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Linguistic Deviances as Stylistic Resources in the Nigerian Music Industry: A Semiotic Analysis of Adeleke's "Funds" and Apata's "Hustle"

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ABSTRACT

This study examined linguistic deviances (LDs) as stylistic resources in the Nigerian music industry, through a semiotic analysis of Adeleke's "Funds" and Apata's "Hustle". Linguistic deviance, a hallmark of creative language use in artistic expression, is explored here as a deliberate semiotic act that encodes cultural, ideological, and socio-economic meanings within the contemporary Nigerian popular music. A qualitative research design was adopted in the analysis of the selected songs. The study draws from Barthes' semiotic theory of denotation, connotation, and myth, as well as Leech and Short's stylistics theory as frameworks for unpacking how deviation from linguistic norms constructs stylistic identity and social commentary. Findings from the study showed that LDs in both songs transcend mere artistic play; they index resistance to linguistic hegemony, assert sociolectal authenticity, and project the artists' personae as voices of economic struggle and self-affirmation. The results further showed that LDs are deliberate strategies that enhance rhythm, meaning, and cultural identity. The use of code-switching by the artists fosters hybridity, slang, and neologisms that reflect youth culture, while NPE ensures inclusiveness. Repetition and phonological stylization are also found to strengthen emphasis and musicality. The study, while concluding that LDs are powerful stylistic and semiotic devices that enrich Nigerian music, negotiate cultural identity, and index the lived realities of the youth, recommends that further research be conducted across other artists and genres, as well as the documentation of emerging linguistic innovations in other African music. This study has implications for theoretical studies and contributes to the growing body of scholarship at the intersection of

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stylistics, semiotics, and sociolinguistics, highlighting how popular music mediates between local linguistic practices and global stylistic trends.

Keywords: Linguistic Deviances; Nigerian Music; NPE; Slang; Stylistics; Semiotics

1. Introduction

Language has always been a tool for communication among humans. Such a tool often changes based on the social and cultural setting, thereby paving the way for language variation among users. In Nigeria, a nation with a multilingual and multicultural background, language variation is inevitable. Considering its rich multicultural and multilingual landscape with a dynamic setting, linguistic deviance has not only become a stylistic device but also a marker of authenticity and creativity, especially in the Nigerian music industry. Thus, the Nigerian music industry, particularly in its contemporary Afrobeats and pop variants, has become a vibrant site for linguistic innovation, cultural identity construction, and semiotic creativity [1]. Artists deploy multiple languages, dialects, and stylistic elements not only as a communicative tool but also as a resource for style, branding, and meaning-making in a competitive global industry. With English functioning as the official language, Nigerian Pidgin English as a lingua franca, while Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo dominate regional communication, Nigerian musicians often blend these languages with global English, creating hybrid styles that resonate locally and internationally [2].

In this way, linguistic deviation becomes central to stylistics because deviation from linguistic norms draws attention and creates foregrounding [3, 4]. According to Leech, linguistic deviation may occur at several levels: graphological, phonological, lexical, grammatical, semantic, dialectal, and even register-based [3]. In literature and artistic texts, deviation is not perceived as error but as a deliberate stylistic choice meant to achieve effects such as emphasis, humour, defamiliarization, or identity marking [5]. Foregrounding thus explains how unusual or deviant features become stylistic resources that enhance artistic expression.

In view of the foregoing, this study explores linguistic deviances as stylistic resources in Nigerian popular music, focusing on two songs: *Funds* by David Adeleke (popularly known as Davido) and *Hustle* by Teniola Apata (known as Teni) [6, 7]. Through a semiotic analysis, the research investigates how departures from linguistic norms contribute to the stylistic and cultural impact of these works. Although many studies have explored code-switching and creative language use in Nigerian music as a whole, only a few of such studies have looked closely at how specific songs use language and style to create meaning. In particular, existing scholarship on Nigerian popular music has highlighted code-switching, multilingualism, and the role of NPE in popular culture [2, 8, 9]. However, few studies have treated linguistic deviance systematically as a stylistic resource within a semiotic and SFL framework. Most research catalogues instances of code-mixing or slang but does not connect them to their broader stylistic and ideological functions. On this note, the present study contributes by (1) identifying and classifying linguistic deviances across phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels; (2) analysing their stylistic and semiotic functions in the selected songs; and (3) demonstrating how deviance intersects with themes of wealth, struggle, and identity construction in Nigerian music. In doing so, the study advances the stylistic study of African popular culture and enriches the discourse on semiotic creativity in globalized cultural industries.

While linguistic deviation in the music industry does not undermine or affect correct grammar or spelling used in formal situations, this study contributes to the dynamic nature of language use within the Nigerian linguistic landscape, considering its multilingual and multicultural nature, thereby paving the way for a detailed case-based analysis of contemporary Afrobeats lyrics from semiotic and sociolinguistic lenses. Our present study is significant in that it illuminates how Nigerian artists negotiate identity, aspiration, and politics through language in popular music; thereby offering insights for music scholars, marketers, and cultural commentators on how linguistic styling contributes to meaning-making and audience perception.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Linguistic Deviance

Linguistic deviance refers to deliberate deviations from standard language norms for artistic, stylistic, or commu-

nicative purposes. As Leech notes, linguistic deviance is central to poetic language and creativity. It encompasses lexical, grammatical, phonological, and semantic deviations that serve to foreground meaning and engage the audience[3]. In linguistics, deviance is distinguished from mere variation or local innovation: it signals an unacceptable or ill-formed usage in relation to the codified standard. Crystal defines deviance as individual differences in language that do not conform to expected rules, producing utterances like "cat the" in grammar, which lack conventional acceptability[10]. Within child language pathology, deviance is also applied narrowly: it indicates structures or pronunciations that lie outside typical developmental patterns, unlike simple delay, where the language is mature but slower to appear.

As Mansoor and Salman posit, linguistic deviance is viewed as a deliberate departure from standard norms of language use, especially as a defining characteristic of literary style[11]. Literary language, especially in poetry, drama, and prose, functions as a situational variety of English that is historically regarded as elevated, sublime, and distinct from ordinary discourse[11]. This distinctiveness is largely achieved through various forms of linguistic deviation, which enable writers to manipulate language creatively and express meanings that transcend the limitations of standard grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Mohammad and Salman's postulation shows that linguistic deviance is not a flaw but a stylistic tool, used by writers and poets to evoke emotion, foreground meaning, challenge readers, and reflect individual artistic identity[11]. Drawing from Leech's framework, Mansoor and Salman explore nine major types of linguistic deviation: lexical, semantic, syntactic, phonological, morphological, graphological, historical, dialectal, and register-based; and affirm that such deviations enrich texts by disrupting readers' expectations, stimulating deeper interpretation, and enhancing literary aesthetics. Ultimately, linguistic deviance is presented as an intentional and functional stylistic device that is central to the texture and impact of literary language[3, 11, 12].

From the foregoing, it is clear that the concept of linguistic deviance encompasses structural rule-breaking, semantic oddity, psychological discomfort, identity signalling, and socially constructed stigma. It operates at the intersection of linguistic form, speaker attitudes, social labeling, and ideology, illustrating not just what constitutes "wrong" language, but how social forces define and respond to language divergence.

2.2. Stylistics Resources in Music

Stylistic resources in music refer to the range of linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic devices that creators deploy within song lyrics and musical performance to craft meaning, emotional resonance, and aesthetic identity. The term "stylistic resources," traditionally associated with literary stylistics, finds fruitful application in music through the study of lyrics as poetic texts. Simpson articulates that stylistic dexterity is not confined to canonical literature but is equally evident in popular music and song lyrics[13]. Leech and Short's principles of foregrounding, where deviation from linguistic norms enhances psychological prominence, can be applied to lyrics to analyze figurative expressions and structural patterns like repetition or parallelism[14]. These stylistic resources operate at multiple linguistic strata, semantic, lexicogrammatical, and phonological, mirroring Halliday's stratification model, whereby each layer contributes to how meaning is conveyed and experienced in music[15].

At the phonological level of stylistic resources, Galperin states that song lyrics frequently deploy devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and stress patterns to produce musical and affective effects[16]. Galperin's classification of phonetic expressive means names alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, and rhythm as primary tools in poetic texts; these same tools appear in music lyrics, shaping sonic texture and emotional tone[16]. Likewise, studies in stylistic phonetics emphasize the function of these devices in literature, but they carry over into music where sound patterns are directly tied to melody and rhythm, enhancing listeners' affective responses. As Coscarello points out, stylistic analysis of rap lyrics demonstrates phonological arrangement (staccato rhyme, enjambment, internal rhyme) functions to create rhythmic momentum and communicative force in rap performance[17].

At the lexical and semantic level, stylistic resources include metaphor, simile, personification, irony, allusion, intertextual reference, and semantic deviation. Poliakova and Turner emphasize that songwriters employ such devices as rhymes, metaphors, and symbols to go beyond ordinary language, crafting evocative imagery and layered meanings[18, 19]. Also, Tagg highlights how irony and juxtapo-

sition, as well as allusion/intertextuality, add complexity and depth, for instance, pairing upbeat melodies with dystopian lyrics, or referencing canonical texts like Shakespeare within a pop song's narrative framework[20]. These devices foreground emotion and meaning, inviting listeners to interpret lyrics as poetic constructs as well as narrative speech.

In computational and corpus stylistics, stylistic resources in music are studied together through analysis of lyric corpora and audio features. O'Toole & Horvát compute novelty scores from lyrics and musical attributes to trace change, innovation, and genre evolution within Billboard Hot 100 songs over decades[21]. Bansal et al.'s research on hip-hop music reveals how rhyme density, topic shifts, and lexical diversity serve as quantifiable stylistic dimensions that reflect socio-cultural evolution and stylistic identity across time and region[22]. Beyond individual devices, there are broader systemic frameworks and taxonomies that conceptualize stylistic resources in music. All of these go to show the interrelatedness existing between stylistics and musicolinguistic analysis.

2.3. Empirical Studies

A number of studies have shown the intricate relationship existing between music and linguistics, reflecting on the dynamic interplay and incorporation of a multilingual cum multicultural role that language plays in Nigeria. Such empirical studies provide a background for discussion on linguistic deviances as stylistic resources in the Nigerian music industry, as it concerns a semiotic analysis of Adeleke's "Funds" And Apata's "Hustle". Babalola and Taiwo establish that code-switching between English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages like Yoruba or Igbo enhances audience connection and constructs a hybrid identity[23]. Their analysis of artists such as D'Banj, Styl-Plus, and Sunny Nneji confirms that code-switching is not accidental but a stylistic strategy that affirms cultural roots and broadens appeal across linguistic communities. Babalola and Taiwo's study analyzes lyrics from multiple Nigerian hip-hop acts, demonstrating that code-switching among English, Pidgin, and Yoruba (with Yoruba often as the thematic language) is used to reinforce ethnolinguistic identity while enhancing lyrical aesthetics[23]. They identify both inter-sentential switches (between verses) and intra-sentential switches (within lines), and report that such patterns aid in thematic elaboration and audience engagement. The study positions code-switching as a stylistic tool that affords multilingual artistry and reflects Nigeria's linguistic diversity, enabling artists to achieve both local authenticity and broader communicative reach.

In another study, Demenongo applies a systemic-functional multimodal semiotic framework to how meaning is co-constructed between lyrics and visuals in Nigerian pop music videos[24]. By analyzing videos featuring major Nigerian pop acts, he shows that linguistic deviations such as fragmented lyrics, clipped sentences, ellipses, and intentional disfluency are purposefully aligned with visual emphases. For example, abrupt verbal phrases coincide with bold camera angles or luxury visual motifs, amplifying semiotic effects. These non-standard syntactic devices operate not as errors but as stylistic features, intensifying narrative impact when lyrics and visuals synchronize. Demenongo convincingly argues that the orchestration of verbal and visual modes transforms syntactic deviations into meaningful semiotic resources in popular music contexts.

In addition, Murana and Balogun conduct a comparative study of lyrics from Nigerian musicians, demonstrating that code-switching and mixing with Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Pidgin alongside English strategically reflect the country's multilingual plurality and support artistic expression and popularity[25]. Their study shows how indigenous language insertions often coincide with rhyme or stanza endings, functioning as both mnemonic and semiotic closures. These structural deviations are shown to enrich lyrical creativity, evoke ethnolinguistic identity, and engage a wide audience by fusing linguistic forms with sonic structure.

Also, Shaguy and Olojede's study examines how Nigerian hip-hop artists linguistically construct narratives of internet fraud through non-standard grammar, lexical creativity, and metaphor rather than through code-switching[26]. Using Moral Disengagement Theory and lexical semantics, they demonstrate that linguistic subversion, such as inventive slang, collocational quirks, and rhetorical fragmentation, is systematically used to portray ambiguous moral stances, to glamorize illicit hustling, and to critique societal norms. For instance, collocations like "chache" (hustle) or metaphoric portrayals of cybercrime are defiantly formed to foreground irony and narrative stance. Through lexical deviation, these tracks generate layered semiotic meanings: distancing, satire, and cultural commentary.

Furthermore, Akinrinlola *et al*. analyze cyber-scam-related lyrics in Nigerian hip-hop using Mediated Discourse Analysis Theory (MDAT)[27]. Their study, which focuses on how grammatical deviance and rhetorical devices enact discursive identities, shows that linguistic deviations like lexical repetition, metaphorical framing, rhetorical questions, and pronominal ambiguity are not random but structured discursive acts that facilitate glamorization, justification, and identity performance. They submit that deviant syntax such as elliptical phrases, rhetorical fragmentations ("Them no sabi"), and repeated emphasis ("grind grind") function semiotically to project authority, subversion, and moral alignment with interpreted positions.

Also, Babalola, in his neologism formation of the term "lyricapitalism," describes how Nigerian hip-hop lyrics use capitalist-themed metaphors and deviant syntax to express hustler identity and critique global-economic marginalization. Babalola, in this study, illustrates how grammatical play like tense shifts ("I stay no sleep"), clipped phrases ("money run things"), and structural metaphor ("life na race") merge with metaphorical content to craft semiotic meaning[28]. These stylistic deviations from standard grammatical forms serve rhetorical purposes: resisting colonial linguistic norms, embedding capitalist critique, and constructing a subcultural authenticity tied to hustle culture. This analysis frames syntactic deviance itself as a semiotic strategy for subversion and identity formation.

Likewise, Shuaibu's sociolinguistic study investigates code-mixing practices in South/Western Nigerian hip-hop, showing that artists deliberately blend Yoruba, English, and NPE for artistic effect, identity projection, and cultural resonance[29]. Using Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, the study explains how such linguistic selection constitutes a semiotic strategy that foregrounds cultural allegiance and stylistic appeal. Within this paradigm, code-mixing becomes a deviant linguistic resource that enhances rhythmic complexity, expressive authenticity, and interethnic recognition in musical texts.

In a more recent study, Makinde and Nnebe critically explore linguistic innovations in the Nigerian music industry through the analysis of Mohbad's songs "Ko Por Ke (KPK)" and "Peace"[1]. In this study, they highlight how language in music serves as a tool for identity construction, cultural expression, and social commentary. Anchored on Weinreich's language contact hypothesis and Hall's encoding/decoding theory, the research employs qualitative content analysis to investigate how Mohbad strategically uses neologisms, slang, Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), code-switching, phonological stylization, and biblical allusions to reflect urban realities and communicate deeply personal and societal struggles. Their study further reveals how these linguistic strategies, especially the hybridization of Yoruba, English, and NPE, contribute to the evolving lexicon of Nigerian youth and street culture, showcasing music as both a site for linguistic creativity and a platform for social negotiation. Moreover, the research underscores Mohbad's distinctive lyrical style marked by repetition, metaphor, and emotive expressions, which transforms everyday language into expressive cultural artifacts. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes the importance of studying linguistic innovation in Nigerian music for broader implications in sociolinguistics, identity studies, and cultural documentation.

From the foregoing, the empirical review shows that many studies have looked at how Nigerian musicians use code-switching, code-mixing, new words, and non-standard grammar as stylistic tools[1, 23, 29, 30]. However, most of these works focus on general trends among different artists and genres, without closely comparing how individual musicians use these language choices to express particular themes. Not much attention has been given to how artists like Adeleke and Apata use unusual language forms, switching between languages, and metaphors that focus on issues like money, hustle, and resilience. This study addresses that gap by analyzing Adeleke's "Funds" and Apata's "Hustle", showing how their use of linguistic deviances works as a way to build identity, send social messages, and position themselves in the Nigerian music industry.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two interrelated theoretical frameworks: Semiotic Theory as propounded by Roland Barthes, and Stylistics Theory as developed by Leech and Short[4, 31]. These theories are instrumental in analyzing how linguistic deviances serve not only as stylistic tools but also as carriers of meaning in contemporary Nigerian music.

Semiotic theory provides the foundational lens through which this study interprets the signs and symbolic representations embedded in song lyrics. Rooted in the broader field of

semiology, Barthes advances the notion that communication is structured through signs that go beyond their literal meanings to convey deeper connotative, cultural, and ideological values[31]. In the context of music, linguistic deviations such as code-switching, slang, phonological manipulation, and neologisms function as semiotic elements, each encoding specific messages that relate to identity, resistance, youth culture, or socio-political realities. This theory allows for the decoding of these linguistic signs within the larger cultural context of Nigerian urban life, thereby revealing how artists like Adeleke and Apata use language innovatively to reflect their worldview. According to Barthes, every linguistic expression in a musical text, however unconventional, can be seen as a sign with both surface (denotative) and deeper (connotative) meanings. The application of semiotic theory, as an appliable linguistics, provides stylistics and linguistic studies a principled analytic toolkit to (a) link surface forms to layered meanings (in terms of sign relations and levels), (b) integrate multiple semiotic resources (in relation to socially shared codes and convention) in analysis, and (c) formalize otherwise intuitive interpretive moves (in terms of paradigmatic/syntagmatic oppositions and deep structure). Through this semiotic lens, the study examines how these musicians use non-standard linguistic forms as a way of asserting agency, negotiating meaning, and engaging with their audiences.

Complementing the semiotic perspective is the stylistics theory by Leech and Short, which focuses on the analysis of language style in literary and artistic texts[4]. Stylistics examines the intentional choices made by language users in order to create specific effects, and categorizes these choices into various levels: phonological, graphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic[4]. Linguistic deviances, which appear as departures from conventional grammatical or lexical norms, are interpreted in stylistics not as errors but as meaningful stylistic resources. These deviations are seen as part of the artist's toolkit for conveying mood, asserting identity, or reinforcing the theme of a musical piece. In the Nigerian music industry, such features often include the use of Nigerian Pidgin English, local proverbs, hybridized expressions, and creative syntax, all of which serve to reflect cultural authenticity and resonate with specific social groups. Stylistics theory, therefore, enables the study to explore how Adeleke and Apata's use of language, especially their deliberate manipulation of linguistic norms, contributes to the aesthetic, emotive, and communicative power of their music. Together, these two theories provide a comprehensive framework for interpreting linguistic deviances in Nigerian music. While semiotic theory allows us to uncover the symbolic meanings encoded in deviant forms, stylistics theory focuses on the functional and aesthetic aspects of such forms within the structure of the lyrics. This dual-theoretical approach enhances the study's capacity to critically examine how language, culture, and identity intersect in the musical expressions of contemporary Nigerian artists.

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopts a qualitative research design, which is most appropriate for analyzing linguistic and stylistic features in musical texts. This design enables the researchers to explore the meanings embedded in the lyrics, as well as the cultural and communicative functions of non-standard language choices made by the artists. The official lyrics were sourced from verified online music platforms and cross-checked with audio renditions for accuracy. The researchers reviewed the lyrics line-by-line to identify instances of linguistic deviances such as code-switching, Nigerian Pidgin English, neologisms, slang, phonological stylization, and syntactic alterations as resources for meaning making. Furthermore, the study employed a purposive sampling technique in the selection of two songs: "Funds" by Adeleke and "Hustle" by Apata. These songs were chosen because they are rich in linguistic deviances and have attracted public attention for their stylistic and thematic depth. The selection is also based on their relevance to the research objectives, their popularity among Nigerian youth, and the extent to which they reflect the socio-cultural and linguistic trends of contemporary Nigerian society.

In terms of data analysis, a qualitative content analysis was adopted to examine the lyrics. The data were analyzed using semiotic theory and stylistics theory as the guiding analytical frameworks. First, the linguistic deviances in the lyrics were identified and categorized according to types (e.g., neologism, slang, code-switching). Here, Barthes' semiotic theory enables the analysis and interpretation of signs that carry both denotative and connotative meanings[31]. The key elements of Barthes' semiotic theory include denotation,

connotation, and myth, a second-order signification [31]. This theoretical approach enables the analysis of deviant linguistic forms (signifier) and their literal meaning (denotation), provides an insight into what extra meanings such deviant expressions depict (connotation), as well as how broader ideological stances are naturalized through the deviation (myth/second-order signification) [32]. Leech and Short's stylistics theory further guided the analysis of how these deviances contribute to the aesthetic and communicative structure of the lyrics [4].

4. Results

4.1. Identification of Linguistic Deviances in Adeleke's "Funds" and Apata's "Hustle"

Linguistic deviance is the deliberate bending of linguistic norms to produce a stylistic effect and meaning [3, 12, 33, 34]. In the two songs, the recurrent types of linguistic deviances include lexical deviance, semantic deviance, syntactic deviances, and morphological deviances.

4.1.1. Lexical Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle"

As pointed out in the review of literature, lexical deviance refers to the deliberate departure from conventional word usage, often through creative language manipulation [3]. Such deviance can take the form of newly invented words (neologisms), nonstandard spellings, borrowings, unconventional affixation, or archaic forms. The following sections present discussions on the various lexical deviances evidenced in "Funds" and "Hustle."

(1) Slangs as Lexical Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle"

In **Table 1** below, data 1 on "Funds" illustrates the use of slang in contemporary expression. The term "alele" functions as a slang reference for money that disappears quickly. This effect emerges from this figurative usage: money is cast as volatile and unstable, emphasizing the precarity of financial life. In response, the speaker's declaration "I apply pressure" conveys urgency and determination, presenting the persona as someone actively struggling against scarcity. Therefore, this slang not only adds stylistic freshness but also encodes the social reality of hustling and the need for constant effort. In "Hustle", the slang "gas" functions to index obligation and compulsion. This arises as the speaker uses "gas" to frame acts of self-regulation, such as changing one's mind and cooling down with water, as necessary strategies under pressure. The utterance, therefore, performs coping rhetoric by presenting resilience and self-control as vital responses to the stress of everyday hustle.

Table 1. Showing the Use of Slang as Lexical Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

S/N	"Funds"		"Hustle"	
	Slangs	**Meaning**	**Slangs**	**Meaning**
1.	"My money na alele, I apply pressure"	The term "alele" is a creative coinage meaning fleeting or vanishing.	"Sometimes I gas change my mind"	"gas" is a slang meaning "have to" or "must"
2.	"You must apply OT"	Slang for common sense	"...day ones wey suppose get your back"	Earliest or supposedly loyal friends
3.	"I suppose relocate but I go buy Belgium"	A slang term for foreign-used goods, especially second-hand cars.	"No vex baba, my head e full o"	A slang for 'overwhelmed'
4.	"so tell me if you dey down"	This means readiness or willingness to participate in something	—	—
5.	"Wednesday na your shima palava put us for high tension"	"shima" means girlfriend, "palava" means problem, and "high tension" means serious trouble	—	—

In data 2 of **Table 1**, the term "OT" as seen in "Funds" functions as a street-wise resource, indexing intelligence, caution, and strategic thinking as necessary conditions for navigating the hustle. The semiotic effect emerges in how these elements are combined: the ethic of smartness (apply OT) projects a hustle logic where survival and success are

validated through wit, resilience, and the assertion of modern masculinity. Stylistically, this creates a performance of identity marked not only by productivity but also by sharpness, social recognition, and the need to stay ahead in competitive urban life. Also, in "Hustle", the line illustrates how youthful expression frames loyalty and conflict.

Also, data 3 in "Funds" exemplifies how everyday Nigerian expressions encode social and economic realities. The effect is a streetwise performance of financial choice in which the persona signals both ambition and realism, expressing the desire for global mobility while settling for practical and affordable alternatives. In "Hustles", the expression "my head e full o" is a slang that denotes being "overwhelmed". In data 4 of "Funds", "dey down" does not signify weakness or sadness, but rather a readiness or willingness to participate in something. This shift demonstrates the creative elasticity of slang as a resource for signaling openness and belonging. It also functions as a marker of solidarity, positioning the hearer as someone whose loyalty or commitment can be tested through their willingness to "be down" for an activity or cause. Also, the expression "Wednesday na your shima palava put us for high tension" in data 5 energizes the narrative with humour and exaggeration, turning an ordinary relationship conflict into a socially charged scenario as seen in the terms "shima", "palava", and "high tension" which means *girlfriend*, *problem*, and *serious trouble* respectively.

(2) Repetition as a Lexical Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle"

The repetitions depicted in **Table 2** on "Funds" function as a hook, embedding the ideas in the listener's memory while emphasizing the central theme of reckless spending. Semiotic effects arise from the repetition of mismanage my funds; it not only dramatizes desire and indulgence but also projects status and performative extravagance, turning financial recklessness into a marker of identity and audacity. On the other hand, in "Hustle", repetition is a form of linguistic deviance used for emphasis. It highlights the struggles and uncertainties people face in life, reinforcing the song's theme of hardship and perseverance.

(3) Neologism in "Funds"

Neologism refers to newly coined words/expressions or existing words used in new, unconventional ways. Neologism, otherwise known as word coinage, is a manifestation of linguistic creativity in a language's vocabulary [1].

In **Table 3**, Adeleke relies on a number of newly coined words such as "Shekpe", "Bambam", and "Brosay" which function as exclamation. "Bambam" is an endearment in the music "Funds". It is not Standard English, but a creative coinage as used in the song. Also, "Brosay" forms a neologism common in Nigerian streets.

4.1.2. Syntactic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle"

As depicted in **Table 4** below, the data 1 on "Funds" demonstrates parallelism through the repeated structure of a noun phrase, while in "Hustle" parallelism is achieved via the repetition of clauses "Sometimes it feels like…". Here, the grammatical structure of subject + verb + complement is repeated. This creates rhythm and emphasizes the fluctuating emotions of the speaker. The parallelism in data 2 on "Funds" is indicated by the consistent flow of subject-verb-complement arrangements, giving the verse a rhythmic flow. In "Hustle", each line starts with "Sometimes I…" followed by a verb phrase. This highlights different coping strategies while maintaining a consistent grammatical pattern. Also, NPE verbs like 'gas' and 'dey' mixed with English create non-standard grammar while keeping the parallel form.

Data 3 further illustrates parallelism by repeating the structure "noun-phrase and verb-phrase", thereby reinforcing emphasis. Parallel structure is also projected via the negative structure "No be pride no be ego" in "Hustle", depicting a repetitive pattern in "No be … no be". This reinforces the singer's idea and thereby makes the song catchy and memorable. Furthermore, in data 4 of "Funds", parallel structure is enhanced via the use of the subordinate conjunction "if", reiterating the subordinating clause followed by a full clause in the Igbo language. Also, data 5 in "Funds" exhibits structural similarity in its repetitive use of "You must" in both lines with a subject followed by a modal auxiliary (must). In addition, data 6 depicts parallel structures as shown in the repeatedly foregrounded verb phrases "mismanage my funds" or "spend all of my funds on you," thereby sustaining rhythm and cohesion in the song.

Table 2. Showing Repetition as a Lexical Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle".

S/N	"Funds"	"Hustle"
1.	"Do you know, do you know"	"sometimes"
2.	"Girl I know, girl I know"	"Na this hustle I dey so (Aye aye ah, aye aye ah, aye aye ah)"
3.	Mismanage my funds	—
5.	My baby bambam"	—
6.	"Baby"	—
7.	"Wanna"	—

Table 3. Showing Neologism as a Lexical Deviance in "Funds".

S/N	Neologism	Meaning
1.	"Shekpe"	Shout-out
2.	"Bambam"	A pet name
3.	"Brosay"	Brother

Table 4. Showing Parallelism used as Lexical Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

S/N	"Funds"	"Hustle"
1.	"Black sheep forever, black sheep for life"	"Sometimes it feels like success is a trap" "And sometimes it feels like people don't understand"
2.	"Okay (okay), girl, make I show you my bank account" "Two face, I get plenty to go around" "So, girl, make you dance when you hear the sound" "Na we dey pop all over town"	"Sometimes I gas change my mind" "Sometimes I gas dey behind" "Sometimes I will have to say no" "Sometimes I gas pour water on top my head"
3.	"Girl, I know, girl, I know, some things that you do not know"	"No be pride no be ego"
4.	If I handle this your body, oga sọ kwú so, oga sọ kwú sọ If you put me for palava, m je kpọla gi ọfala,"	—
5.	"You must apply OT Big boy you must to buy plenty"	—
6.	Mismanage my funds on you All I really wanna do is I'll mismanage my funds Even if they wanna stop me Mismanage my funds on you All I wanna do is Mismanage my funds.	—

Note: The underline in 1 above shows the repetition of noun phrase, *Black sheep for*, for emphasis purposes, while the use of *Sometimes it feels like* reflects on the use of clause element which serves as a dependent clause element to the clause that follows. Likewise, in 2, such structures as *girl, make I* and *girl, make you* repeat the same subject-verb-object elements provide rhythmic flow for the verse. Other underlined structural elements such as subject-verb and verb-complement as well as conditional phrases *If I* and *If you* all lend credence to the parallel structures that provide rhythm and cohesion to the songs.

(1) Ellipsis as Syntactic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle"

In **Table 5** below, data 1 in "Funds" exhibits ellipsis, a common characteristic of Nigerian Pidgin English, where auxiliaries and determiners are often omitted. This condenses a full imperative sentence into street grammar, thereby intensifying urgency and compulsion. Similarly, data 2 also demonstrates ellipsis, particularly in the omission of verbs and coordinating conjunctions. Instead of the expected structure, "Bring tilapia, kote, and egufe with cocain," the sentence reduces into a listing style, where the repeated verb "bring" and the conjunction "and" are left out, leaving only the nouns in sequence. Also, the phrase in data 3 exhibits ellipsis through the omission of the subject pronoun "I." Although unstated, the subject is implied within the context, while the predicate is left to stand alone. Furthermore, in data 4, the verb "are" is replaced with "dey" an NPE, since the full expression should read "so tell me if you are down." These examples show how ellipsis functions in Nigerian Pidgin English, simplifying expressions while still retaining meaning through context.

In "Hustle", the line in no. 1 demonstrates typical ellipsis in Nigerian Pidgin English, where auxiliaries and linking verbs are often omitted. This omission creates speech-like immediacy, giving the expression a spontaneous, personal, and conversational tone that reflects the informal context of the language. Also, the lines "I gat so many things I dey reason / No bother me o" show how omission can compress complex thoughts into simple, direct clauses. Rather than elaborating with full grammatical structures, the speaker delivers a concise, introspective reflection, emphasizing both urgency and emotional depth via NPE.

(2) Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) as Syntactic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle"

As shown in **Table 6** below, the data from "Funds" reveal that Nigerian Pidgin English departs significantly from Standard English syntax while retaining meaning through contextual cues. The expression "Make I show you my bank account" demonstrates the replacement of "let me" with the NPE equivalent "make I", while "Na we dey pop all over the town" omits the copula "are" and employs "na" as a focus marker to signal emphasis. Similarly, "So tell me if you dey down, dey town" shows both auxiliary omission and subject deletion, and "Whether na traffic abi go-slow" illustrates how NPE substitutes "abi" for the SE "or". Lines such as "I no fit complain you go see say my baby bambam" and "Big boy you must to buy plenty" show how NPE introduces simplification ("no fit" for "cannot") or redundancy (must to). The playful reduplication in "Conquer the street with play play" illustrates NPE's creative restructuring of English.

Table 5. Showing Ellipsis as Syntactic Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

S/N	"Funds"	"Hustle"
1.	"Big boy you must to buy plenty"	"No vex baba my head e full o"
2.	"Alright, okay Ten brokoto for the voltage Tilapia, kote, bring egufe with cocain"	"I gat so many things I dey reason No bother me o"
3.	"Mismanage my fund on you"	—
4.	So tell me if you dey down,"	—

Table 6. Showing Nigerian Pidgin English as Syntactic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle".

Song	Lines	Syntactic Deviance
"Funds"	"Make I show you my bank account"	Use of make I instead of Standard English let me.
"Funds"	"Na we dey pop all over the town"	Omission of the verb *are*; na functions as a focus marker ("we are the ones").
"Funds"	"So tell me if you dey down, dey town"	Omission of *are*; the second clause dey town lacks a subject.
"Funds"	"Whether na traffic abi go-slow"	Omission of copula is; *abi* used as a conjunctive marker instead of *or*.
"Funds"	"I no fit complain you go see say my baby bambam,"	Use of *no fit* for *cannot*; *say* used instead of *that*.
"Funds"	Big boy you must to buy plenty,"	Redundancy of "to" after modal "must".
"Funds"	"Conquer the street with play play"	Omission of subject pronoun (I'll/we'll)
"Hustle"	"Na this hustle I dey so"	Use of na in place of it is; restructured word order for topicalization.
"Hustle"	"No add your own join my own"	Simplification of verb (no add instead of do not add); possessives expressed as your own/my own vs yours/mine.
"Hustle"	"No vex baba my head e full o"	No vex replaces don't be angry; baba used as vocative; my head e full omits copula is; particle o adds emphasis.

In "Hustle", syntactic deviance also plays a prominent role. "Na this hustle I dey so" reflects topicalization through *na* as a focus marker, while "No add your own join my own" simplifies verbs and replaces Standard possessives (yours/mine) with extended forms (your own/my own). The line "No vex baba my head e full o" integrates multiple devia-

tions: omission of auxiliaries, vocative insertion (baba), and copula replacement with "e", all capped with the emphatic particle "o". Together, these instances highlight how NPE reworks English syntax into a more economical, culturally resonant, and expressive system.

4.1.3. Dialectal Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle"

As Leech asserts, this type of deviation is frequently noticed in verse written by poets who intend to reveal their emotions and feelings but think that the standard language cannot help in exactly representing such feelings and emotions. Therefore, they resort to the dialect of their mother tongue because they think that it is in a better situation to do this role rather than the standard language [3]. This is often seen in:

(1) Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in "Funds" and "Hustle"

Code-switching and code-mixing function as a performative strategy that foregrounds Nigerian multilingual identity in "Funds". As depicted in **Table 7** below, the line "Do you know, do you know, say owó mi ti pọ l'agbo? (Vul' indlela)" exemplifies multilingual layering, moving between English and NPE for accessibility, Yoruba for local identity, and Nguni for pan-African solidarity. Similarly, "Anyị je bili na Paris, ọ ga-adị kwa mma" blends Igbo syntax with a global reference (Paris), reflecting the coexistence of indigenous worldview and cosmopolitan aspiration. Lines like "Gobe, Ucee the gbedu na replay / Find abacha for my brosay" merge Yoruba (conflict, music) with Igbo (cuisine) inside Pidgin, reassembling ethnic identities into a shared street register. In "If I handle this your body, oga sọ kwú sọ… m je kpọla gị ọfọla," intra-sentential code-switching dramatizes intimacy and authority, with Igbo amplifying emotional and cultural depth against an English/Pidgin frame.

In "Hustle", code-mixing is subtler but equally effective. "I wan talk my mind o / For anyone wey fit relate o" shows how Pidgin syntax is infused with English vocabulary, revealing its hybrid nature as both accessible and localized. The alternation in "Cos family go call enemy go call / I don't know who is who" demonstrates how NPE conveys grassroots social realities while Standard English delivers a punchline for broader resonance. Together, these instances highlight how Nigerian artists exploit dialectal deviance through code-switching and code-mixing to negotiate identity, solidarity, and stylistic expressiveness, producing a soundscape that is simultaneously local, national, and global.

4.1.4. Semantic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle"

Semantic deviance happens when the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence is used in a way that breaks the normal or expected rules of meaning in language. In other words, it occurs when words are combined in such a way that they create unusual, illogical, or unexpected meanings.

(1) Metaphor

In **Table 8** below, the metaphor "My money na alele" reframes money as fleeting, transient, and uncontrollable, as shown in the data in "Funds". Rather than a stable possession, money is depicted as something that quickly disappears, much like air or a passing shadow. This metaphor condenses complex financial realities, such as the ease of spending and the difficulty of saving, into a vivid image of impermanence. Semantically, it redefines money as both urgent and performative, reinforcing a culture of quick consumption and indulgence.

In "Hustle", the metaphor "Sometimes it feels like success is a trap" presents success not as a reward but as a potential snare. Here, achievement is reimagined as something that can restrict or overwhelm, reflecting the paradox of modern hustle culture: while success brings recognition, it can also generate pressure, envy, or new challenges. The metaphor deepens the emotional resonance of the song by capturing both aspiration and caution, showing that what is desirable can also carry hidden dangers. Together, these data demonstrate how metaphor as semantic deviance reshapes ordinary concepts (money, success) into culturally loaded symbols, enabling Nigerian Pidgin music to communicate layered meanings that go beyond literal expression.

(2) Personification

As seen in **Table 9** below, personification is notably absent in "Funds", but in "Hustle", it serves as a crucial semantic device. The line "Make this pressure no drive me insane o" attributes agency to pressure, transforming it from

a mere psychological condition into an adversarial force that acts upon the individual. This figurative usage dramatizes the intensity of ambition and struggle in the hustle culture, where societal and personal expectations exert overwhelming weight. By presenting pressure as an active, almost animate agent, the song deepens its emotional resonance, underscoring the vulnerability of the human mind in the face of the relentless pursuit of success.

Table 7. Showing code-switching and Code-mixing in "Funds" and "Hustle".

Song	Line	Dialectal Deviance (Code-Switching/Code-Mixing)
"Funds"	"Do you know, do you know, say owó mi ti pọ l'agbo? (Vul' indlela)"	Multilingual layering: English + Pidgin + Yoruba (owó mi ti pọ l'agbo = "my money is plenty in my area") + Nguni (Vul' indlela = "open the way").
"Funds"	"Anyị je bili na Paris, ọ ga-adị kwa mma,"	Intra-sentential mixing: Igbo grammar with English noun *Paris*, combining indigenous expression with global reference.
"Funds"	"Gobe, Ucee the gbedu na replay Find abacha for my brosay"	Cross-ethnic lexis: Yoruba (gobe - trouble, gbedu- music/beat) + Igbo (abacha - delicacy) embedded in Nigerian Pidgin.
"Funds"	"If I handle this your body, oga sọ kwú sọ, oga sọ kwú sọ If you put me for palava, m je kpọla gị ọfọla"	Intra-sentential switches: English/Pidgin as frame; Igbo (oga sọ kwú sọ - it will be sweet; m je kpọla gị ọfọla -"I will curse you openly") heightens affective force.
"Hustle"	"I wan talk my mind o" "For anyone wey fit relate o"	Pidgin syntax (I wan talk, wey fit) with English vocabulary (talk, mind, anyone, relate) a kind of hybrid intra-sentential mix.
"Hustle"	"Cos family go call enemy go call/I don't know who is who"	Pidgin clause (family go call enemy go call) shifts into Standard English (I don't know who is who) for emphasis.

Table 8. Showing Metaphor as Semantic Deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle".

Song	Line	Semantic Deviance (Metaphor)
"Funds"	"My money na alele"	Money is metaphorically portrayed as alele (fleeting/evanescent), symbolizing transience, urgency, and the inevitability of spending.
"Hustle"	"Sometimes it feels like success is a trap."	Success is metaphorically framed as a trap.

Table 9. Showing Personification as Semantic Deviance in "Hustle".

Song	Line	Semantic Deviance (Personification)
"Hustle"	"Make this pressure no drive me insane o"	Pressure is personified as an active force capable of "driving" someone insane.

4.1.5. Phonological Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle"

Phonological deviation is characterized by inadequate use of phonological rules of language due to linguistic disorganization. This could happen through rhyme, mispronunciation, and abbreviation of words (See **Table 10**).

In "Funds", **Table 10** shows that phonological deviation is employed as a stylistic tool to enhance rhythm, sound play, and musical flow. Abbreviations like "wanna" and "Ucee" condense Standard English pronunciation, creating smoother transitions for performance. Non-lexical vocables such as "Ayayayayayayayaya," "Bambam," and "Shekpe" act as sound fillers that enrich the musical texture, while the inclusion of Nguni/Zulu-Xhosa tags like "WeMaMgobhozi" and "He unyana wam" projects transnational awareness and pan-African identity. Similarly, lines such as "Whether na traffic abi go-slow / Baby, I promise I go still show" reveal how rhyme and rhythm override standard norms, with phonological shifts sustaining musical resonance.

In "Hustle", phonological deviation is equally central. Vocalizations like "Ri di mah kool a yooo" and "Aye aye ah aye aye ah aye aye ah" extend vowels and employ rhythmic repetition, simulating breath, effort, and collective chant, thereby fostering participatory energy. The abbreviation "cos" for "because" further highlights how speech forms are reshaped for efficiency and flow. Rhyming sequences such as "Sometimes I gas stay away / When I have nothing to say" and "I don't know who is who / No be pride no be ego" em-

phasize phonological alignment over grammatical precision, producing cohesion, emotional resonance, and memorability. Altogether, these instances demonstrate how phonological deviance transforms ordinary language into a rhythmic, performative medium, intensifying musicality while reinforcing cultural identity.

Table 10. Showing Phonological Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

Song	Expression	Phonological Deviance
"Funds"	"Wanna"	Abbreviated/stylized pronunciation for rhythmic flow.
"Funds"	"Ucee", "Ayayayayayayayaya," "Bambam," "Shekpe," "WeMaMgobhozi" "He unyana wam"	Use of non-lexical vocables, elongated sounds, and Nguni/Zulu-Xhosa tags for call-and-response and pan-African identity.
"Funds"	"Whether na traffic abi go-slow Baby, I promise I go still show"	Modified pronunciation to create rhyme and rhythmic correspondence.
"Funds"	"My money na alele, I apply pressure Wednesday na your shima palava put us for high tension,"	Pronunciation/rhyme adjusted for sound patterning and aesthetic resonance.
"Hustle"	"Ri di mah kool a yooo" and "Aye aye ah aye aye ah aye aye ah"	Elongated vowels, rhythmic repetition; vocal strain and chant create immersive, collective participation.
"Hustle"	"cos"	Abbreviation of *because* for rhythmic and musical flow.
"Hustle"	"Whether na traffic abi go-slow Baby, I promise I go still show"	Rhyming alignment drives sound cohesion, overriding Standard English pronunciation.
"Hustle"	"I don't know who is who No be pride no be ego"	Sound alignment and rhyme pattern enhance musicality and reinforce meaning.

4.1.6. Morphological Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle"

In linguistics, morphology is the study of how words are formed from the smallest meaningful units (often called morphemes). So, morphological deviance is depicted when normal word-formation rules are broken, altered, or creatively twisted to form new or unusual words (See **Table 11**).

In **Table 11** above, the reduplication of sounds such as "Ayayayayayayayaya" as used in "Funds" departs from standard morphology by creating playful, rhythm-driven patterns that function more as musical ornaments than meaningful words. Similarly, "Bambam" uses reduplication of the root "bam" to intensify sound and rhythm, a feature common in slang and music but not in formal word-building. The expression "two face" drops the affixed from the standard two-faced, producing a deviant form that simplifies structure while retaining meaning. Likewise, "play play" employs reduplication to emphasize unseriousness, extending beyond the morphological conventions of Standard English.

In "Hustle", morphological deviance emerges through simplification and replacement. The phrase "I wan talk my mind o" reduces the Standard English infinitive *want to,* with *wan* functioning as a modal-like marker of intention, a common feature of Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE). Similarly, in "cos the pressure e plenty and expectations high", the Standard English linking verb "is" is replaced with "e", reflecting a morphological feature of NPE that marks existence or state. These deviations not only simplify expression but also reinforce identity, rhythm, and communicative immediacy within the musical context.

Table 11. Showing morphological deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

Song	Expression	Type of Morphological Deviance
"Funds"	"Ayayayayayayayaya"	Reduplication beyond normal word formation
"Funds"	"Bambam"	Reduplication of root
"Funds"	"Two face"	Affix omission
"Funds"	"Play play"	Reduplication for emphasis
"Histle"	"I wan talk my mind o"	Reduction of infinitive verb form
"Hustle"	"Cos the pressure e plenty and expectations high"	Linking verb replacement

4.2. Stylistic Resources in Constructing Meaning around Hustle, Money, and Resilience

4.2.1. Hustle as Obligation, Cycle, and Identity

In "Hustle", the central theme is highlighted through repeated lines such as "Na this hustle I dey so" and "This hustle can be so overwhelming sometimes." The repetition, combined with the use of NPE, transforms hustle from a mere activity into a pervasive aspect of existence, with the chorus functioning as a ritualized expression of shared perseverance. The song also illustrates coping strategies, as seen in "Sometimes I gas change my mind … I gas pour water on top my head." The slang term "gas" (meaning must) and the vivid image of pouring water on one's head portray resilience as a form of self-management under pressure. On a broader social level, the track highlights instability in support networks, evident in lines like "Even your day ones wey suppose show you the way/ Na the people dey backbite." The youth slang "day ones" (referring to long-term friends) emphasizes the precariousness of social bonds, reinforcing the emotional intensity of the hustle.

4.2.2. Money as Volatile Pleasure and Social Pressure

This can be seen in "Funds", where money is depicted as both an unstable source of enjoyment and a form of social pressure, illustrated through lines like "My money na alele, I apply pressure" and "Mismanage my funds on you … Spend all of my funds on you." The slang term "allele" (meaning restless or unstable), together with the repeated declarations, presents wealth as both fleeting and performatively displayed, framing its instability as part of a deliberate show. This performative logic is further reinforced in "You must apply OT / Big boy you must to buy plenty," where the imperative structure merges the necessity of labor (OT, understood as extra effort or hustle) with the compulsion to consume, creating a cycle in which work exists primarily to enable display and acquisition. The song also builds vivid social scenes with lines like "Na we dey pop all over town / … gbedu na replay / Tilapia, kote … abacha," blending NPE with culturally specific references to music and cuisine to evoke a sensory economy of nightlife and leisure. In this way, money is represented less as a stable resource and more as fleeting experiences, highlighting its dual role as both a source of pleasure and a mechanism of social expectation.

4.2.3. Resilience as Boundary-Setting and Mental Load Management

This could be seen in "Hustle," where resilience emerges not as grand heroism but as the capacity to set boundaries in a crowded social and economic world. The lines "No vex baba my head e full o," "No add your own join my own," and "Sometimes I will have to say no" use truncation and direct address ("baba") to convert everyday refusals into acts of legitimate self-preservation. The follow-up, "So if you see me outside and I no greet you … my head e full o," extends this strategy by suspending routine social scripts such as greeting, publicly authorizing self-care over social obligation. By contrast, "Funds" articulates resilience through economic improvisation: "I suppose relocate but I go buy Belgium" reframes the pressure to migrate into a street-savvy alternative, buying second-hand ("Belgium") as a pragmatic form of endurance. Together, these strategies show resilience as both internal management of mental load and external negotiation of material conditions. Thus, while "Hustle" foregrounds resilience through boundary-setting and adaptive self-care, "Funds" binds it to financial ingenuity within volatile pleasure–risk cycles. Both texts position Nigerian urban life as a precarious yet creative field where survival requires not just effort but tactical negotiation of social and economic pressures.

4.3. Semiotic and Linguistic Strategies in the Formation of Meaning

Semiotic cues embedded within the audio-text itself include adlibs, namedrops, multilingual tags, and chant forms since these are present in the lyrics.

4.3.1. Adlibs, Vocables, and Call-and-Response

Adlibs and vocables such as "Ayayayayayayayaya", "Bambam," "Shekpe," and "We ma mgobhozi / We Ma Mgobhozi / He unyana wam" serve as non-lexical expressions and Nguni-language tags that stage celebration and signal entry, effectively performing the call to "open the way" are replicated in "Funds". Stylistically, these elements create a pan-African soundscape while semiotically scaffolding code-mixing, using sound to cue transitions between languages, social moods, and relational stances, ranging from party exuberance to boastful intimacy. Similarly, in "Hustle", vocalizations such as "Ri di mah kool a yooo" and the chant-

like refrain "Aye aye ah aye aye ah aye aye ah" elongate vowels and percussively space syllables, embodying breath work, physical exertion, and fatigue. The stylistic effect transforms the chorus into a collective coping ritual, while semiotically the chant mirrors the push-pull rhythm of daily grind, turning vocalization into an embodied performance of endurance and solidarity among listeners.

4.3.2. Intertextual Tags and Namedrops

The use of proper names, tags, and titles such as "Obo", "Baddest", "Chee," "Odumodublvck," "NATIVE," and "Spending money Pablo" serves as semiotic markers to index social and cultural networks, including subcultural affiliations, artist crews, and reputational capital in "Funds". In terms of style, these allusions serve as badges of legitimacy, situating the character in a certain metropolitan musical and social environment. The song's aesthetics of pleasure and peril are heightened by the reference to "Pablo," which further conjures up myths of illegal wealth and extravagant risk-taking. Such tags enhance the performative texture of the lyrics while intertextually tying the persona to wider cultural narratives and scene credibility. They also signify insider knowledge and aspirational identity.

4.3.3. Culture-Specific Lexis as Visual-Aural Icons

Culture-specific lexical items such as "Tilapia, kote … abacha," "gbedu na replay," and "Gobe" operate as visual and aural icons that evoke the sights and sounds of urban leisure in "Funds". Stylistically, references to food and party culture create vivid images of convivial scenes, plates, dancing, and music, while simultaneously conveying rhythm and cadence, with "gbedu" exemplifying how beat and musicality are encoded linguistically, enhancing the flow of Nigerian Pidgin English. While in "Hustle", lines like "No add your own join my own" and "Cos family go call enemy go call" serve a different semiotic function. They resemble aphorisms or proverbial sayings, transforming personal challenges into socially recognizable wisdom that resonates with communal experience.

Across both songs, adlibs, chants, namedrops, and culturally loaded lexis interact with code-mixing and Nigerian Pidgin English syntax to enrich meaning. While "Funds" foregrounds arrival, pleasure, and performative indulgence, "Hustle" emphasizes collective endurance, resilience, and self-care. Together, these examples demonstrate how culturally anchored language functions as both an aesthetic and social marker in contemporary Nigerian music, guiding interpretation through intertwined visual, aural, and linguistic cues.

4.4. Differential Use of Linguistic Deviances by Adeleke and Apata in Articulating Ideological and Identity Stances

In **Table 12** below, the comparison of Adeleke's "Funds" and Apata's "Hustle" shows how each artist uses linguistic deviance to signal ideology and identity. "Funds" employs multilingual mixing, slang, NPE imperatives, ellipsis, and repetition to project hedonistic aspiration and a hybrid, pan-African persona. "Hustle" uses NPE structures, English and Yoruba inserts, chant-like refrains, and aphoristic lines to emphasize resilience, self-care, and communal solidarity. Together, the songs illustrate that linguistic deviance shapes both social identity and ideological expression in Nigerian urban music.

In summary, our discussion on data presented identified and analyzed the principal forms of linguistic deviance in "Funds" and "Hustle": lexical deviances, Semantic deviance, morphological deviance, phonological deviances, syntactic deviances, and dialectal deviance. Using Stylistics, these choices were shown to foreground hedonistic aspiration (in Funds) and psychosocial resilience (in Hustle). Using Semiotics, the analysis showed how adlibs, chants, namedrops, and culture-specific lexis interact with language to amplify meaning. Finally, the comparative reading demonstrated that while both songs speak the language of hustle, they project notably different ideologies and identities: a cosmopolitan, spend-forward ethos in "Funds" versus a communal, boundary-setting ethos in "Hustle". This study is limited to an examination of emerging language features that differ from Standard Nigerian English and how these differences are used as resources for meaning-making. Other musical features, such as melody and rhythm, are not included in this study; the focus is limited to the lyrics' language and style. Also, the study's cultural focus is limited to Nigeria, as it explores how language changes relate to and reflect Nigerian social culture. We reflect on how popular music is currently being localized by Nigerian youth and urban culture through these artists and songs.

Table 12. Showing differential Use of Linguistic Deviances in "Funds" and "Hustle".

S/N	Aspect	"Funds" by Adeleke	"Hustle" by Apata
1.	**Linguistics profile/Deviances**	In "funds", Adeleke employs rapid code-mixing across English, Yoruba, Igbo, and Nguni; NPE imperatives (must to buy plenty); slang (alele, OT, Belgium); enumerative ellipsis (Tilapia, kote, bring egufe…); repetition of hooks (Mismanage my funds).	While in "hustle", Apata foregrounds primarily on NPE with English inserts; Yoruba switch (Wo ni iru pala pala…); heavy repetition of Sometimes; chant-like refrain (Na this hustle I dey so); aphoristic lines; truncated syntax.
2.	**Ideological Stance**	Adeleke's song constructs hedonistic aspiration; money is volatile but performative and tied to consumption and display ("My money na alele", "Mismanage my funds on you … Spend all of my funds on you"). Pressure is acknowledged but channeled into pleasure and scene-building.	Apata frames a survivalist resilience; success is mentally taxing and ambivalent ("Sometimes it feels like success is a trap"). Self-care and boundary-setting are publicly sanctioned ("Sometimes I will have to say no", "No add your own join my own"). Money is secondary to mental and social strain.
3.	**Identity performance**	Adeleke hybrid, pan-Nigerian and pan-African persona; identity coded through multilingual bravado, crew tags ("Obo, Baddest… Odumodublvck"), and performative consumption.	Apata present grassroots, confessional persona speaking for ordinary listeners under pressure ("No vex baba my head e full o"); identity is survivalist, communal, and oriented toward everyday resilience.

5. Conclusions

The study concludes that linguistic deviances are an integral part of the Nigerian music industry and function as semiotic and stylistic resources. In "Funds", Adeleke employs multilingual mixing, slang, NPE imperatives, repetition, ellipsis, and adlibs to construct a hedonistic, pan-Nigerian/pan-African persona and to celebrate wealth, pleasure, and performance. In "Hustle", Apata relies on NPE structures, English and Yoruba inserts, chant-like refrains, repetition, truncated syntax, and aphoristic lines to foreground resilience, self-care, and communal solidarity under social and mental pressures. Viewed through a semiotic lens, these linguistic deviances act as signs of aspiration, struggle, and identity, while stylistically enriching the songs' rhythm, memorability, and affective impact. The comparison shows that non-standard linguistic forms in Nigerian urban music are deliberately employed to articulate ideology and shape social identity, demonstrating the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and music.

In view of the foregoing, the researchers recommend that further studies should explore linguistic deviances across a broader range of Nigerian artists and genres. This will enable comparative investigations to examine how linguistic deviances in Nigerian music differ from those in other African or global musical contexts. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the universality and uniqueness of these linguistic features.

For musicians, artists should continue to creatively employ linguistic deviances as stylistic tools, as they foster cultural authenticity and establish strong connections with local audiences while still appealing to global listeners. However, care should be taken to balance linguistic creativity with intelligibility for international audiences to ensure broader appreciation of music. For educators and linguists, Nigerian popular music should be recognized as a legitimate resource for linguistic and cultural studies. Its rich and dynamic use of language offers valuable insights into youth identity, creativity, and socio-cultural realities.

Finally, for the music industry, stakeholders should actively document and archive emerging slang, neologisms, and stylistic forms in music. These linguistic innovations not only enrich creative expression but also contribute significantly to the evolving lexicon of Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English, thereby preserving them for future scholarly and cultural reference.

Author Contributions

Regarding the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT), as it concerns the conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, and investigation, are provided as follows:

Conceptualization, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; methodology, P.O.M.; validation, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; formal analysis, P.O.M.

and P.C.O.; investigation, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; resources, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; data curation, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; writing—original draft preparation, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; writing—review and editing, P.O.M.; visualization, P.O.M.; supervision, P.O.M.; project administration, P.O.M. and P.C.O.; funding acquisition, P.O.M. and P.C.O. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

This study does not require an informed consent statement since the data for this study were sourced from secondary sources and are readily available for public consumption. Thus, the researchers declared that the informed consent statement is "Not applicable."

Data Availability Statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article. Data for the study which are available online were sourced from https://genius.com/Teni-hustle-lyrics and https://lyrics.lyricfind.com/lyrics/davido-funds as indicated in the reference section.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. On this note, the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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