A Clash of Worlds: A Stylistic Analysis of Imrana's 'Imagine Say'

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Abstract

The study explores creativity and innovation in the song (music video) 'Imagine Say,' by Imrana, a young Ghanaian musician. Adopting various theories and principles of Stylistics, the study identifies such creativity and innovation as parallelism, deviation, contrast, and other figures of speech, and what they foreground, in order to examine how effectively they contribute to the overall meaning and message of the song. The result indicates that the artiste adopts multimodality to express the meaning and message of the song. The diction, background scenes and chorus, sound effects, personification, repetition Parallelism, deviation, metaphor, and other figures of speech highlight the theme and meaning of the song, and thus help the audience to get the message – Discrimination and injustice against those who come from the streets (the poor and vulnerable) must cease. It is not by choice that they come from the streets; coming from the street does not make one a criminal; if any street person can be charged for any crime s/he must be given a fair hearing at a court of competent jurisdiction, rather than subjecting him/her to mob/instant justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics explores readers' interaction with language of texts to identify how they understand, and are affected by the texts when they read. It is a way of applying linguistic models, as well as theories from other disciplines such as Psychology, Literature, Pragmatics and Sociology to the analysis of a text. (Mcrae & Clark, 2004). This study is a stylistic analysis of Imrana's song, 'Imagine Say,' and it seeks to explore creativity and innovation in the song, and how that contributes to the overall meaning and message of the song. An essential and major perspective of stylistics is to explore creativity and innovation in the use of language in a text.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Stylistics as a Discipline

Stylistics as a discipline, has evolved from application of linguistic models to the study of literary texts, to cover a wide range of theories (not just linguistic theories) and areas (not

just literary texts). Starting in the 20th century from Anglo-American criticism as extension of moves in literary criticism that focused on studying the text (analyses of the text) rather than the author, Stylistics, according to Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) now involves detail analyses of a wide range of texts – extending beyond literary texts, and aesthetic properties of texts. Modern Stylistics focuses on the language of the text, and accepted linguistic methods of categorizing and interpreting in order to reflect an impersonal reproducible truth. It sees dialogism as a key feature of texts, and it relies on objective rather than subjective/impressionistic criteria in discussion. The objective criteria is to ensure that stylistic analyses provide a less intuitive and personalized method of analysis that produce 'observable' and 'replicable' categories of description (Mcrae & Clark, 2004), and inherent in this are the principles of rigour, retrievability and replicability (the 3R's of Stylistics) – principles that are required for stylistics research to be objective and empirical. (Wales, 2001, cited by Bimbola, 2021). Rigour refers to transparency in stylistic research, in terms of process, methods and justification. It promotes objectiveness by ensuring clear explanation of the application of tools, process and results of the analysis. It also demands that the way in which stylistic research is carried out and presented enables others to ascertain its consistency and clarity of sampling method, analytical tools and process of analysis that can be followed to inquire into the same or another text. In other words stylistics is clear in its framework (Bimbola, 2021; Ahmed & Mohammed, 2021) and that indicates its scientific nature. With regard to replicability, it is required that the methods of stylistic research are clear enough to enable verification by other stylisticians, by applying those methods to the same or another text. How conclusions are reached is accessible to a point where other researchers can do analysis in the same way. With replicability, research conclusions are reached through ways (methods) that are accessible. Retrievability on the other hand indicates that stylistic analysis employs clear concepts and terms that are based on consensus of Stylisticians. This allows researchers to follow the process, test the categories, and ascertain how conclusion was reached, in order to agree or disagree. Thus, the principles ensure that stylistic research is objective and scientific in nature – it is clear in its framework, conclusions are reached through ways that are accessible, and conclusions that are reached could be ascertained by other researchers, due to centrality of language.

2.2. Theories of Modern Stylistics

As Modern Stylistics extends beyond literary texts and aesthetic properties of texts, stylistic analyses now involve many areas and theories (Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998).

Formal Stylistics considers the form and function performed by a text at its various levels. At the level of the sound, phones, syllables, suprasegmentals are looked at for tempo, force and tone in terms of alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, rhyme, etc. Graphology on the other hand looks at the text in terms of layout, shape/size/type of font, capitalization, boldface, italics, repetition, underlining, paragraphing, spacing, colour, in order to identify graphic symbolism, among other things, while the Semantic level offers marked units such as allusion, personification, oxymoron, euphemism, hyperbole, etc. Grammar (Morphology and Syntax) provide information on medium, formality, politeness level, structural variability, functional variability. This is based on the idea that speech communication has a repertoire of expressive means (from linguistic to paralinguistic and extra-linguistic features) that offers variation at various levels. There are thus stylistically neutral as well as marked units (Mistrick, 1993, cited by Mbarek, I. A.) that manifest in deviation, parallelism and foregrounding.

Discourse stylistics is concerned with the form and function of communication in specific social, cultural or historical contexts. It draws on the techniques of Discourse Analysis (Simpson & Hall, 2002), and therefore combines the elements of both Stylistics and Discourse Analysis - phonological devices, graphological devices, lexical devices, grammatical devices, semantic devices, tropes and schemes, textual coherence , cohesive devices, referencing and inferencing devices.

Feminist Stylistics is concerned with text and gender. It concentrates on how language use points to feminist and gender issues; how authors have employed linguistic – linguistic resources can project voices, attitudes and sociolinguistic variables. Feminist Stylistics project, reproduce, and challenge the writing norms.

Cognitive Stylistics focuses more on what a reader come to a text with, rather than the text or author. It hinge on the idea that readers have a mental representation of the environment/world – schema. It is with this background experiences and knowledge of the environment/world that helps them to understand a text (Stockwell, 2002). The reader's mental representation of the world is shaped by multiple experiences that produce idealized prototypical images. Such mental images are prompted by the words of a text read, and that forms the interpretation of the text. Another important point is that in Cognitive Stylistics, what is foregrounded in a text is dependent on the reader and the mental images s/he comes to the text with. As Woldemariam (2015:18) notes, 'The cognitive stylistics model, however, is a departure from textualist to contextualist stylistics interpretation of a text.' The meaning of some metaphor (a mapping of areas of experience) and metonymy (representation of a state by its feature) can be realized only by resorting to the reader's knowledge, beliefs and inferences. Stockwell (2002) emphasizes that Cognitive Stylistics involves various (not just a single) theories – schema theory, mind style, conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, etc., which provide principles, such as generalization, embodiment and commitment. The theories, as have been discussed, are applied to stylistic analysis of a text, as and when necessary.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is a stylistic analysis of Imrana's song, 'Imagine Say.' It seeks to explore creativity and innovation in the song, and how they contribute to the overall meaning and message of the song. An essential and major perspective of stylistics is to explore creativity and innovation in the use of language in a text.The linguistic linguistic and stylistic categories of a text are capable of exposing societal ills that are presented in literary works (Mwinwelle et al, 2021). The study employs various theories and principles of Stylistics, as have been discussed – refer to Literature Review.

3.1 Research Questions

The study explores creativity and innovation in the song, 'Imagine Say' and how they contribute to the overall meaning and message of the song. Questions that are discussed are: what creativity and innovation are employed in the song, 'Imagine Say'? How have the creativity and innovation been used, and what effects do they have on the overall meaning or message of the song? The study thus employs various theories and principles of Stylistics – refer to Literature Review.

3.2 Methodology

The study explores creativity and innovation in the song1, 'Imagine Say' by Imrana, and how they contribute to its overall meaning and message. An essential and major perspective of stylistics is to explore creativity and innovation in the use of language in a text. The song (music video) is analysed at various levels for specific features of creativity and innovation in language use that portray deviation and parallelism – foregrounding, contrast, metaphor and other figures of speech. How such creativity and innovation contribute to the overall meaning and message of the song is examined, and conclusions are made.

3.3 The Artiste and his Song

Imrana is a Ghanaian Afrobeats and Pop artiste born in Sunyani on December 9, 1996. (afrikalyrics.com; rhymezgh.com). As a new artiste, Imrana has a few hit songs, one of which is 'Imagine Say,' released in 2019. The emotional and inspirational song talks about life choices, and one not having control over who s/he should be (Ghana Waves Online, 2019). The song[1] which reflects the artiste's personal experience of hardship (Dzido, 2019) is presented in a video where he (the artiste) with clothes stripped off, is handcuffed, and seated before a

security officer for interrogation. He laments, pleads and tears up as he gives his statement. Having been accused of stealing a bag, he is chased, knocked down, beaten and arrested by a mob. However he has not stolen any bag. Having been found in the street, he is given the bag to keep for the bearer who goes to urinate. The mod who sees him holding the bag then accuses him of stealing – resulting in the beating and arrest. The persona (artiste) has been incriminate on a false charge, and he blames it on poverty and the hardship he is going through, and the perceptions and stereotypes against the poor – those who come from the streets, whose mums sell meat, whose faces are not nice, who cannot walk, who don't have money, etc. He believes that if he were rich (not poor) he would not be in this predicament, since he would not be in the street; even if he would come out he would be in a private car. He would also dress neatly, live in a nice house, etc., and command respect, as the scenes in the second part of the music video indicate. He would not be in the streets to be incriminated on false charge – The poor is vulnerable, while the rich is secure. The persona (artiste) is however of the view that no one can be blamed for who s/he is – poor, lame/ cripple, ugly, etc., as 'we never choose life – life chose we.'

Lyrics of ImRana's 'Imagine Say'
Oh yeah
(Dare dare mamebeat)
And yeah yeah yeah yeah… Imrana
On my way
On my way
Life never easy on my way
Man dey hung but food no dey
On this day
On this day eeeeh
I got something I need to say
So am pleading
Am pleading
And then
Imagine say I was to choose my life
Imagine saying I was born by despite
Imagine say there's no rich and no poor
And then

1. https://youtu.be/S3QCi1dU1zg

Imagine say there's no Christ no Islam
Imagine say I was to choose my religion
Imagine say
You just imagine
But say
We never choose life, life chose we
So no bi my fault sey I come from the street
No bi my fault sey my mom sells meat

Ohhhhh yeah

We never choose life, life chose we

No bi my fault sey I come from the street

And ino bi my fault sey my mom sells meat eheheehhhhh

No bi my fault if ino get sika

No bi my fault if ino fit

No bi my fault if ino fi waka

Oh ohh eheehehehe

No bi my fault if ino get tribe

No be my fault if I sleep outside

No bi my fault if my face no fine

Ohoh. Eeehhhh

Imagine say I was to choose my life

Imagine set I was born by despite

Imagine sey there's no rich no poor

And then

Imagine say there's no Christ no Islam

Imagine set I was to choose my religion

Imagine say

You just imagine

But see

[Adapted from: https://www.celebritiesbuzz.com.gh/lyrics-imrana-imagine-say-lyrics/]

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This The song expresses its meaning and message through multimodality – scenes, sounds, and figures of speech. There are deviations, parallelism, and mappings that prompt certain thoughts and ideas to highlight the meaning and the message(s) of the song.

The music video begins where the persona, with clothes stripped off, is handcuffed, and seated before a security officer for interrogation. He laments, pleads and tears up as he gives his statement, indicating that he has been arrested for committing a crime. Other scenes depict the life of those who come from the streets and slums, emphasizing the hardship they (the persona inclusive) go through. The other half of the video however presents scenes of life of the privileged rich – nice house, car, dressing and looks, and well protected, respected and regarded. Contrast is drawn between the life (world) of the poor and that of the rich, emphasizing the persona's view that if he were rich he would not go through such hardship.

Sound effects have also been employed to contribute to the meaning and message. Repetition of some vowel sounds – [e:] - way dey, day, say, [i:] - we, street, meat, reflect wailing (of the persona)

Further, the persona (artiste) uses simple and short structures (words, phrases and clauses) reflective of his weak command of the English language – the language of the educated, rich, elites and the sophisticated. He thus resorts to Pidgin English, which those from the streets and slums are comfortable with, as far as the use of English and communication with the elites is concerned. The use of Pidgin English therefore reflects the persona's background as someone from the streets, who has a challenge in expressing himself well – weak self-expression and defence. The weak self-expression in the English language is emphasized by the persona's expression of 'I got something I need to say,' which deviates from the norm, and is thus foregrounded.

Another incidence of foregrounding is seen in the use of 'Sika'. 'Sika' in Twi, the most popular indigenous Ghanaian language refers to money – rich(es). The expression 'sika' highlights and emphasizes the important role money (riches) plays in how people are perceived, regarded, and treated. If people were to choose between being poor and rich, everybody would choose to be rich. Life is not like that and therefore you can't blame him for being poor. This is emphasized in the personification of 'life' in the paradoxical statement – 'We never choose life, life chose we'

The persona thus draws parallelism between 'sleeping outside,' 'my mom sells meat,' 'my face no fine,' 'ino fit see,' 'ino fit waka,' and maps them with poverty.

Repetition of 'imagine say,' and the accompanying parallelism (Imagine say I was to choose my life, Imagine saying I was born by despite, Imagine say there's no rich and no poor, Imagine say there's no Christ no Islam, Imagine say I was to choose my religion) indicate the persona's view of another world – imaginary world where one chooses his life, parents, etc., where he could be blamed for being poor, living in the streets, etc. Contrast (conflict) is drawn between this imaginary world and the real world where one cannot make such life choices, and therefore he cannot be blamed for coming from the streets, and being poor – a clash of worlds.

'Despite,' a Ghanaian business magnate, symbolizes the rich, and if 'Despite' were his father, he would enjoy the best treatment and protection, and would not go through hardship.

The parallelism further extends the vulnerability of the poor to other areas – those who have no tribe, those who cannot walk, etc. – the marginalized in society – should not be blamed for who they are. They are who they are not by choice (but by destiny). It is not a crime to be poor, disable, to come from the street – however, society perceives them as criminals. The persona thus pleads that the poor, those from the streets, etc. should not be killed or molested; they are not criminals. If they can be accused of any crime they should be summoned before a court of competent jurisdiction. This is emphasized by the background chorus – 'saman me, saman me na meba,' an allusion to 'Saman me[2],' an old hit song by the Yamoah's Band. The song thus condemns mob justice – injustice against those who come from the streets – the poor who society perceives as criminals.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Imrana, in his music video, 'Imagine Say,' employs multimodality to express the meaning and message of the song, as has been revealed in the analysis. The music video presents scenes that reflect the theme, meaning and message of the song. This is emphasized by the use of sound effects, background chorus, personification, repetition Parallelism, metaphor, which all help the reader to understand the message of the song – Those who come from the streets (the poor) go through a lot of hardship, not by choice, but by destiny, which man does not have control of. They go hungry, they are disrespected, disregarded, perceived as criminals, molested and killed. 2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD3LvLpWE6A
However they cannot be blamed for coming from the streets and being poor. As street children, there is not much they can do since they have no choice as to who their parents should be (whether rich or poor). Who become your parents, and the conditions under which you are brought up is a matter of destiny. They should therefore not be blamed for coming from the streets, being poor, looking dirty, looking ugly; they should not be blamed for their mothers selling meat. They are who they are not by choice (but by destiny). It is not a crime to be poor, disable, and to come from the street – but society perceives them as criminals.
The persona thus pleads that the poor, those from the streets, etc. should not be killed or molested; they are not criminals. If they can be accused of any crime they should be summoned before a court of competent jurisdiction. Through his creativity and novelty the artiste condemns mob justice – injustice perpetuated against those who come from the streets – the poor who society perceives as criminals. Imrana in the music video thus, shows creativity, innovation and versatility, and as an artiste, succeeds in driving home his message.

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