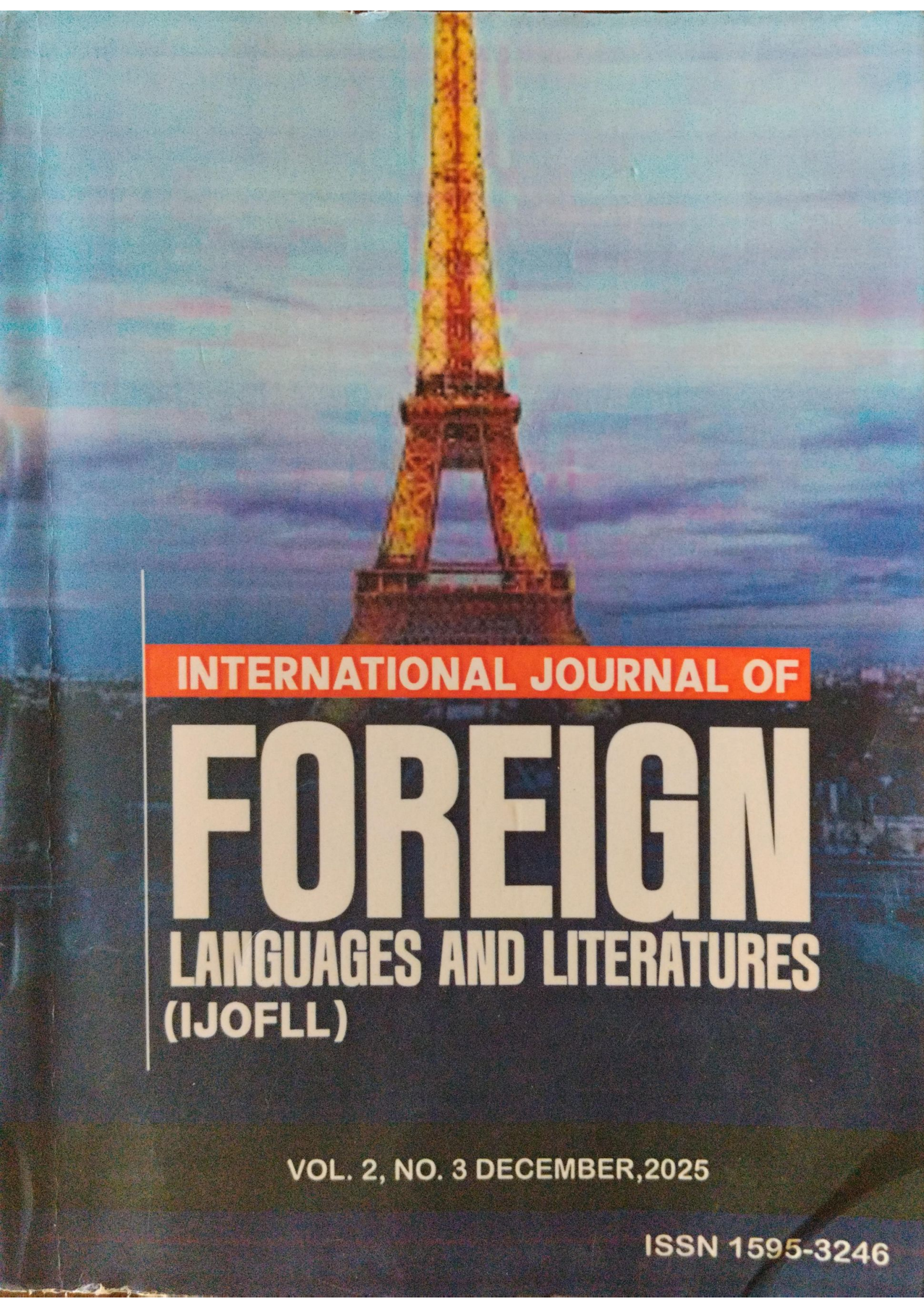


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A SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDY OF SELECTED SONGS OF ASAKE

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ABSTRACT

Language in music has been one of the most formidable way of formulating the socio-cultural foundation of every human community as both have intrinsic capacity to forge a common identity and assign it to any society where they are domiciled. This study addresses the need for a comprehensive sociolinguistic analysis of Asake's songs to uncover the intricate ways his music depicts cultural and social contexts, uses language to engage and resonate with his audience, and illustrates the characteristics of the speech community it represents. The aim is to provide insights in the role of Asake's music in reflecting and shaping the lived experiences and identities of his audience. The study explores how Asake's songs depict the cultural and social contexts of the communities he represents, the use of language to establish communicative competence within his songs, and how his songs illustrate the characteristics of the intended speech community. Through a qualitative approach, the study analyses two selected songs: "Lonely at the Top" and "Believe". The result reveals that Asake employed linguistic strategies such as code mixing and code-switching which have sociocultural implications. It shows also that ethnographic aspects of Asake's music serve as cultural artifacts that document and influence the lived experiences of his community. The study contributes to the understanding of how popular culture, through music, constructs and communicates identity within specific cultural contexts

INTRODUCTION

Language can be described as a system of communication that uses symbols (such as words, sounds, or gestures) to convey meaning between individuals or groups (Bonvillain, 2019). It is a complex cognitive and social phenomenon that allows humans to express and interpret a wide range of ideas, emotions, and experiences. Language is a fundamental aspect of human cognition, culture, and society, and it plays a critical role in all aspects of human life, including education, politics, media, art, and science (Kovecses, 2006). We can simply say that language is the bedrock of communication.

Language has been variously defined by different scholars. Sapir (1921, p.8), language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. It can be used in expressing our culture. Language, whether verbal or written plays a vital role in communication. It is often viewed as "a vehicle of thought, a system of expression that mediates the transfer of thought from one person to another (Nelson, 1998)". This implies that, without language, there would not have been a medium for the exchange of thoughts and ideas which shapes us daily as humans, better than the lesser animals.

Cameron, (2014), defines sociolinguistics as the study of language in relation to society It investigates the ways in which language is utilized in social contexts, how language reflects and shapes social relationships, attitudes, and identities, and how language is inspired with the aid of human interaction and how it influences social norms and values (Edwards, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on the historical evolution, conceptual foundations, theoretical frameworks, and empirical investigations within the research study scope

Conceptual review

"Sociolinguistics is a field of study that emerged in the mid-20th century as linguists and social scientists started to discover the relationship between language and society" (Buhari, 2022). The first use of the term sociolinguistics was through Thomas Callan Hodson within the identification of his 1939 article "Sociolinguistics in India" published in Man in India.

Sociolinguistics is an area of study that specializes in the relationship between language and society. When linguists started to turn out to be interested in the social and geographic versions of language use in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sociolinguistics turned into "born" (Danesi, 2017). The linguist Leonard Bloomfield, who tested the differences between spoken and written language as well as regional versions in English in the 1920s and 30s, emerged as one of the earliest pioneers of sociolinguistics. Yet, sociolinguistics does not any longer emerge as a stand-alone field of observation until the 1950s and 1960s. The emergence of sociolinguistics as a distinct field of study can be traced lower back to the 60s and 1970s, when students which include William Labov, Dell Hymes, and Joshua Fishman started to use quantitative and qualitative strategies to the study of language and society. The linguist William Labov had a significant position in the early improvement of sociolinguistics by means of carrying out several important studies at the socioeconomic and geographical versions in American English. This brought about the improvement of the methodological method of variationist sociolinguistics, which became the dominant paradigm within the subject for numerous many years (Hazen, 2007).

"The field has its roots in several regions, consisting of dialectology, anthropology, and sociology" (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2008). One early precursor to sociolinguistics changed into dialectology, which targeted at the study of regional and social versions in language use. Linguists consisting of George Philip Krapp and Hans Kurath in the early 20th century accumulated statistics on dialects and regional variations in language use, laying the basis for later sociolinguistic research. Another precursor to sociolinguistics became the study of language and lifestyle in anthropology (Milroy, 2012). Anthropologists together with Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf explored the ways in which language shapes concept and tradition, and their work laid the muse for later research of language and identity in sociolinguistics. The subject of sociology also contributed to the improvement of sociolinguistics, specifically through the paintings of scholars inclusive of Erving Goffman and William Labov. Goffman's studies of face-to-face interplay and Labov's studies at the phonological features of New York City English, demonstrating that social elements together with age, gender, and social elegance were related to specific linguistic variables. This study hooked up the methodological method of variationist sociolinguistics, which have become the dominant paradigm within the area for a long time.

Today, sociolinguistics remains a colourful and dynamic area to look at, with ongoing studies on a huge range of subjects related to language and society. It has essential programs in fields which includes language training, language coverage, and intercultural communication, and it plays a vital position in explaining the complex relationship among language and society. Having hooked up the records and foundation of Sociolinguistics, the definitions of Sociolinguistics can be mentioned in the next segment.

Dell Hymes' Ethnolinguistic Hypothesis Theory

Dell Hymes was an influential figure in the fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, whose work fundamentally reshaped our understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and society (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010). Born in 1927 in Portland, Oregon, Hymes pursued an academic career that spanned several decades, during which he made significant contributions to the study of language as a social phenomenon. His interdisciplinary approach combined insights from linguistics, anthropology, and ethnography, emphasizing the importance of context in understanding linguistic behavior. Hymes completed his undergraduate studies at Reed College and earned his Ph.D. in Linguistics from Indiana University in 1955. He taught at several prestigious institutions, including Harvard University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania. Throughout his career, Hymes was deeply engaged in the study of indigenous languages of North America, particularly those of the Pacific Northwest, which informed much of his theoretical work (Silverstein, 2010).

Hymes is perhaps best known for pioneering the field of ethnography of communication, a framework for analyzing how language use is embedded in cultural and social contexts. This approach diverged from traditional linguistic theories that often isolated language from its social functions (McCarty, 2014).. Instead, he advocated for a holistic study of language, considering the social rules and norms that govern communicative behavior. One of Hymes' key contributions was the SPEAKING model, an acronym that stands for Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre (Kiesling, 2012).. This model provided a systematic way to analyze communicative events by examining various components that influence how language is used in specific contexts. The SPEAKING model remains a foundational tool in the field of

sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, allowing researchers to dissect the complexities of communicative interactions.

Hymes also introduced the concept of communicative competence, which broadened the notion of linguistic competence proposed by Noam Chomsky (Celce-Murcia, 2007). While Chomsky's linguistic competence focused on an individual's knowledge of grammatical rules, Hymes' communicative competence encompassed the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts (Lillis & Brown, 2006). This concept highlighted the interplay between linguistic knowledge and social norms, that effective communication involves more than just grammatical accuracy.

The Ethnolinguistic Hypothesis emerged within the broader context of 20th-century linguistic anthropology, a period marked by emphasizing increasing interest in the ways language shapes and is shaped by cultural practices (Beeman, 2012). Valenzuela & Valenzuela (2020), said Hymes' work was influenced by earlier anthropological theories, particularly those of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, who posited that language influences thought and perception a notion commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis or linguistic relativity. However, Hymes extended these ideas by focusing on the social functions of language and the ways in which language use reflects and reinforces cultural norms (Bonvillain, 2019). He argued that understanding a language requires understanding the cultural context in which it is used. This perspective aligned with the ethnographic tradition in anthropology, which emphasizes detailed, context-rich studies of human behavior.

Theoretical Framework

Duranti (2009), in developing the Ethnolinguistic Hypothesis, Hymes drew on his extensive fieldwork among indigenous communities, where he observed the intricate connections between language, culture, and social structure. He noted that language practices often serve to maintain social cohesion and transmit cultural knowledge, playing a crucial role in the perpetuation of cultural identity. Hymes' Ethnolinguistic Hypothesis posits that language is both shaped by and shapes the cultural and social environment (Duranti,2003). This bi-directional relationship implies that linguistic practices are deeply embedded in cultural norms and social structures. The hypothesis emphasizes that to fully understand a language, one must consider the

ethnographic context of how people use language in their everyday, the meanings they attach to their speech, and the social functions it serves.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Datum 1

Lonely at the Top

[Intro]

Ọọh

ỌọhBah

[Verse 1]

It's lonely at the top (Lonely, lonely, lonely)

Money on my mind (Money, money, money)

Don't care what they yarning about me in particular

Ko kan mi, kan mi, kan mi

Out here on the road chasing my dream because I know

No one can chase it for me

[Pre-Chorus]

Ọlọlọlade maa n gb'ọmọ lọ (Gb'ọmọ lọ)

Bọrọkọtọ idi ṣ'ọmọ lọ (Idi ṣ'ọmọ lọ)

Ẹ fi wọn s'ilẹ jẹ kan ma lọ

No dey find anybody na money I want (Me I want)

No dey hear wetin people dey talk (People dey talk)

Wọn ti ge Aṣakẹ l'eti lọ (L'eti lọ)

This life na one, I no get another one

I go take am do wetin I love

[Chorus]

Wetin you love o

No be wetin I love o

Wetin I love I go do am with all my heart o

Ogogoro no be vodka

Mr. Money ginger

But una know I no dey waste time

Mr. Money ginger

[Verse 2]

Just carry on, baby no time (No time)

Bad boy dey me I dey fine

And at the same time, me I dey high (High)
Mo duro tan, mo stand out
Calm down , you go dey fine
Like fine wine, no decline
Sing about it, extraordinary things
Show me love, I go show you more
O pọ lọ pọ, pọ
Wo bo ṣe n ṣe, wo bo ṣe n ṣe
Ọmọ e don tey, jẹ 'a ṣ'ere kére
Mo n fọ f'aye, mo ti fọ f'aye
Ye, ye

[Pre-Chorus]
Ọlọlọlade maa n gb'ọmọ lọ (Gb'ọmọ lọ)
Bọrọkọtọ idi ṣ'ọmọ lọ (Idi ṣ'ọmọ lọ)
Ẹ fi wọn s'ilẹ jẹ kan ma lọ

No dey find anybody na money I want (Me I want)
No dey hear wetin people dey talk (People dey talk)
Wọn ti ge Aṣakẹ l'eti lọ (L'eti lọ)
This life na one, I no get another one
I go take am do wetin I love

[Chorus]
Wetin you love o
No be wetin I love o
Wetin I love I go do am with all my heart o
Ogogoro no be vodka
Mr. Money ginger
But una know I no dey waste time
Mr. Money ginger

Analysis of "Lonely at the Top" by Asake

In "Lonely at the Top", the setting is not explicitly described, but it can be inferred through the lyrics. The song seems to take place in a contemporary urban environment where the pursuit of wealth and success is a central theme. The use of words like "money," "chasing my dream," and "on the road" suggests a bustling milieu, competitive atmosphere typical of modern cities where individuals strive for personal success. This setting reflects the broader cultural context of urban Nigeria, where music, ambition, and the pursuit of economic stability are significant aspects of daily life. The scene, in a psychological sense, is one of introspection and determination. Asake reflects on his journey to success, acknowledging the loneliness and challenges that come with it. The repeated use of phrases like "lonely at the top" and "money on my mind" highlights the emotional and mental state of someone deeply focused on their goals, often at the expense of social connections.

In "Lonely at the Top", Asake is the primary participant, sharing his personal narrative and perspective. The audience includes his fans, listeners who can relate to his journey, and perhaps fellow artists or individuals in similar pursuits of success. The lyrics suggest a direct address to a broader community ("Don't care what they yarning about me in particular"), indicating that Asake is aware of the public's perception and the scrutiny that comes with fame. The song also references various social actors indirectly, such as critics or gossips ("No dey hear wetin people dey talk") and those who might be envious or judgmental of his success ("Ko kan mi,

kan mi, kan mi"). This creates a dialogue between Asake and the wider societal context in which he operates.

The primary end of "Lonely at the Top" is to convey Asake's experiences and feelings about his journey to success. He aims to express the solitary nature of his position, the determination driving his actions, and the resilience needed to continue pursuing his dreams despite external opinions and pressures. Another goal is to inspire and resonate with listeners who might be on similar paths, reinforcing the idea that success often comes with personal sacrifices. Asake also seeks to assert his individuality and commitment to his own values ("Wetin you love o / No be wetin I love o"), emphasizing that his priorities might differ from societal expectations.

Act sequence encompasses the structure and order of the communicative acts within the text. The song's structure follows a conventional pattern of verses, pre-chorus, and chorus:

Intro: Sets the tone with a melodic "Ooh" that prepares the listener for the introspective content.

Verse 1: Introduces the main themes of loneliness and determination, focusing on Asake's mindset and the criticism he faces.

Pre-Chorus: Highlights cultural references and personal resolve ("Ọlọlọlade maa n gb'ọmọ lọ"), emphasizing the inevitability of his path and his focus on financial success.

Chorus: Reinforces the contrast between personal and societal values, asserting his dedication to his own goals and passions.

Verse 2: Continues the narrative with additional reflections on his journey, maintaining a focus on resilience and self-confidence.

Pre-Chorus and Chorus: these are repeated to reinforce the main messages and emotional impact of the song.

This sequence effectively conveys Asake's message by alternating between personal introspection and broader statements of intent, creating a balanced narrative that is both personal and universally relatable.

The tone (Key) of "Lonely at the Top" is both reflective and assertive. Asake conveys a sense of solitude and introspection through lines like "It's lonely at the top" and "No one can chase it for me." This reflective tone is balanced with a strong sense of determination and self-assurance, evident in lines such as "No dey find anybody na money I want" and "I go take am do wetin I love." The manner of delivery is direct and candid, with Asake openly sharing his thoughts and feelings

without pretense. The repeated phrases and rhythmic flow of the lyrics contribute to a musicality that enhances the emotional resonance of the song.

In the song the primary channel is musical performance, combining vocal delivery with instrumental accompaniment. The song's instrumentation includes contemporary Afrobeat elements, characterized by rhythmic beats and melodic hooks that create an engaging listening experience. The form of speech is a mix of English and Yoruba, reflecting Asake's cultural background and the linguistic diversity of his audience. Code-switching between languages adds depth to the lyrics, allowing Asake to connect with listeners on multiple levels and convey cultural nuances that might be lost in a single language.

The norms in the song are shaped by the cultural context of the Nigerian music scene, where success and fame are often accompanied by public scrutiny and commentary. Asake navigates these norms by emphasizing his independence and focus on personal goals, rather than conforming to external expectations. The use of Yoruba phrases and cultural references aligns with the norms of celebrating and preserving cultural heritage within the music. This approach resonates with listeners who share similar cultural backgrounds and appreciate the authenticity and representation in his music.

"Lonely at the Top" falls within the genre of contemporary Afrobeat music, which often blends personal storytelling with rhythmic and melodic elements that appeal to a wide audience. Within this genre, the song can also be classified as a narrative, as it recounts Asake's personal journey and experiences. The genre conventions of Afrobeat include the use of rhythmic beats, repetitive hooks, and a mix of languages, all of which are present in this song. By adhering to these conventions, Asake ensures that his message is accessible and engaging to his listeners.

Datum 2
Believe

[Intro] Ololade mi Aşakẹ
Tune in to the King of Sound and Blues

[Verse 1]
How far my G?
Mo fẹ pa'wo mi
Mi o fẹ were, fun mi l'owo mi

As e dey go, ma ma dupẹ ni
Tori ore to n bọ, o pọ bi dozen
O pọ bi 40
Based on believe

[Pre-Chorus]Işẹju kan l'o ku, wọn ma mọ
Everybody, gbogbo wọn ma mọ
Tell dem make dem pay attention

Hun hun hun
Dakun jẹ'n s'ọrọ
I dey street, I dey hustle like bọlọ
Where dem dey when I no get no Kọbọ?
Where dem dey?
Brother, where dem dey?

[Chorus]I believe I believe
I believe I believe
I believe I believe (hee hor hor hor hor hor hor)
I believe I believe
I believe I believe
I believe I believe

[Verse 2]
They want make my value go down like metal parts
Make I hammer dem, second verse
Ọlọgbọn l'o ni universe
When I drop lamba dem, go dance
Oya Mr. Money, ẹ ma şe jẹ k'o cast
O n pẹ t'o ba cast
Make I puff puff pass
Symbiosis, we' the game we no fit kalas
We collide with life as we speak ọmọ bow
Oya da'hun
Gynomous, scandalous

Wọn n'o fabulous, stupendous
World famous
Notorious, ambitious, scrupulous
Nitty gritty, authentic too
I'm the one!

[Pre-Chorus] Işẹju kan l'o ku, wọn ma mọ
Everybody, gbogbo wọn ma mọ
Tell dem make dem pay attention
E get why wey dem call me landlord
Hun hun hun
Dakun jẹ'n s'ọrọ
I dey street, I dey hustle like bọlọ
Where dem dey when I no get no Kọbọ?
Where dem dey?
Brother, where dem dey?
I believe!

[Chorus] I believe I believe
I believe I believe
I believe I believe (hee hor hor hor hor hor hor)
I believe I believe
I believe I believe
I believe I believe
Ah ah ah

Analysis of "Believe" by Asake

In "Believe," the setting is implied rather than explicitly stated. The song is set against the backdrop of contemporary urban Nigeria, a place characterized by bustling city life, economic hustle, and vibrant street culture. The references to wealth ("owo nla bi Jeff Bezos abi Elon Musk") and street life ("I dey street, I dey hustle like bọlọ") suggest an environment where financial success and survival are primary concerns. The scene is one of resilience and aspiration. Asake reflects on his journey, the struggles he faced, and his unwavering belief in his eventual success. This psychological setting underscores the song's motivational tone,

resonating with listeners who identify with the challenges and dreams of making it big in a competitive world.

In the song Asake is the primary participant, narrating his story and expressing his beliefs. The audience consists of his fans and listeners, particularly those who resonate with his narrative of struggle and success. The song addresses both his supporters and his critics, as well as those who doubted him during his early days ("Where dem dey when I no get no Kọbọ?"). Asake also indirectly references other influential figures such as Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, symbolizing the heights of financial success he aspires to. The song thus creates a conversation between Asake and his audience about the realities of ambition, perseverance, and self-belief.

The primary end of "Believe" is to inspire and affirm. Asake shares his personal narrative to encourage others to believe in themselves and their dreams despite obstacles. The repeated chorus, "I believe I believe," serves as a mantra of self-affirmation, reinforcing the importance of belief in one's journey towards success. Another goal is to assert his identity and position within the music industry and society ("E get why wey dem call me landlord"). Asake uses the song to establish his credibility and remind listeners of his hard work and dedication.

The structure of "Believe" follows a traditional pattern with an intro, verses, pre-choruses, and chorus:

Intro: Sets the tone with a greeting ("Ololade mi Aşakẹ") and a nod to his musical style ("Tune in to the King of Sound and Blues").

Verse 1: Introduces the themes of ambition and financial aspiration, referencing influential figures and the importance of gratitude.

Pre-Chorus: Highlights his street credibility and the significance of paying attention to his journey and message.

Chorus: these are repeated affirmations of belief, serving as the emotional and thematic core of the song.

Verse 2: Expands on the themes of resilience and overcoming challenges, emphasizing his unique attributes and success.

Pre-Chorus and Chorus: Repeated to reinforce the song's key messages and emotional impact.

This act sequence effectively builds a narrative of struggle, resilience, and belief, engaging the listener through a rhythmic and lyrical journey.

The tone (Key) of "Believe" is motivational and assertive. Asake's delivery is confident and empowering, designed to uplift and inspire his audience. The use of Yoruba phrases alongside English adds a cultural depth and authenticity to his

message, making it resonate more deeply with his Nigerian listeners. The manner of delivery is direct and impactful, with Asake using both declarative statements ("I believe I believe") and rhetorical questions ("Where dem dey when I no get no Kọbọ?") to emphasize his points. This combination of affirmation and questioning engages the audience and invites them to reflect on their own experiences and beliefs.

In the song the primary channel is musical performance, combining vocal delivery with instrumental accompaniment typical of Afrobeat music. The song features rhythmic beats, melodic hooks, and a blend of traditional and contemporary sounds that create an engaging and culturally rich listening experience. The form of speech is a mix of English and Yoruba, showcasing code-switching that reflects Asake's cultural heritage and connects with a diverse audience. This bilingual approach allows him to convey cultural nuances and reach listeners on multiple linguistic and cultural levels.

"Believe" belongs to the genre of contemporary Afrobeat music, a genre known for its rhythmic complexity, melodic richness, and cultural depth. Within this genre, the song can also be seen as a motivational narrative, as it tells the story of Asake's journey and beliefs. Afrobeat as a genre is characterized by its fusion of traditional African music with jazz, funk, and other styles, creating a sound that is both distinctly African and globally appealing. "Believe" adheres to these genre conventions, using its rhythmic and melodic elements to enhance its narrative and emotional impact.

Conclusion

Asake's songs illustrate the characteristics of his speech community, reflecting the shared experiences and cultural dynamics of urban Nigerians. By addressing themes that resonate deeply with his listeners, Asake creates music that is both relatable and impactful, offering a vivid portrayal of the contemporary Nigerian urban experience. Through his music, Asake not only entertains but also inspires and connects with his audience, reinforcing the cultural and social values that define his community. His ability to blend linguistic and cultural elements into his music highlights the richness and diversity of Nigerian culture, making his songs a valuable contribution to the global music landscape. In essence, Asake's music is a celebration of the human spirit, capturing the essence of urban Nigerian life with authenticity, depth, and cultural pride. His songs serve as a testament to the power of music as a tool for

communication, reflection, and connection, offering listeners a profound and engaging experience that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries.

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