), and language transfer (language interference). Borrowing affects the lexicon, the words that make up a language, while code-switching takes place in individual utterances. Speakers form and establish a pidgin language when two or more speakers who do not speak a common language form an intermediate, third language. On the other hand, speakers practice code-switching when they are each fluent in both languages.

Code mixing is a thematically related term, but the usage of the terms *code-switching* and *code-mixing* varies. Some scholars use either term to denote the same practice, while others apply *code-mixing* to denote the formal linguistic properties of language-contact phenomena and *code-switching* to denote the actual, spoken usages by multilingual persons. Code-mixing is similar to the use or creation of pidgins; but while a pidgin is created across groups that do not share a common language, code-mixing may occur within a multilingual setting where speakers share more than one language. Consequently code-mixing is a compulsory consequence of bilingualism and multilingualism. It is the placing or

mixing of various linguistic units (affixes, words, phrases, clauses) from two different grammatical systems within the same sentence and speech context.

In the words of Prasad (2008), the purpose of code mixing seems to be to symbolise a somewhat ambiguous situation for which neither of the languages can be quite right. It is a kind of linguistic cocktail in which few words of one language and a few from others, and again a few from the former and a few from the later and so on, mix up. The changes generally take place more or less randomly.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is hinged on Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. It has a considerable impact on social psychology. It has also been tested in a wide range of fields and settings including prejudice, stereotyping, and language use. Tajfel & Turner (1979) proposed that the groups (eg. social class, family, dialect groups, etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self esteem. As a result, it gives us a sense of social identity as well as a sense of belonging to the social world. Therefore in order to increase our self-image, we either enhance the status of the group we belong or discriminate and hold prejudice views against the “out-group”. Consequently, we divide the world into “them” and “us” based through a process of social categorization which implies putting people into social groups known as in-group (us) and out-group (them).

The basic assumption of the theory is that group members of an in-group will seek negative aspects of an out-group through discrimination and prejudiced remarks in order to enhance their self image. Such prejudiced views between cultures could result in racism (anti-Semitism and Xenophobic tendency) and the extreme form of racism has resulted in genocide in Germany with the Jews, in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis, in the former Yugoslavia between the Bosnians and Serbs, in Nigeria between Modakeke and Ife, Ijaw and Itshekiri. Following Tajfel and Turner (1979), stereotyping is based on a normal cognitive process. We have the tendency to group things together and while doing this, we exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities of things in the group. According to them, three cognitive processes are involved in evaluating others as “us” or “them’ (i.e. “in-group” and “out-group”). These are social categorization, social identification and social comparison.

In stage one, we categorize people, including ourselves, in order to comprehend the social environment be it Christian/Muslim, migrants/landowners, central language/dialects, blacks/whites, etc. If we can assign people to a category, then we can tell things about them. In the second stage, we adopt the identity of the category we have categorized ourselves to belong. For instance, if we categorize ourselves as Muslims, we begin to adopt the identity of a Muslim and start to act in the ways we believe Muslims act and conform to the norms of the group. We also lace our emotions to the identified group as our self-esteem is bound up with the group membership. Finally, having categorized and identified ourselves with a group, we then tend to compare that group with other groups. Our own group must compete favourably with other groups if we must maintain our self-esteem. Competition and hostility between two rival groups is not only an issue of competing for resources but also of competing identities.

### **Presentation of Data and Analysis**

In *Come and See My Moda*, various linguistic variables have been used to reflect social factors such as ethnicity, social background, age and gender. These linguistic variables which indicate aspect of the artistes' social identity are: dislocation of words, Pidgin, repetition of words, code mixing and discourse particles.

Dislocation is the displacement of something from its usual or proper position. The use of the words like "Mr Chairman", "Oga Land Lord", "Maradona", and "Local Official" in *Come and See My Moda* is a good example of dislocation of words. The use of the phrases "Mr Chairman" and "Oga Landlord" to refer to the suitor signifies the conduct of Nigerian politicians to the female folks in the 21st century political power play. This is a form of dislocation of words from politics to love affair. The word *Maradona* is dislocated from the field of football as the best world number ten (10) footballer known for dribbling, to love affair denoting treachery. It refers to the male folks in society flirts who ogle ladies around. It describes how politicians deceive different young ladies in town; "everyday na so so sisi o", "everyday na different specie o of different sisi o". These phrases have been dislocated in line with the basic assumption of Social Identity Theory that group members of an in-group will seek negative aspects of an out-group through discrimination and prejudiced remarks in order to enhance their self image.

In multilingual countries like Nigeria and Ghana with many varieties of codes to choose from, the choice of Pidgin signals the sociolinguistic background of the

artistes, that is why Vee and Alade's choice of pidgin in expressing social realities is an indicator that they product of similar linguistic background in which Pidgin is the most comfortable vehicle of communication. Pidgin conveys sociocultural information to listeners who share similar sociolinguistic background as the artistes. Apart from being the most comfortable code used by a larger population, pidgin is one of the preferred codes for African singers when they intend to extol the virtues of mothers. A landmark example is "Sweet Mother" by Prince Nico Mbarga produced in 1974. Prince Nico Mbarga selected pidgin as the best code in which he could pass information to his listeners. Since mother figure, being a social variable, occupies the hearts of most Nigerian and Cameroonian populace, the half Nigerian and Cameroonian chose to eulogise the virtues of mothers in Pidgin.

The continuous use of "come and see my mother" (not father), is a manifestation of in-group and out-group disparity between the male and the female genders in society. It shows the importance of a mother in the family in certain social activity. It is only the mother that can devote her time into finding out the personality and background of the man in question and she knows what is best for her daughter. Once the mother's approval is obtained, the father's follows soon afterward because women know how to manipulate their husband and other situations in the house to suit them. Therefore, the constant repetition of "come and see my mother" and "you must to see my mother" is a pointer to the social rating or elevation of women in Africa as emphases are placed on the superior role of mothers over fathers in bringing up their children. Consequently, Vee and Alade have used repetition to foreground and to express the shared background knowledge held in Nigeria and Ghana where mothers are the first to approve eligible suitors for their children or play the role of coaxing their husbands to approve their choice.

Vee and Alade's use of code-mixing provides clues to listeners about their sociolinguistic background. This shows that code-mixing is a consequence of bilingualism. With constant alternating of codes from Nigerian English to pidgin, the artistes have communicated to the African society that relationships should not be unofficial, ladies should not be fooled by unserious men with their vain promises, stressing that a lady's body is not for sale, however, it could be assessed by men only when they "make it official, if they "... really mean am" "make you follow me, all the way to Nigeria o". This implies that women have social identity which should be protected. In line with Social Identity Theory, the groups (eg. social class, family, dialect groups, etc.) in which people belong to is

an important source of pride and self esteem. As a result, it gives them a sense of social identity as well as a sense of belonging to the social world.

Other instances of code-mixing in the lyrics are: “ha le le le body” (ie. sophisticated or sexy body) and “I no like your money but I know you want my body”. With those code-mixed words, the artistes have a sense of social identity as well as a sense of belonging to a social world. Therefore, to increase their self-image, they either enhance the status of the group they belong or discriminate and hold prejudice views against the “out-group” by saying “I no like your money...” yet you like my “ha le le le body”. Consequently, they divide the world into “them” and “us” based on a process of social categorization which implies putting people into social groups known as in-group (us) and out-group (them).

### **Discourse Particles**

Discourse particles are short linguistic elements that are not normally assigned to a class of words. Examples of discourse particles are *shoo, ah, ee, eh, sha*, and so on. Discourse particles have been used in the song to criticise and advise those men who run after different kinds of women, promising to give them everything they want and making each one feel she is the only special one while others are ‘photocopy’.

Everyday na so so sisi o (na so so Sisi o)  
Everyday na different specie o (of different Sisi o)  
Come and see my mother ah  
Come and see my mother eh  
Make it official, if you really mean am (Aha)  
Come and follow me all the way to Ghana o  
Make you follow me, all the way to Nigeria o

In linguistics, a discourse particle is a lexeme or particle which has no direct semantic meaning in the context of a sentence, having rather a pragmatic function: it serves to indicate the speaker's attitude, or to structure their relationship to other participants in a conversation. By implication, the use of discourse particles in the text is to show the otherness of the male folks.



## **Findings**

The paper observed that the various linguistic variables in *Come and See My Moda*, used to indicate the speakers' social factors are; discourse particles, dislocations of words, repetition of words, pidgin and code mixing.

The artistes have creatively used these linguistic variables to demarcate and to show the interplay of gender identity.

Gender is an important social variable for a better understanding of the structure of language because it improves language through choice of codes, discourse particles, repetition and other linguistic communicative features

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Sociolinguistics investigates the relationship between language and society, and within any given society, there are social variables like family, age, gender, occupation, class and so on. Being that no society exists without a language; certain linguistic variables are used in discourse to reflect these social variables. Mz Vee and Yemi Alade have exploited these linguistic features through the medium of song in order to indicate their social identity.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **The Lyrics of Come and See My Mother**

A woman of quality knows what she wants  
if you want to tarry me and do what you want  
then hurry hurry come carry your baby go

[Chorus]

Come and see my mother ah (My mother ah)  
You must to see my mother ah (My Mother ah)  
Come and see my mother eh (My mother ah)  
You must to see my mother ah (My Mother ah)

[Hook]

If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry

If you want, come and carry  
come and carry

[MzVee]

If you want my body, then come see my Mummy  
I no like your money but I know you want my body  
My body, my body  
Ha le le le body  
Come see my mummy  
Make it official, if you really mean am  
Come and follow me, all the way to Ghana o  
hurry hurry come carry your baby go

[Chorus]

Come and see my mother ah (My mother ah)  
You must to see my mother ah (My Mother ah)  
Come and see my mother eh (My mother ah)  
You must to see my mother ah (My Mother ah)

[Hook]

If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
come and carry

[Yemi Alade]

Yemi Alade  
Mr Chairman, Oga LandLord  
Maradona, Local Official  
Everyday na so so sisi o (na so so Sisi o)  
Everyday na different specie o (of different Sisi o)  
Say you love me, talk ya own  
Anything I want you gat it  
I'm the one you really want  
All the others photocopy  
Make it official, if you really mean am (Aha)

Make you follow me, all the way to Nigeria o  
hurry hurry come carry your baby go

[Chorus]

Come and see my mother (My mother)  
You must to see my mother (My Mother)  
Come and see my mother eh (My mother)  
You must to see my mother (My Mother)

If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
On your marks, come and carry  
If you want, come and carry  
come and carry

[Outro]

A woman of quality knows what she wants  
if you want to carry me and do what you want  
then hurry hurry come carry your baby go

Come and see my mother (My mother)  
You must to see my mother (My Mother)  
Come and see my mother eh (My mother)  
You must to see my mother (My Mother)

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Lyrics of Sweet Mother**

Sweet mother I no go forget you  
For dey suffer we you suffer for me yeah [2x]

When i dey crry my mother go carry me  
She go say my pikin wetin you dey cry yeah yeah  
Stop stop! stop stop!! stop stop!!!  
Make you no cry again oo  
When i wan sleep my mother go pet me

She go lie me well-well for bed  
She go cover me cloth say make you sleep  
Sleep sleep my pikin oooo  
When i dey hungry my mom go run up and down  
She dey find me something we i go chop  
Sweet mother eeeeeee..sweet mother oooo..eee

When i dey sick my mother go cry cry cry  
She go say instead wey i go die make she die  
She go beg God, God help me, God help me, my pikin oo

If i no sleep, my mother no go sleep  
If i no chop, my mother no go chop  
She no dey tire ooo  
Sweet mother i no go forget dey suffer wey you suffer for me yeah yeah  
Sweet mother eeeeeeeeeeee  
Sweet mother oooo....eeeee

You fit get another wife  
you fit get another husband  
but you fit get another mother? No!

when i dey hungry my mom go run up and down  
she dey find me something we i go chop  
sweet mother aaaaaa...sweet mother oooo..eee  
when i dey sick my mother go cry cry cry  
she go say instead wey i go die make she die  
she go beg God, God help me, God help me, my pikin oo  
If i no sleep, my mother no go sleep  
If i no chop, my mother no go chop  
she no dey tire ooo  
sweet mother i no go forget dey suffer wey you suffer for me yeah yeah  
Sweet mother aaaaaaaaaaaaa  
Sweet mother eeee..ooooooo  
Sweet mother aaaaaaaaaaaaa  
Sweet mother eeee..ooooooo