

## PRAGMATIC EFFECTS IN SLANGS AND CATCHY PHRASES IN SELECTED SONGS OF WIZKID

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### Abstract

Slang forms and catchy phrases give linguistic aesthetics to songs and most significantly, they allow singers to pass lots of messages, even while they utter just few of those messages. This suggests that there are hidden messages in slang forms and catchy phrases utilized in hip-hop songs, and for these hidden messages to be known to listeners, a specific level of language analysis has got to be put in situ. This study therefore, set out to undertake a pragmatic analysis of slang and catchy phrases utilized in some selected Wizkid's hip-hop songs, the songs are; "Bombay" (2014), "Sound it" (2014), "Wad Up" (2011), "On Top Your Matter" (2011) and "Joro" (2019). The target of this study is to spot the important meanings of slang forms and catchy phrases that are utilized in Nigerian hip-hop songs, with regard to the general meanings of those songs themselves. This identification will successively help us to state the explanations why they (these slang forms and catchy phrases) are utilized in the songs of Wizkid and their contributions to the singer's intended meanings of those songs.

**Keywords:** Slangs, Catchy phrases, Hip-pop, Wizkid and Pragmatics

### 1.1 Introduction

Language may be a major and an important tool in human existence. No wonder Microsoft Encarta defines it as "the principal means employed by citizenry to speak with one another". Language is primarily spoken, although it often transferred to other media like written, non-verbal and so on. It is therefore, the bedrock of communication which holds a society together. Communication occurs in various ways: like interaction through conversation (discourse), speech delivery, the media (such as radio and television), singing, music (irrespective of the genre) and lots of others. For instance, one's interpretation of "I love you" could also be different from another person's interpretation, albeit the person singing/saying the utterance is that the same. This entire process is named "encoding and decoding".

Hip-hop is denotatively mentioned as a kind of recent dance room music with spoken words and a gentle beat played on electronic instruments. Nigerian hip-hop, the major concern of this research work consists of hip-

hop songs, written, composed, arranged, sung, promoted, and marketed in Nigeria for Nigerians. The composition of Nigerian hip-hop songs involves the careful use of lexis (the total of words or vocabulary during a language) which appropriately expresses minds of hip-hop singers. Another important aspect within the lexis of Nigerian hip-hop is that the "use of slang". Elbe (1996) defines slang as an ever changing and trendy set of vocabulary of sociability used to express or reinforce identity cohesiveness within a group with a trend or fashion in a society at large (, p.3). It is to be noted that, certain lexical items are used in Nigerian hip-hop songs, especially those sung in Nigerian native languages (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa), which do not perfectly fit into the space of a slang but are at an equivalent time, to not be categorized as conventional day to day lexis. These lexical items for the aim of this work, are tagged, "Catchy phrases". An example is Atilaawi (Yoruba) (meaning "the one, whom we are talking about") which is deliberately chosen by a Yoruba hip-hop singer to satirize (criticize) a

specific leader. This paper is a pragmatic investigation of Wizkid's slangy and catchy phrases in his selected songs. The objective of the study is to identify the social function and meaning of slangs and catchy phrases as expressed in selected songs of Wizkid.

### 1.1.1 Brief biography of Wizkid

Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun, born 16th July, 1990 is known professionally as Wizkid. Wizkid is a Nigerian singer and songwriter. One of Africa's biggest artistes, Wizkid is the most decorated African artist internationally, and one of the most revolutionary Afro-pop artistes of the modern era. He began recording music at the age of 11 and managed to release a collaborative album with the Glorious Five, a group he and a couple of his church friends formed. Wizkid signed a record deal with Empire Mates Entertainment (E.M.E) in 2009. He rose to prominence after releasing "Holla at Your Boy", the lead single from his debut studio album *Superstar* (2011). "Tease Me/Bad Guys", "Don't Dull", "Love My Baby", "Pakurumo" and "Oluwa Lo Ni" were also released as singles from the *Superstar* album. Ayo, his self-titled second studio album, was released in September 2014. It was supported by six singles: "Jaiye Jaiye", "On Top Your Matter", "One Question", "Joy", "Bombay" and "Show You the Money".

Wizkid left E.M.E after his contract expired. In 2016, Wizkid achieved international recognition following his collaboration with Drake on the global hit, "One Dance", which reached number one in 15 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. He signed a multi-album deal with RCA Records in March 2017. His third studio album *Sounds from the Other Side* was released on 14 July 2017. It serves as his major label debut and was primarily a Caribbean-influenced record. *SFTOS* was supported by five singles: "Daddy Yo", "Sweet Love", "Come Closer", "African Bad Gyal" and "Naughty Ride". Wizkid became the first Afrobeats artist to appear in the 2018 Guinness World Records for his contribution to "One Dance".

### 1.2 Scope of the Study

This work uses five (5) of Wizkid's

hip-hop songs as data within which slangy forms and catchy phrases are going to be extracted. Also only the illocutionary act as classified with J. Searle's (1969); Representatives, Directives, Expressives, Commissives and Declaratives are going to be investigated in the analysis. This restriction is thanks to the very fact that there are tons of elements in pragmatics, a number of which are specifically gotten from pragmatic and a few others, gotten from theories of meaning and semantics. Therefore, so as to be explicit and to remain within the allocated paper space for this seminar work, this restriction is important.

## 2.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1.1 Pragmatic effects of Hip-hop

Debating on the effect of African American Hip-hop on Nigerian Hip-hop, Shonekan (2010) posits that the recognition of American-African Hip-hop music by Nigerian Hip-hop artistes is barren of historical and cultural appreciative of Hip-hop. She does a comparative study, exploring the terrain of cultural space between the Nigerian Hip-hop artistes and African-American Hip-hop artistes. She examines how the space is shared between them despite the cultural and geographical distance. Her work also traces the connection between the language and culture of those two countries. Using 2face Idibia's lyrics, Oikelome (2013) studies the individuality within the sort of Nigerian Hip-hop that has eventually created a method that is distinct thereto alone. He also explores the gender aspect of Nigerian Hip-hop music. He argues that ladies are portrayed in Nigerian Hip-hop music as sex symbols. Consistent with him, women are used as mere tools and objects by Hip-hop artistes in Nigeria, as a way of enhancing their celebrity status and commercial viability. However, the work does not give an account of interviews that were conducted with the artistes, where the artistes confessed that ladies were used in their music to realize popularity and to market their brand. The idea for creating such conclusion is not stated clearly, thus this might not be an objective position or view. In actual

fact, Oikelome (2013) supported his data (the lyrics of 2face), the argument is partly self-defeating because 2face's hottest track African Queen may be a veneration of the African Belle. Yet, this point could also be partly amenable. As, with the evolution of the Hip-hop in Nigeria, came also the evolution and professionalization of its value chain or accompaniments, like Dancers (male and female), Fashion, cars, in order that despite the negative influences, the economic advancement it is delivered to the industry and stakeholders cannot be ignored. The feminine dancers especially, are now seen less as sex tools and perceived more as liable specialists, who are contributing significantly to the expansion of the industry.

Richardson (2007) studies how young black women make meaning of the way they are portrayed in Hip-hop/rap music and videos. He also explores the complex language mastery and information – making capacity that exists among young black women who participate in Hip-hop subculture. The study commends methods to the tenacity of those complex issues, by concerned educators and community activists.

Furthermore, Damein (2006) identifies the role of fantasy in Hip-hop consumption and the way young men construct themselves as masculine, through such fantasies. Using an ethnographic methodology, he realises that Hip-hop members often use sexist, and homophobic taunts, but not as an attack on females or homosexuals, but to feminize the others, and thus masculinizing oneself. Finally, it had been revealed that gangster rap is usually consumed as fantasy during which teenage males can forge strong masculine gender identities that they find difficult to assume at college or at work.

A comparative study is additionally done by Kellerer (2013) on the influence of Hip-hop on Tanzania and Zimbabwe. He posits that the emergence of pop in promoting materialism in Zimbabwe is non-threatening, unlike Bongo Flava in Tanzania, whose music has the capacity to instill real political influence. Kunzler (2007; 2011), focuses on the political potential of

African rap. The study makes clear that Hip-hop has the power to boost awareness of social issues and impact change. Gueye (2013) looks at the foremost political Hip-hop scenes in Africa. The study analyses the political rendezvous of Hip-hop artistes in Senegal, during the 2011 social protests. He sheds light on the control of Hip-hop music of groups like Keur Gui, and Y'ana Marre within the movement Enough is Enough.

Kitwana (2002) takes a glance at Hip-hop as a vehicle for political and social change. He establishes this fact when he traces the unification between commercial and grassroots culture. The study reveals that Hip-hop is quite a money-making tool; it is a tool that has the capacity to cause fundamental change. His position is contrary to other scholars such as (Lusane,1993 and McWhoter, 2008), who claim that Hip-hop is not an appropriate tool for social change. Time and time again in Nigeria, it's been demonstrated that Hip-hop is quite a money textile machine. It has been an influential tool for the youth to seek out expression, especially during a time of economic and social hardship. Politicians have also always employed it as a channel for communicating with their younger audiences, validating its usefulness as a national development and media tool.

Winston (2007) investigated the journalistic role Hip-hop plays in communicating daily issues in ways in which challenge the powerful and therefore the oppressors, and provides a voice to the disadvantaged. His study argues that popular music genre may be a journalistic tool that competes with and rivals mainstream journalism in ways in which address political, social, and economic realities in repressive contexts.

Ajayi(2012) conducted a practical study of the abusive language deployed by Nigerian Hip-Hop artistes, with a view to categorizing the Face Threatening Acts (FTA) utilized in damaging one another's "faces". The study concludes that the FTA employed by the artistes are mainly to scale back their rivals to zero even when there's no serious conflict. He also

contends that Nigerian Hip-hop artistes threaten each other's face even once they don't have anything against one another. The threat is simply to realize social power.

Walter (2003) examined identity in Hip-hop lyrics. He studied how the one dimensional representation of Hip-hop has affected the whites' perception of whites and blacks. Using critical theory, the study shows the consequences of the culture industry's cycle of assumptions on the one-dimensional representation of Hip-hop music and its reflection and reinforcement of the whites and white culture.

Richardson (2006) investigated how language functions as a strong tool of identity and the way English language has been ready to continually function as language of identity for Hip-hop artistes round the world. He provides a summary of the rhetorical language and literacy practices of Hip-hop also because of the tremendous impact it continues to possess on the language within the USA and round the globe.

On his part, Thomas (2007) made a critical discourse analysis on Hip-hop within the United States of America, showing how emcees construct different aspects of reality through lyrics and extra-linguistic symbols. The study shows how their lyrics and para-linguistic features reflect and construct ideology and identity within the songs of the Hip-hop artistes. Munoz-Labor, Weinstein, and Parker, (2007) conducted an ethnographic study on the social lifetime of girls and boys between the ages 15-21 in Hiphop clubs to get how they negotiate gender relations on the floor. Their investigation revealed that Hip-hop culture provides an insight into gender and sexual scripts of urban minority youths. The study also shows that ladies challenge the masculinity of men in social environment. Hutchison (2013) investigated how women bodies are portrayed in American Hip-hop music. He blames the American society for such perversion. The research reveals that the American society accepts the inequality between men and ladies by expecting women to simply accept the role of sexual stimulator.

Gretchen (2013) studied how college students perceive and answer portrayal of girls when exposed to misogynistic lyrics. The outcomes of the study show a direct correlation between misogynous thinking and rap/Hip-hop utilization.

### **3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1.1 Method of data collection**

In carrying out this study, five (5) Wizkid's hip-hop songs were selected as data within which slangy forms and unusual lexical items were extracted. They are, "*Bombay*" (2014), "*Sound it*" (2014), "*Wad Up*" (2011), "*On Top Your Matter*" (2011) and "*Joro*" (2019). These tracks will be carefully and repeatedly listened to in order to gather their lyrics. Also, consultations will be made into library reference materials, textbooks, and the internet in order to get materials relating to pragmatics, music (hip-hop), and slang and also meaning in general.

#### **3.1.2 Method of data analysis**

The intended technique of analysis will involve a short general description of the songs, one after the other, and identification of slangy forms and catchy phrases found in them. Finally, a detailed pragmatic analysis of these slangy forms and catchy phrases will be done using the five illocutionary speech acts according to J. Searle's (1969) classification.

### **3.2 Theoretical framework**

Many scholars such as Ishaya (2018), Gunn & Ekor (2018) and Gunn & Ishaya (2020) have adopted speech acts theory to various pragmatic analyses, unlike Uwen and Ellah (2022) who adopted van Dijk's (2008, 2009) context models in other pragmatic analysis. This study has adopted the speech-act theory as developed by J. L. Austin (1962). Specifically, the perlocutionary acts aspect of the theory serves as a useful analytical tool in this analysis. In the view of Lawal (1997) the perlocutionary speech-act is the intended or unintended consequence of or reaction to what is said. This act is not part of the conventional meaning of the utterance, but it is derived from the context of situation, of the utterance. Therefore, the analysis also focuses on the contextualize features of the communication (hip pop songs) events that take place in the study.

This pragmatic theory considers meaning relative to users and context. This theory seeks to understand the nature of language by studying the interaction of the aspects of linguistic structure and pragmatics in the production and interpretation of

meaning. The context of situation implies that language comes to life only when functioning in some environment. Therefore, this theory is relevant to the present study as it will reveal why the singer uses certain slangs and catchy phrases.

#### 4.1 Data presentation and Analysis of Wizkid's Selected Songs from a Pragmatic Perspective

Table 1: Wizkid's *Bombay* (2014)

Utterance 1	Background information	Illocutionary Acts	Contexts/competence
Your bumbum bigger than Bombay	<i>Bombay</i> is a slang created by Wizkid to mean something excessively big. In the real sense, <i>Bombay</i> is a big city in India and it is an enviable place to stay. The audience is expected to share this knowledge for a successful interpretation. It can also be said to be a catchy phrase that that was often used by India youth to call attention to anything great or awesome.	a. Direct Illocutionary Acts: Assertive (Stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary Acts: Expressive (Praising)	a. <b>Linguistic:</b> The grammatical competence of the audience helps in interpreting the utterance at a sentential level to mean that the speaker's girl is visibly more fashionable than others, with a comparison of her buttocks (bumbum) to a big city "Bombay" b. <b>Situational:</b> The speaker (Wizkid) has seen and experienced the size of the lady's buttocks and has decided to register his opinion through comparison. He does this by creating an atmosphere to praise the lady and her big bums. c. <b>Psychological</b> The speaker feels elated to appreciate nature and the creature; he is of feeling that nothing is compared to the lady's ass and he does not need anyone to tell him otherwise. d. <b>Social:</b> the relationship between the speaker and the lady is that of friends, while the relationship between the speaker and the listeners is that of admirers.

Table 2: Wizkid's *Sound It* (2014)

Utterance 2	Background information	Illocutionary Acts	Contexts/competence
You are gonna feel my parara omoge	"parara" is a Yoruba slang and a catchy phrase used to described the penis. It is catchy in the sense that Yoruba youths often use it to establish sex acts as though it were all through agreeable and legal	a. Direct Illocutionary Acts: Assertive (Stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary Acts: Expressive (imploring)	a. <b>Linguistic:</b> the conventional knowledge of language will assist in understanding that the speaker is telling his addressee to feel comfortable or be relaxed, though it is not obviously known the reason why the lady should be relaxed. b. <b>Situational:</b> the speaker and the addressee are in a party dancing, kissing and having fun. The former hurries back to have more when he and the addressee eventually found themselves home where the latter would feel his parara. c. <b>Psychological:</b> the speaker is elected and desperate to have the address. He is confident too that he has got what would make the

			addressee feel at home, as such, the phrase; “you are gonna feel my parara” is catchy and assuring. <b>d. Social:</b> the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is that of lovers.
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**Table 3: Wizkid’s *Wad Up* (2011)**

Utterance 3	Background information	Illocutionary Acts	Contexts/competence
“They say I too dirty: I no get swagger”	The phrase “swagger” originally means a way of walking or behaviour that shows you are confident. However, the meaning shifted from what it was known. In this context it means having enabled personality or reputation. The phrase is quite catchy especially when men are on the look for self-esteem.	a. Direct illocutionary Act: assertive; (reporting) b. Indirect illocutionary Act: Expression (mourning)	a. <b>Linguistic:</b> the conventional or grammatical knowledge of language helps in understanding the phrase “swagger”. b. <b>Situational:</b> the speaker finds himself in the midst of others who mock at his lifestyle by being characterized as being dirty and not having swag. c. <b>Psychological:</b> the speaker is very sad and ashamed due to the perception of his personality. His tone suggests that he regrets his present situation and wishes to improve on it. d. <b>Social:</b> the relationship is that of low class and high class men, hence the inferiority complex.

**Table 4: Wizkid’s *On Top Your Matter* (2011)**

Utterance 4	Background information	Illocutionary Acts	Contexts/competence
You too fine pass mami water	The phrase “mami water” is a slangy version of the Nigerian “mamiwata” who happened to be the most celebrated mermaid in Africa. Mermaid actually existed in the Western legend hundreds of years ago. It is believed to be half human and half fish “mamiwata” is often depicted with long healthy hairs, with charming irresistible beauty.	a. Direct illocutionary Act: assertive; (declaring) b. Indirect illocutionary Act: Expressive (praising)	a. <b>Linguistics:</b> the conventional or grammatical knowledge of language helps in understanding the phrase “mamiwata” b. <b>Situational:</b> the speaker compares his addressee’s (lady) beauty to a mermaid whom he uses the slang “mamiwata” for. He praises the lady’s beauty and compare her to a mermaid whose beauty is very attractive, calm and loving. c. <b>Psychological:</b> the speaker feels elated and quite enthusiastic praising his lady. The audience or listeners see the spirit of ecstasy. He long to be with the lady forever. d. <b>Social:</b> the relationship between the speaker and the lady he addresses is that of two lovers. The speaker is in love with a lady he compares her beauty to that of a mermaid.

**Table 5: Wizkid’s Joro (2019)**

Utterance 5	Background information	Illocutionary acts	Contexts/competences
Dance to my Konto	Etymologically, the phrase “konto” is German from Italian “Conto”. It originally means bank account or money. The speaker uses the phrase to capture his attractive and expensive abode (apartment).	a. Direct illocutionary act: directive; (requesting) b. Indirect illocutionary act: Expressive (asking)	<p><b>a. Linguistic:</b> the grammatical knowledge as required would only promote the audience information that the speaker is asking the addressee to go to a place of comfort (the speaker’s place). The utterance is quite directive and request oriented.</p> <p><b>b. Psychological:</b> the speaker has strong feeling that the addressee would succumb to his demand. This is noticed in the way he requested the presence of the lady who is dancing. “dance to my konto” as if the lady had that thought too.</p> <p><b>c. Situational:</b> as an admirer the speaker is asking for a warmth presence of a lady who is dancing. He wants her to grace his bed with her beauty or better still to come and dance in his “konto” (house).</p> <p><b>d. Social:</b> the relationship between the speaker and the addressee is that of admirer versus a dancer.</p>

**Discussion of Findings**

This discussion of the findings is based on the research questions raised. In utterance 1 “Your bumbum bigger than Bombay”, it is obvious that ‘Bombay’ is typical of Nigeria slangs created by Wizkid to mean something excessively big. In the real sense, “Bombay” is a big city in India. The real meaning of ‘Bombay’ has been shifted from its original base in Wizkid’s song. From pragmatic perspective, it has an illocutionary act of stating fact and praising one’s nature, particularly a girl’s buttocks often called ‘bumbum’. The phrase “your bumbum bigger than Bombay” is quite catchy, attractive and inviting. It appeals to one’s sense when one realizes that ‘Bombay’ is a big city in a foreign country. The listeners are attracted to this phrase by virtue of its linguistic and psychological implications. The lyrics that accompanied the clips reveal the encomium the singer showers on the dancer. The lyrics reveal that the dancer has an overwhelming effect on him and he would appreciate if they could make out in his room. The situation is that of a lover praising and admiring God’s work on her. Thus it becomes socially tone

that the speaker is deeply in love with the addressee.

Furthermore, in utterance 2, the word omoge is a word used among the Yoruba folks to mean an attractive young lady while “parara” is a Yoruba slang used among some Yoruba speakers to mean penis. Although it depends on the context one finds himself, however, most youth find it more comfortable to use ‘parara’ instead of ‘penis’ which is a sort of taboo to most of them to say. From a pragmatic view point, the phrase “you gonna feel my parara omoge” sounds assertive and expressive in illocutionary acts. With one’s linguistic competence, one would know that the speaker is addressing a female whose emotional reaction is to “feel... parara omoge”. The situation then holds true that the speaker, though not directly stated, implies that there is comfort and pleasure reserved for the lady once she accepts him.

Utterance 3 “they say I too dirty/I no get swagger” produces another catchy phrase that appeals to one’s personality and reputation. Being dirty here implies having low life or not well known among one’s contemporaries. Swagger,

originally, means a way of walking with so much confidence and also to be boastful. In this context, 'swagger' is a Nigerian slang that depicts one whose status is high in terms of dressing, money and good looking. Pragmatically, the speaker's illocutionary act is assertive, lamenting what others are saying about him by being dirty and lacks 'swagger'.

Utterance 4 presents another catchy phrase, "you too fine pass mami water" mami water originally is the Nigerian English version of mamiwata to mean a beautiful and very attractive lady whose beauty is beyond human comparison. Mamiwata in the Nigerian sense is a beautiful goddess who is half-human and half-fish. It is believed that she crossed to the West some years ago to explore. Contextually, Wizkid adopts the phrase "mami water to express or confess how charming the addressee is. Finally, another catchy phrase and slang found in the analysed songs is found in utterance 5, the phrase "Dance to my Konto" presupposed that the addressee is dancing already. However, its meaning goes beyond dancing, it could imply exploring. The speaker wishes the addressee could 'dance' (explore or try) his own world of pleasure called "Konto". Konto

here is a Nigerian slang for one's world of pleasure especially a male. The speaker wishes she has more when she finally comes to his own world of pleasure. He uses "konto" to describe a kind of comfort that the addressee would receive in his world if she finally agrees to dance in his 'konto'

### Conclusion

From the discussion so far, it was discovered that vulgarity, obscenity and offensive language characterized the slangs and catchy phrases of Wizkid songs. This is the singer's own creativity. Songs by Wizkid are created to communicate his intention to attract his listeners' attention through the use of these uncouth language. Through slangs and catchy expressions, new words are introduced into the vocabulary and the fans and general public are open to new words. Slangs and catchy expressions are usually enriched by contexts, language competence and illocutionary acts. Consequently, from a pragmatic point of view, it means a lot to the target audience the message the speaker intends passing across. Wizkid has successfully used slangs and catchy expressions to advance the world of hip pop music in Nigeria and the world at large.

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