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## **Discursive Practices in Nigerian Pentecostal Christian Songs**

**Abstract.** Music is derived from the linguistic and cultural experience of the composer or singer. This study looks at the contemporary practice in Christian songs and how the socio-cultural experiences of worshippers are influencing the kinds of songs that are composed and sung in Pentecostal Churches in South-western Nigeria. Songs in contemporary Christian gatherings no longer have pure worship content. Socio-cultural experiences, brought about by economic decline, the indigenous spiritual world-view, and other contemporary social practices now filter into Church songs. Songs are also used to manipulate and condemn those who would not respect such new discursive practices in the Church. This is a clear ideological departure from the practices of the Church in its earliest days. It was also observed that language interlading in form of code mixing is becoming common in contemporary Christian songs. The implication of this for Christian worship is that many of the songs now have pure social value, thereby eroding the worship value.

**Key Words:** discourse, discursive practices, Pentecostal, critical discourse analysis, songs, church

## **Introduction**

Systemic Linguistics, a major theory of the nature of language, draws attention to the place of context in language interpretation. M.A.K. Halliday, the major proponent of this school of thought which adopts a functionalist approach to language, asserts in most of his work that language use is a social activity and that language users make choices from their language systems, to express three major functions in response to the demands of the society. These functions, which he calls “metafunctions” are the ideational or experiential functions (the world of ideas, the background knowledge of a culture prevalent in the society in which a speaker is operating); the interpersonal function (the roles people assume and how they behave in different situations of language use and the roles they assume); and the textual function (the function that deals with conventions for realizing and organizing texts) (See Halliday, 1973, 1985).

A view related to that expressed by Systemic linguists is generally expressed by discourse analysts, that discourse is a social practice which cannot be separated from the social contexts in which it is embedded. The goal of Discourse Analysis (DA) is to identify the categories, ideas, views, roles, etc., of participants within the text. Several discourse analysts have agreed that DA dwells on the categorizing, performative, and rhetorical features of texts and talk. (see Antaki, et al., 2003 and Potter, 1996). DA is a way of understanding social interactions.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Study of Language Behaviour**

Critical Discourse analysis is a later development within DA, one of whose major postulations is that our expressions are not neutral – they portray our social identities, relationships and ideologies (see Ayoola, 2005). In most interactions, users bring with them different dispositions towards language which are closely related to their social positioning. Kress (1990) stresses that the defined and delimited set of statements that constitute a discourse

are themselves expressive of and organized by a specific ideology. Language, therefore, can never appear by itself – it always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms, which themselves reflect the prevailing discursive and ideological systems (Taiwo, 2007: 220).

Critical Discourse Analysis is a departure from traditional methods of language analysis which look at the surface linguistic forms to determine meaning. The aim is to “unmask” the meaning in any form of language. It has a strong historical link with an approach developed by a group based at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s (Fowler, 1981; Fowler, *et al*, 1979). This group was strongly influenced by the work of Systemic Linguistics, combined with stylistic approaches borrowed from Chomskyan Transformational Generative Grammar and the works of Roland Barthes and early French semiotics (see Threadgold, 2003). According to Threadgold, (2003),

Critical linguistics was concerned to read the meanings in texts as the realization of social processes, seeing texts as functioning ideologically and politically in relation to their contexts. This was very much an approach in which discourse was text, but there was little emphasis on the production and interpretation of texts, a too ready assumption of the transparent relationship between textual features and social meanings and a neglect of discourse as a domain of social struggle or of the ways in which changes in discourse might be related to wider process of social and cultural change. (p.10)

CDA therefore, draws on poststructuralist discourse theory and critical linguistics. It focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts. According to van Dijk (2001), CDA deals with social issues and power relations in the society. Most studies on CDA ask questions about how discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social dominance. CDA features such issues as power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structure and social order (see van Dijk, 2001: 354).

CDA has been applied so much in recent times to the study of language in areas, such as media, news reports, editorials and other media contents (van Dijk, 1988; Kaplan, 1990; Kress,

1990, Taiwo, 2007). This is based on the premise that “our words are never neutral”, but reflect the interests of those who speak. (Fiske, 1994). The meanings we convey with our words are identified by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions (McGregor, 2003).

The present study is a departure from the usual focus of CDA on the media and other popular institutional discourses to another genre - language used with music. We base this study on the premise that vocal music is a form of language performance. Songs are not sung just for the sake of singing; they are meaningful and these meanings are rooted in the experience and cultural values of the singer. It is with this viewpoint that we critically examine the language of some contemporary Christian songs to explore the choices made in the lyrics and identify how they tie with the wider social and cultural structures of the society.

This study examines the features of language as they are used for \*\*signification. This work is an attempt to critically interpret some contemporary Christian songs used in worship in South Western Nigeria by looking beyond the words to the ideologies that underlie their composition. We view songs as instances of language use, which like any other linguistic forms, express the socio-cultural experience and beliefs of the singer. Thus, what people believe and will naturally say is what they compose and put to music to become songs. This work seeks to tackle the following questions:

- (a) What are the typical features of contemporary Christian songs in South-western Nigeria?
- (b) In what ways do contemporary Christian songs mirror the socio-cultural experience of the singers in South-western Nigeria?
- (c) How are these songs used to influence the world-view of contemporary Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria?

### **Socio-political Conditions in Nigeria (1983 – 1999)**

Shortly after her independence, Nigeria witnessed relative prosperity. The 1970s were years of economic expansion in the country, based on oil revenue. This economic boom, however, came to a halt in 1981 with the collapse of oil prices in the world market. Unemployment, rampant inflation and scarcity followed. Pentecostalism, which had been in the country for about a decade, blossomed in the 1980s due to these socio-economic changes observable in the country. The policies of the military dictatorship, which ruled from the early 1980s until June 1999 over the nation's acute economic short-comings, drove residents to seek solace in prayer. The military government of Ibrahim Babangida introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, which further precipitated hardship in the nation with massive economic retrenchment, an embargo on employment, and devastating price increases. Against this backdrop of economic and moral decline, the Pentecostal churches brought a sense of community, motivation to work, and a self-help philosophy. They also engendered distinct teachings related to purity and prosperity. According to Hunt (2000),

These churches provide new strategies of survival and the restructuring of personal and collective relationships against a backdrop of severe economic decline. Hence, they frequently offer symbolic and material resources to a number of distinct social groups in Nigeria and at a practical level establish innovating forms of social organization. In simple terms, they mark a reaction to the ever-changing difficulties, demands and constraints of everyday existence - not only those engendered by the political state but the broader economic and social conditions. (p.5).

The years under examination witnessed four military regimes in Nigeria. The military incursion in power led to unnecessary profligacy, since they were not accountable to the electorate. The rule of law was at its lowest ebb. The significance of this period for this study is that it marked the beginning of shift in Pentecostal discourse. This shift was a response to the socio-political and economic conditions of the country. Pentecostal ministers started shifting

their focus from the typically recognized themes of holiness, righteousness, salvation and repentance to material prosperity and Divine blessing, which adherents became more comfortable with.

### **Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria**

Pentecostalism is a Christian movement that sprang up in the United States. Western Pentecostalism started gaining popularity in Nigeria in the late 1960s and early 1970s through organizations like The Scripture Union and Students Christian Movement (see Ojo, 2006). Now in the new millennium, Pentecostalism has continued to spread all over the nation. The fastest growing Pentecostal groups in Nigeria in the new millennium are The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), The Living Faith Ministries, also known as Winners Chapel, Deeper Life Church and Mountain of Fire and Miracles. These Churches are not only growing in Nigeria, they are spreading their tentacles to other African nations, Europe, America, and Russia. For instance, after the collapse of Communism and the break up of The Soviet Union, Pentecostalism spread into the Soviet Union, whose residents had been denied religious experience for many years. Nigerian-born Sunday Adelaja is reputed to command one of world's largest mega-churches based in Ukraine. Nigerian ministries also send missionaries to these parts of the world to establish branches of their organization. Hunt (2000) identifies the major reason for the missionary efforts of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches in other parts of the world, particularly Europe, "the wish to evangelize what is perceived by the Nigerian churches as the 'dark continent' of Europe, has led to the 'planting' of numerous congregations out of Nigeria by individual parishes in Lagos or other large urban areas in Nigeria." (p.6).

### **The Nigerian Pentecostal Discourse**

Just like discourse in other domains of language use, the Pentecostal discourse in Nigeria has its own peculiar features, which are deeply rooted in basic Christian doctrines and practices and the

socio-economic and cultural experience of the adherents. There is no doubt that Nigerian Pentecostal discourse draws much from the Western Pentecostal discourse – the latter being the source. However, many years after Pentecostalism has taken its roots in Nigeria, Nigerian Christians have learnt to express their experience in worship in what can be described as a purely Nigerian way, which is a clear departure from the Western way, the result of the nativization of imported practices to express distinctly contemporaneous Nigerian cultural values.

One aspect of the African tradition, which is very strong in Nigeria, is the sense of relationship between the spirit world and the physical world. The strong belief in the Nigerian culture that humans can and do manipulate the spiritual to affect the physical has brought many to the conclusion that things do not “just happen,” especially when they are unpleasant. For instance, most deaths are traced to a human source, possibly manipulating the spiritual powers. This belief coupled with socio-economic challenges such as inflation, poverty, unemployment, and life insecurity, makes fear and anxiety reflect persistently as components of discourse in Nigeria, even among Pentecostals Christians.

Its is clear that beyond the typical components of Christian discourse – faith, perseverance, love, sacrifice, and so forth, other issues that typically reflect the Nigerian socio-cultural setting feature in the routine conversations, literary works, and even music, which is derived from the normal daily discourse.

### **Contemporary Pentecostal Christian Songs**

Contemporary Pentecostal Christian songs are used in worship in Christian gatherings. Sometimes among Pentecostals, there is a perception of distinction between different kinds of songs, such as praise songs and worship songs. To some Pentecostals, praise songs are characterized by faster beats and dancing, while worship songs are solemn. However, for the purpose of this study, we did not look at these distinctions. What we refer to as Pentecostal

Christian songs encompass all the different kinds of songs, as long as they are used in contemporary Christian worship services. We do not make any distinction between slow and fast beat songs, since this study is not a musicological study. Rather, our goal is to look at the linguistic components of the songs, which we consider as derived from natural speech. We will also look at how the songs reflect the experience of the people in the context of daily lives and immediate personal and societal needs.

Christian songs come with different themes. Some of the traditionally focused themes reflect the typical Christian doctrines of faith, love, righteousness, perseverance, *etc.* Other more specific themes are adoration of God, gratitude to God, commitment to the Christian service, prayer, and so forth. In order to reflect contemporary values in the Nigerian society, the thematic tentacles of worship songs have extended to embrace issues that would not normally be featured in worship songs, such as success, competition, challenge, *etc.* The socio-economic climate of Nigeria has led to the incorporation of songs that address the challenges being experienced by Nigerian Christians.

### **Methodology**

This work is a critical analysis of contemporary Pentecostal songs in South-western Nigeria. The data is drawn from songs used in Pentecostal settings in four states in the south-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria – Osun, Ondo, Lagos and Oyo States. These songs were elicited through three primary media - firstly through the use of tape recorder, secondly through participant observation and thirdly through a study of some of the songs that have been recorded for commercial purpose. These three methods gave us access to a wide range of songs from different sources. For instance, the experience from the field (Church services) helps us not just to listen to and record the songs, but also to take observational notes, while those from recorded cassettes help us fill the gap, in cases when songs that are missed out in the services. Five different



Pentecostal Church denominations were visited in each state, giving us a total of twenty churches visited. The songs finally used were selected through purposive random sampling – mainly songs that typically mirror the experience of the singers

The songs used were sung in the two predominant languages in the area of study – Yoruba and English. The songs targeted were the indigenous Nigerian songs – typically composed and popularly sang in Pentecostal churches. Some of these songs have features of language interlading – mixing of the two languages in one song. We are conscious that some songs used in worship are Western in origin. Such songs are excluded from this data, because the data aims to bring out experiential issues, which are closely tied to the peoples' identities. The study also excludes hymns in either language. The corpus was subjected to a critical analysis with a view to establish the link between the linguistics content and the social structure in which they are produced.

### **Findings and Discussions**

A critical analysis of the discursal elements in contemporary Pentecostal songs reveals that most of them have a clear departure from Western-oriented songs, which still exist in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches. It was particularly noted that contemporary Christian songs are gradually changing their focus from pure praise and worship to the socio-cultural setting and values of the people. Contemporary Christian songs are no longer the conventional prayer, commitment, and praise songs. They now delve into the areas of financial success, prosperity, competition, challenge, and assertions

The prosperity message is gaining ground among Nigerian Pentecostals. The reason for this is not far-fetched – the profound economic, social and political challenges in the country have thrown a lot of Nigerians into hardship, fear, and sorrow. The range of teachings in most Pentecostal churches is now tending towards wealth, success and health. Invitations to Churches

are woven around these issues. People are asked to come “to receive blessings” and prosperity, rather than “to receive Jesus.”

Apart from the prosperity message, the spiritual world is amplified, and adherents are encouraged to continuously wage war against it and all the human agents who represent it. Most challenges are termed “spiritual”, even when they can apparently be traced to human faults. Vengeance against perceived enemies is openly taught, and prayers and songs are targeted at enemies – those who would stand against the success of adherents. An affliction or total elimination of an enemy seems to be a great achievement in most contemporary Pentecostal settings, a sharp departure from the practices of earlier Pentecostals in the country. They were quite conscious of the spirit world, but their message tended more towards ‘holiness’ and “righteousness,” and the enemy was largely de-emphasized.

Contemporary songs are clearly a reflection of the kinds of teachings going on in the Pentecostal context. Sometimes, teachings on prosperity are thinly dressed in the theology of praise. For instance one of the songs, which is a call and response song is reproduce below.

- |    |   |                |
|----|---|----------------|
| 1. | <i>Bàbá, Bàbá, Bàbá, Bàbá, loke</i>               | <i>Baba</i>    |
|    | <i>Gbogbo oun tí mo ní ma fì yìn ọ lógo</i>       | <i>Bàbá</i>    |
|    | <i>Apá, ojú, etí, esè mi tire ni o</i>            | <i>Baba</i>    |
|    | <i>Ilé tí ma kó o</i>                             | <i>mansion</i> |
|    | <i>Omo tí mo bí o</i>                             |                |
|    | <i>Pajero mi ò, BMW mi ò</i>                      | <i>Baba</i>    |
|    | <i>Bàbá, Bàbá o Bàbá mi l'ókè</i>                 | <i>Baba</i>    |
|    | (Father, Father, Father, Father, Father in heaven | Father         |
|    | All I have will be used for your praise           | Father         |
|    | My hands, eyes, ears and legs are yours           | Father         |
|    | The house I will build                            | mansion        |
|    | My children                                       |                |
|    | My Pajero and BMW                                 | Father         |
|    | Father, Father, Father, Father in heaven)         | Father         |

A critical analysis of this song shows that it appears to have the message of praise on the surface.

Beneath that surface lies the cravings of the larger society – riding expensive cars (*Mitsubishi*

*Pajero* and *BMW*) and building *mansions*, which project status and command respect for the owner. The song shows that the Church appears to reflect the yardstick used by the overall society for defining prosperity and success.

Another major issue is the value the Yoruba place on celebrations. One of the social means of dousing the tensions of the socio-economic challenges in the country involves celebrations. People lavishly celebrate just anything that is considered a mark of achievement in the world, such as birthdays, moving to a new house, naming a baby, a new car, promotion, graduation, burial of aged people, and so on. Apart from these social issues, contemporary Nigerian Christians celebrate some remarkable spiritual landmarks or achievements, such as ordination as priests or deacons, confirmation of membership in the Church, baptism, Church anniversaries and annual general meetings. Every celebration is marked with the provision of much food and drink for guests. A celebration is not considered successful if people do not eat to their satisfaction and even take some things home as souvenirs. This brought about the concept of “take away”, which is now an established practice in most celebrations in the south-western Nigeria. A “take away” may include a meal and drinks packed for the guest, or items such as handkerchiefs, tin or bottle openers, plastic products (plastic hand fans, bowls, buckets, jugs), household items, towels, napkins, wall clocks, notebooks, etc., which are given to guests as tokens of appreciation. Meals are prepared in excess to ensure that guests can take home some food. This idea has also been expressed in some songs to reflect the value of people and what they consider as success for any celebration. Below is one of such songs:

2. *Làìpé, lài jìnà, e o wá bá mi dupe*  
*Làìpé, lài jìnà, e o wá bá mi jó*  
*Tó jé wí pé,*  
*E ó je àjeyó, é ó tún dì lolé*  
 ‘Very soon, you will rejoice with me  
 Very soon, you will dance with me  
 To the extent that

You will eat satisfactorily and have enough to take home'

Celebrations are seen as occasions to thank God and get others together to thank God with the celebrant. Dance is a very important component of any celebration. It is the Yoruba people's way of expressing joy and gratitude. The celebrant dances to some songs played on a stereo or by a live band and guests join in to express their joy. To dance with celebrants is to identify with their success. In addition to dancing with the celebrant, people spend money for the celebrant by placing money on them and sometimes the musicians (if there is a live band). This practice, called *spraying*, has also filtered into the Church. Thanksgivings in Churches are done with much dancing and spraying. To underscore the importance of dance, so many Pentecostal Christian songs address the issue of dance, making it clear that it is their own way of expressing gratitude to God. The following extracts from songs are examples:

3. *I will dance as David danced*
4. *We are dancing unto the Lord, dancing hallelujah...*
5. *Bò le jó, yàgò lónà fún mi. N ó fì j"o mi hàn bì eni moore*  
'if you cannot dance, excuse me on the way. I will dance to demonstrate my gratitude'
6. *èmi á jó, orí Bàbá mi á wú, èmi á jó, inu Jésù á dùn sí mi ò...*  
'I will dance and my father will be impressed, I will dance and Jesus will be happy with me'

Dance is such an important aspect of the social reality of the Yoruba that even the Church cannot deny it.

Some Pentecostals interpret dance as frivolity and therefore will not use drums or dance in their worship. However, the many Pentecostals who accept dance sometimes qualify it as "*ijó Jésù*" (Jesus' dance) to differentiate it from the *worldly dance* and justify the act. It is, though, getting more difficult to draw a fine distinction along this line, as the commercialisation of Christian songs is accelerating. Some of the songs that clearly originate from Pentecostal

gatherings are now becoming popular and accepted generally, regardless of religion or background. The reason may be adduced to the fact that the values of the Church and those of the world are merging, and non-Christians are more comfortable with the songs that emanate from the Church in contemporary times than previously. Furthermore, musicians from different backgrounds have appropriated Christian songs and incorporated them into their brand of songs.

Contemporary Pentecostals also employ the use of subtle challenge to those who fail to comply with their practice. This is an expression of power to influence, control and manipulate those who would not conform. This is particularly done with respect to social practices that go along with some of the contemporary songs. Those who will not sing or dance are subtly marginalized. Some songs clearly demonstrate this.

7. *Bó ò le jó yàgò lónà fún mi* ‘if you cannot dance, leave the way for me’
8. *Bó ò bá le è jó, o ti j Olórun ní gbèsè* (if you cannot dance, you are a debtor to God)
9. *oò lè pàtéwó, kò tún lè k’orin, ó wá nse diè diè bíí aláìmoore* ‘you cannot clap, you cannot sing, you are behaving like an ingrate’

Pentecostal Churches generally, in contemporary times, are growing more uncomfortable with the doctrine of “suffering” in any form, as the gospel of “success” or “prosperity” in all ramifications is fast taking over. Most discourses in the Church are woven around prosperity, so prosperity songs are getting more popular. A song in the Nigerian Pidgin demonstrates this:

10. *Me I no go suffer, I no go beg for bread,  
God of miracle, na my papa o, na my papa o  
(I will not suffer and I will not beg for bread  
God of miracle is my father, He is my father)*
11. *Jaburata, jaburata, jaburata  
God go bless me jaburata  
Jaburata, jaburata, jaburata  
God go bless me jaburata  
‘So well, so well, so well  
God will bless me so well*

So well, so well  
 God will bless me so well'

Akintayo (2006) observes the influence the influence of contemporary music on the Nigerian Pidgin community, and the inroads of dance into the movement as well,

It is fascinating to note that numerous gospel choruses in pidgin enjoy amazing popularity among the adherents of Christian Faith. The religious faithful also dance enthusiastically to the percussive rhythm of the choruses (p.136).

To further reflect the fact that the theme of “success” is gaining ground among contemporary Pentecostals, the lyrics of existing songs are changing to accommodate this new doctrine. Two versions of a song are reproduced below, the original (a) followed by the latter, with substitution (b).

12. *a. Today, o, I will lift up my voice in praise,  
 For I know that you are always there for me,  
 Almighty God, You are my all in all,  
 No matter what I face, when TROUBLE comes my way,  
 I will praise the Lord.*

*b. Today, o, I will lift up my voice in praise,  
 For I know that you are always there for me,  
 Almighty God, You are my all in all,  
 No matter what I face, when SUCCESS comes my way,  
 I will praise the Lord.*

The word *trouble* is offensive to many contemporary Christians. The traditional logic in this song is that a person will naturally praise God in success, but it is more difficult to praise God in trouble; therefore the earlier version is more suitable for this message. The composer of the original version, a popular worship leader in Pentecostal gatherings in Nigeria, once told the story that inspired the composition. His family went to Church on a Sunday and on their return found house completely burnt down. While ruminating over the incident and trying to get over the shock, he was inspired to compose that song, which is a popular worship song among the

Pentecostals in the country. So, the song was actually composed in the context of “trouble” and not “success,” which is reflected in the revised version.

Cultural practices are also filtering into the Church in respect to the use of honorific personal deixis. For instance, the Yoruba have the honorific forms for adults and unfamiliar people *èyin* as opposed to *ìwo*, the non-honorific counterpart ‘you’. It is now common for some worshippers to replace every occurrence of *ìwo* with *èyin* when referring to God in their songs to demonstrate their respect for God, as in the following extract:

13. *èyin lánà o, èyin lónì, èyin lóla, ò, èyin l’ójó gbogbo* ‘you are the same yesterday, today and everyday’

14. *èyin ni mo wá gbé ga, èyin ni mo wá fiyìn fun* ‘you are the one I have come to lift high, you are the one I have come to glorify’

Respect is an aspect of social order, indexing the speakers consciousness of the relation to the person being addressed. In this case, the feeling is that we cannot be familiar with God to the extent of dishonouring Him. If in the world view of the Yoruba a well-respected person is to be honoured, how much more so God, the creator of mankind?

The study also discovered some instances of language interlading, in the form of code mixing. In some instances, Yoruba expressions feature in English worship songs, especially when such expressions cannot be adequately conveyed in English, for example:

15. *Your excellency káábíyèsí* (*káábíyèsí* means a person who cannot be queried’

16. *We komólè* ‘*komólè* is a style of dancing that makes that dancer slant his/her body down in the course of dancing’

17. *We rábàbà* ‘turning to different direction with arms wide spread’

The expressions *káábíyèsí* and *komólè* are so culture-specific that they do not have any satisfactory English equivalents. *Káábíyèsí* is used for greeting kings in Yoruba land. It expresses the sanctity of the office of kings. In most instances, kings cannot be asked why they

chose to act in any particular way. By extension, God is seen not just as “Your Excellency” (an expression used to refer to highly honoured people), he is also the King who installs kings, as the Yoruba will put it (*Oba tó n foba je*). On the other hand, *rábàbà* is a word that has its origin in the way the Yoruba worship the deities. Adherents turn their bodies around. This is to indicate that wherever one turns to, the gods are there. The idea was brought into contemporary worship as Christians see similarity in this belief of the idol worshippers and theirs – that God is everywhere. The word marks total submission and veneration to God.

Other instances of language interlading may just be done for various reasons best known to the composer and the singer and not necessarily because of lack of adequate ways of expressing concepts. Examples of such songs include;

18. *I just want to say, Baba o, E se, e, e, e, e* ‘I ust want to say thank you father’
19. *Olórun àgbáyé o You are mighty* ‘God of all the earth, You are Mighty’
20. *ìwo nìkan l’ògo ye, Mighty Father, King of creation, ìwo nìkan l’ògo ye* ‘you alone are worthy of glory, Mighty Father, King of Creation, you alone are worthy of glory’

Instances of code mixing involving the use of Nigerian languages in one song are heard as well.

21. *Kò mà s’oba bíire, Kò mà s’oba ù Jèsù, Igwe* ‘*there is no king as you, there is no king as Jesus; Igwe* ‘an Igbo name for a king’
22. *Jesus na you biko, ògá pátá pátá, Na you biko oga* ‘*Jesus it’s only you, please the greatest boss, it’s only you, the greatest boss; na you Nigerian Pidgin* “it’s you”’

Song 21 is a code-mixing of Igbo in a Yoruban song. Song 22 is a code mixing of Nigerian Pidgin and Yoruba. The multilingual nature of most Nigerian cities is encouraging the mixture of major language in discourse and this likewise is increasingly reflected in Pentecostal songs.



## **Conclusion**

This paper explores discursive practices in contemporary Pentecostal Christian songs in Nigeria. The study identifies the influence of the prosperity message coupled with socio-cultural practices in contemporary Christian songs. Christian songs in contemporary times do not necessarily convey the intrinsic values of praise worship, as they used to do in the early days of Christianity in Nigeria. The socio-cultural experiences of the singers greatly influence the songs they sing. Songs are used to wage war against perceived enemies of the singers, and to manipulate those who would not conform with certain practices and possibly condemn them. Songs are no longer rendered in one language; rather, the contemporary social practice of code-switching and mixing are becoming regular features of Nigerian Christian songs.

The major finding of this paper is the expression of indigenous cultural practices in an erstwhile purely foreign religious practice. The need to blend the contact languages results in the mixing of their structures is felt when culture-specific concepts are required to express the exact feelings of worshippers.

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