

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF DJ ZUBIS' *TA'AZIYA*

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Abstract

This study is a sociolinguistic investigation into a Nupe song titled *Ta'aziya* (condolences) by DJ Zubis. *Ta'aziya* is a track in the Nupe musical artist's album titled "Boro toh Elu". A total of twelve (12) sampled texts are purposively selected from the song and analysed based on Dell Hymes Ethnography of Communication, the mnemonic of S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G, which means setting, participants, end, act, key, instrumentality, norm and genre. Being constant in the song, setting and participants are first explained. The analysis is in a tabular form. The findings of the study reveal that the intents of the song are to: urge people to be grateful to Allah even in bereavement or grief, always seek Allah's forgiveness, and to be humble, all of which are achieved through informative and directive acts. The artist explores gestures such as weeping to reveal the depth of his grief and nodding to confirm oneness and supremacy of Allah. The text is characterised by code mixing and switching between Arabic and Nupe languages. The study concludes that DJ Zubis' "*Ta'aziya*" is a religious song not only intended to lament the demise of his departed colleagues in Nupe music and film industry but also to promote the teachings or gospel of Islam.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, DJ Zubis, *Ta'aziya* (condolences), code mixing/switching

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is a discipline that yokes sociology and linguistics. Every society or situation has unique linguistic codes and modes of exchange acceptable to it. In other words, the concern of sociolinguistics is how social factors of age, ethnicity, religion, sex, status and educational level, etc. affect linguistic choices and their communicative values or interpretation in a given society. To buttress this, Agbo (2013, p. 219) submits that people signal aspects of their social identity through language. Social contexts are parts of modern linguistics because language is by its nature a social phenomenon. Hence, the effectiveness of a given language text rests on the oars of form and situation (Alabi 2008, p.252). In sociolinguistics, there are many determining factors for differences in language use. Principal ones among them are: social class, which deals with the position of the speaker in the society or in the speech event viz the position of his/her audience; geographical origin, which is responsible for accent and regional dialects; sex, which brings about differences in the pattern of language use between man and woman, especially in terms of intonation and speech quantity; Religion, which focuses on the pattern of language use informed by religious beliefs and spirituality; culture, which is the

totality of ways of life of a people or social group, and social context, which concerns the situational and psychological effects of language use. It is in line with these, that Lawal (1997, p. 27) asserts that “variety and variability are unique inevitable features of language ... in widely differing circumstances.” Of all these social variables that influence language use, variables of religion and social context are of particular concern to this study.

Language and Social Context

Besides the general principles of language use, there are situation or speech-event-bound requirements in language use. For example, the language used at funeral events is different from the language used at marriage or naming ceremonies. This is why functional linguists characterise (social) context as the core of linguistic communication and language as a social activity being performed in a social world. The primary focus of functional linguists, who belong to the schools of sociolinguistics, systemic functional linguistics, (critical) discourse analysis, text linguistics, pragmatics and forensic linguistics, etc. is specific context of language use.

Ta’aziya

Ta’aziya is an Arabic term for mourning or condolences. It concerns outward social and emotional expressions and actions such as weeping, social and religious performances in dirges and funeral rites as well wistful discourse about the deceased or an entity associated with death ((Mulemi 2017). It is also described as the process of adapting to a loss of a fellow human being influenced by culture, religion and social events such as grieving rituals (Sciencedirect.com/topics/medicine-and-dentistry/mourning). DJ Zubis’ *Ta’aziya* is a song (a dirge) by one of the leading modern young Nupe artists and musicians popularly called DJ Zubis. It is a mournful piece of music with linguistic flavours from Arabic language and performed in memory of his departed Nupe traditional artists – musicians, actors, actresses and comedians. *Ta’aziya* is also sung in memory of Wachin Hussain, the former *Ezonuwa* (Village Head) of Kutigi, the headquarters of Lavun Local Government Area of Niger State. As an oral performance, the physical setting of the song is a mimicked cemetery. *Ta’aziya* is the sixth track in one of DJ Zubis’ musical albums titled “*Boro toh Elu*”, which was released in 2018. Other tracks in the album are: *Ebo Cinci’o*, IGP Police, Yes, *Etsu Yahaya*, *Boro toh Elu*, *Gani Kutigi* and *Siyasa*. DJ Zubis is well known for his artistic performances on inevitability of death, mortality of man, resurrection, morality, man’s infallibility, patience, forgiveness and most importantly, women emancipation and justice. Hence, some of his critics consider him as a feminist. DJ Zubis is from Kutigi, the Head Quarters of Lavun Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria.

Code Switching and Religion in *Ta’aziya*

The sociolinguistic concepts of code-switching and code-mixing are elements or features of spoken language – conversation, involving alternation of codes and styles (Hymes 1974). They are well known linguistic traits of every average bilingual in any society. They are used by some people

interchangeably. However, code mixing deals with the use of two or more distinct linguistic codes or systems within a single utterance while code switching focuses on the psychologically or sociologically motivated movement from one discrete code to another within a communicative event (Waris 2012). In other words, while code mixing is intra-sentential, code switching is inter-sentential. Socially discursive strategies of code mixing and code switching are consciously explored by language users to showcase their social group affinity, solidarity, identity and in most cases, to exclude non-members of a social group from full participation in a speech event. This is why Agbo (2013, p. 237) submits that language choice is a declaration of national affinity or pride.

Psychologically motivated code switching is typical in condolence messages, greetings or songs by Muslims. That is, there are established expressions in Arabic that feature in condolence messages or funeral events by Muslims. A typical example of these kinds of expressions are *Inna lillahi wa inna ilahi rajiu'un*, which means from Allah we came and unto Him we shall return and *Allahu Akbar*, which means Allah is the greatest, respectively. Islamically, these expressions are expected to be uttered on receiving news about occurrence of a death or a calamity before any other expression in our indigenous codes follows. These show that religion is a motivational factor in our language use. As Agbo puts it 'acquiring a religion, to some extent, involves learning a new vocabulary' (p. 231). All these, as Kim (2006) submits, mean that code-mixing and switching are influenced by the topic of discourse and the physical context or setting of a performance, as evident in DJ Zubis' choice of cemetery to perform his *Ta'aziya* (condolences or mourning) on his departed fellow Nupe artists. Similarly, in line with Albirini (2011) and Gumperz (1977), DJ Zubis alternates between Arabic and Nupe in his *Ta'aziya* for the purposes of introducing formulaic Islamic expressions regarding death, quoting directly from the Holy Qur'an to emphasise importance of his message or death discourse and indicating his pan-Muslim identity, as evident in his repetition of *Allahu Akbar* which means Allah is the greatest, among others.

Oral Literature

Oral literature or orature is not only as old as man but also a life-time literary art in every culture or society, especially, African cultures. It cuts across prose genre (i. e proverbs, folktales, riddles and jokes), drama genre (i. e traditional dances, wrestling and festivals), and poetic genre (i. e songs, lullaby, etc.). Orature is, irrespective of its genre dramatic because it requires physical presence of the artist and his/her audience. One of its rhetorical features is repetition, especially epizeuxis when in religious context. Epizeuxis is a free immediate kind of repetition device employed in religious drama to suggest the intensity of a speaker's feeling or emotion (Wales 1989, p.153). Unlike ordinary conversation, which considers repetition as a problem of redundancy, in religious oral performance or artistic drama, repetition is a powerful resource of interpersonal involvement, she added. Orature is more entertaining, more enlightening and more persuasive than the written works of art. In the words of

Ker and Usman (2018, p.1) “one can only imagine how dull human life could be ... without personal experience of ... music and art.”

Theoretical Framework

Dell Hymes’ Ethnography of Communication is the theoretical framework for this study. It was developed in 1962 as “Ethnography of speaking” before it was modified in 1964 as “Ethnography of Communication” to capture both verbal and nonverbal human communicative events. It is a theory for analysis of language from the wider contexts of the socio-cultural practices and beliefs of members of a particular group or speech community (<https://www.communicationtheory.org>>...). It is partly a reaction to Chomskyan mentalist, universality, and structuralist schools of language study. Its focus is the description and functional analysis of society and culture through language. Ray and Biswas (2011) describe language as a cultural behaviour that navigates and helps us to share knowledge, arts, morals, beliefs and everything acquired by man as a member of a society. Hymes (1962) developed the following mnemonic of S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G, which is a short form of all the components of the theory:

Setting/ Scene means the physical and psychological time and place of communicative event. It includes the nature of communication and the degree of formality of language use as determined by situational and cultural practices. Different settings/scenes determine different linguistic behaviour. For example, our linguistic behaviour when we are bereaved or at a funeral event sharply differs from our linguistic behaviour at political campaign rallies.

Participant deals with the speaker and his/her interactive and non-interactive audience in communication event.

End concerns the purpose, goal and outcome of communication. The “end” may be to entertain an audience; promote an individual, a people, a belief or a service; or educate an audience, etc.

Act sequence deals with the institutional or culture-based order of participation in an exchange or a speech event. For example, folktales open with phrases like “once upon a time”, “a long time ago” while Islamic religious discourses open with expressions like *Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim* (which means in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful) and *Asalamum Alaikum* (which means may peace be upon you).

Key takes care of certain physical behaviours we engage in, in addition to our utterances in order to achieve our communicative intents. It includes facial expressions, gestures, body movements and different kinds of tones we deploy to make our audience laugh, relax, sober, cry, etc.

Instrumentality involves channel/styles employed in discursive practices. It could be informal/casual, formal, spoken or written. In an informal setting, one of the examples here is code switching/code mixing.

Norm is the rule governing the socio-cultural behaviour of a people, group or speech community. In most traditional African societies, the young is not only

			bereavement or adversity				
2.	<i>Astagafrillah. Soko fa gani be dan wuwayi na zhi goga'ani na'e.</i>	We seek forgiveness from Allah. May Allah forgive our departed colleagues.	Admitting and lamenting being a sinner	directive act (requesting)	The speaker explores low tone to humble himself before Allah.	Code switching, as evident in the sentence "Astagafrillah", which is Arabic while the remaining part of the text is in Nupe language.	Every Muslim is encouraged to always seek Allah's forgiveness because of his fallibility.
3.	<i>Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar. Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihim raji'un</i>	Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. From Allah we came and unto Him we shall return.	Announcing death of a person	Informative act.	The speaker raised his face and two hands up as if he is addressing Allah directly or physically	Apostrophe.	It is a norm in Islam to raise up your hands as a Muslim while asking God for anything; the act is believed to hasten acceptance of prayers.
4.	<i>Kullu nafsi zaikatul maut. Almautu wa'id, sababu kasira</i>	Every living soul shall taste death. Death is only one but its causes are many.	Warning and urging faithfuls to be more committed to the worship of Allah.	Informative act.	Nodding of head in confirmation of this natural fact.	A verse from the Holy Qur'an	Every Muslim is urged to be expectant of his/her own death anywhere, anytime and through any means.
5.	<i>Ajali de ga be'ajin zhiri zuma yi ede bokun eleleba ma yi kabari.</i>	Immediately a person dies, he/she will be dressed in a white cloth and taken to his/her grave.	Preaching humility especially to the rich and the influential members of society.	Informative act.	Demonstrating sleep (in the grave) by swaying or placing the right check on the right palm.	Nupe language	Every Muslim is expected to be humble and moderate in his/his spending.
6.	<i>Waga'a chizan dochi bo wa'a de dozhiu</i>	The death of some people is irreplaceable.	Comforting the bereaved.	As above.	Waving or moving a right finger left and	As above	Excessive public display of grief or

	<i>be'ani. Amma bana ya'ade chichin ya dozhi tuna kpewoga Soko yebu'u ga we kami wuchi gama wula nyu tso ba wu'u</i>	But no matter the depth of love between you and the dead, know that God loves him/her more, hence his/ her death.			right in demonstration of man's inability to change the will of God.		lamentation over a death is discouraged as it may portray God as a wicked being and consequently lead to blasphemy. Hence, sympathizers are advised to comfort the bereaved to avert his resort to blasphemy.
7.	<i>Lahilaha ilallahu, Muhammadu rasulillah.</i>	There is no God except Allah and prophet Muhammad is His messenger.	Confessing being a Muslim and promoting Islam.	As above.	Simultaneous movement of head and right fingers left and right to demonstrate or confess oneness of Allah.	Arabic language.	No one qualifies to be a Muslim until the person accepts and practises that there is no God except Allah and that prophet Muhammad is His messenger.
8.	<i>Imani yaji'o zuriya nya Baba Zonuwa zhi ... Wachin Hussaini dabo be'a ... Wu dabo na wuwa Igboro lo yayi ...</i>	The family of late Ezonuwa Wachin Hussain, be patient. Ezonuwa is no more. While he was alive he assisted us a lot.	Sympathizing with the family of the deceased and promoting his positive legacies or ideals to comfort the family member and lovers.	Initial part of the text is a directive act while the latter part is an informative act.		Nupe language.	It is a norm in Islam to emphasize good parts of the dead and de-emphasize the ugly parts.

9.	<p>- <i>Soko'u ji Mustapha gafara, Mustapha Danjuma dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Salisu Muhammad, sarkin wasa nya payi dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Mahmudu Mokwa dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Isah DVA dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Maimuna mimi'e tso dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Salamatu Kogi' etso dabo be'a.</i></p> <p>- <i>Usman Zubairu kpaki' etso lona.</i></p> <p>- <i>Aisha Ndanusaé etso'e lona</i></p>	<p>- May God forgive Mustapha. Mustapha. Danjuma is no more.</p> <p>- Salisu Muhammad, the former leader of Nupe traditional artists is no more.</p> <p>- Mahmudu Mokwa is no more.</p> <p>- Isah DVA is no more.</p> <p>- Maimuna Mimi is also no more.</p> <p>- Salamatu Kogi is equally no more.</p> <p>- And there goes Usman Zubairu.</p> <p>- There goes Aisha Ndanusa.</p>	<p>Lamenting the death of some of his colleague Nupe musician s and artists.</p>	<p>Informative act.</p>	<p>Weeping and pointing towards the direction of cemetery.</p>	<p>Mixing of Nupe and Arabic codes</p>	<p>It is allowed to moderately lament the death of a colleague, relative, friend, etc. in Islam.</p>
10.	<p><i>Astagafriillah</i></p>	<p>May Allah forgive us.</p>	<p>Confessing being a sinner and seeking forgiveness.</p>	<p>Directive act of requesting.</p>	<p>The speaker raises his palms and head up.</p>	<p>Arabic language.</p>	<p>Seeking Allah's forgiveness always is a norm in Islam.</p>
11.	<p><i>Lahilaha ilallah</i></p>	<p>There is no God except Allah.</p>	<p>Promoting Islam.</p>	<p>Informative act.</p>	<p>The speaker moves one of his fingers left and right to demonstrate oneness of Allah.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>One cannot be a Muslim without uttering, believing and practicing the text: "There is</p>

							no God except Allah”.
12.	<i>Allahu Akbar.</i> <i>Allahu Akbar.</i> <i>Allahu Akbar.</i>	Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest.	Promoting Islam.	Informative act.	The speaker mildly nods his head in demonstration of Allah’s supremacy.	Arabic language.	As above.

Findings of the Study

Findings of this study reveal that the setting of DJ Zubis’ *Ta’aziya* is a mimicked cemetery while the participants are two men and a lady dressed in black, white and green attires. The genre of the song is condolences while its intents are to urge people to: be grateful to Allah even in the face of grief or bereavement, always seek Allah’s forgiveness, praise God and to be humble. Hence, the participants in the song explore informative acts to achieve their communicative goals except in texts 2, 8 and 10 where they deploy directive acts to seek Allah’s forgiveness and urge the bereaved to be patient. The participants also explore gesture such as nodding, movement of head and fingers left and right and weeping, etc. as the keys to affirm that there is no God except Allah and to demonstrate the depth of their grief over the demise of their colleague artists as well as Wachin Hussaini, the late *Ezonuwa* (Village Head) of Kutigi. In terms of instrumentalities, the artists employ resources of code mixing and code switching in the song. These are evident in most sampled texts analysed. The study finds that it is a norm in Islam to: be self-controlled in the face of bereavement or grief; be expectant of death any moment, anywhere and through any means; worship no deity except Allah; accept Prophet Muhammad as the messenger of Allah and seek Allah’s forgiveness always, etc.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that Dell Hymes Ethnography of communication is a suitable theory to account for religious discourses or texts from socio-linguistics perspective. The study also concludes that DJ Zubis’ *Ta’aziya* is a religious song intended not only to condole with the families and friends of the departed Nupe traditional artists as well as the families and friends of Late Wachin Hussain, the former village head of Kutigi but also to promote the ideals, norms or gospel of Islam and in the process, reveal the religious identity of the participants and that of the people whose deaths are the subjects of the song. In all, Dj Zubis’ *Ta’aziya* is a sermonizing text.

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