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# Transatlantic translanguaging in Zimdancehall: Reassessing linguistic creativity in youth language practices

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## 1. Introduction

The importance of the relationship between music and youth language has been underlined by scholars of African youth language phenomena, especially with regard to the role of Hip Hop (e.g. Vierke 2015). The present contribution explores this relationship by focusing on Zimbabwean youth language practices in Zimdancehall music. Among other creative strategies, the examples analyzed in this paper feature transatlantic translanguaging practices and thus illustrate the often called upon global dimension of youth language practices with regard to connections between Africa and its Caribbean diaspora.

In Zimdancehall, young people draw creatively on the semiotic resources in their

[1] Special thanks to Cyril Mangwende, Helen Kauma, Bryan Kauma and Tabani Hollington for their help with transcribing and translating Zimdancehall lyrics and sharing their knowledge of Zimdancehall practices. I am grateful to the Global South Studies Center (University of Cologne) for supporting my research. I warmly thank Mary Chambers for proofreading and copyediting this contribution.

multilingual repertoires and engage in a range of linguistic strategies and practices which can be described in terms of translingual practices (Canagarajah 2013) or translanguaging (García & Wei 2014). The music artists also make use of other creative youth language practices in their music, for instance by coining new expressions in their lyrics which are then popularized through the music.

While youth language practices have often been marked as 'specially creative' practices by linguistic scholars, my objective is to show that while the youth language practices found in Zimdancehall music are certainly creative, they are as such not different from linguistic practices in other sociolinguistic contexts. In fact, linguistic creativity should not be regarded as a special practice, but rather as a common phenomenon in the way human beings use language (see Carter 2004). In this regard, this paper presents a fresh look at youth language by deconstructing the myth of its *otherness* and placing it in its contexts as common language practice.

The study of African youth language practices has gained momentum in the past two decades and continues to attract academic attention. Scholars have dealt with various practices in different countries and have discussed a range of theoretical issues and creative linguistic strategies. It has repeatedly been argued that youth language practices are embedded in global, urban and youth culture and that they are connected to other social practices such as clothing choices, hair styles, music, and so forth (e.g. Kießling & Mous 2004, Hollington & Nassenstein 2015). In this context, and especially with regard to the creative linguistic strategies of language manipulation, youth language practices have often been treated as 'special' languages, different from 'standard' language and from adults' or other language practices. While the examples of youth language illustrated here and in other contributions do reflect linguistic creativity, this paper argues that similar forms of creativity are employed by all human beings, especially in multilingual contexts.

With regard to music, a range of scholars have outlined the impact of Hip Hop on youth language practices, illustrating influences from global Hip Hop repertoires as well as developments in local African Hip Hop scenes (e.g. Vierke 2015). However, in many African societies and especially among youths and adolescents, Jamaican music, in particular Reggae and Dancehall, play an important role and have an impact on local linguistic practices. In Zimbabwe, Reggae (and later Dancehall) have been very popular for decades, especially since the release of Bob Marley's song *Zimbabwe* in 1979. In recent years, a unique Dancehall genre called Zimdancehall emerged in the country and currently constitutes the dominating popular music genre in Zimbabwe and its diaspora. This chapter looks at Zimdancehall by focusing on the use of youth language and translanguaging practices (see below for a definition of the term) in the lyrical performances of music artists. The notions of translanguaging and linguistic creativity have gained momentum in recent sociolinguistic approaches to language practices. Sociolinguists have been less concerned with analyzing language structures and more with examining real linguistic and communicative practices in their social contexts, with the help of ethnographic methods. This perspective has led to new approaches to language and multilingual practices. They

have also impacted views on African youth languages, especially because the very nature of most youth language practices is that they are fast-changing, multilingual, creative and unbounded, and thus require a focus on actual performances in order to understand the complex communicative and semiotic resources involved and the way they are put together in bricolage (see Nassenstein & Hollington 2016). While these new perspectives in sociolinguistics (see also Deumert 2014) reflect a general paradigm shift in the discipline and relate to language and linguistics at large, it seems that they had a special effect on (African) youth language research: While they have certainly brought fresh looks on youth language, they also seem to have reinforced the (often implied) view that youth languages are special due to their creative nature. The creativity of manipulative strategies and multilingual practices which also involve fast-changing youth styles and culture as well as global influences seems to exhibit some extraordinary glow. This view will be questioned in this contribution.

The recent paradigm shift in sociolinguistics has brought new terms such as the above-mentioned *translanguaging* (García & Wei 2014) or *translingual practice* (Canagarajah 2013). Such terms are intended to focus on the performative nature of linguistic practice and to reflect a new perspective on language as such, namely a focus on the messy realities of parole. In multilingual communicative situations, this also means that speakers do not separate 'languages' by switching from one language to another, but rather draw resources from a large multilingual repertoire which they use in creative and unbounded ways. The term 'translingual practice' was employed by Canagarajah as an umbrella term for communicative practices which transcend individual languages and words, involving diverse semiotic resources (Canagarajah 2013: 6–8). In other words,

> [t]he term translingual conceives of language relationships in more dynamic terms. The semiotic resources in one's repertoire or in society interact more closely, become part of an integrated resource, and enhance each other. The languages mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars. (ibid.: 8)

In a similar vein, García and Wei adopt the term translanguaging and state that it refers to

> a trans-semiotic system with many meaning-making signs [...] that combine to make up a person's semiotic repertoire. [...] Bilingual [or multilingual] speakers select meaning-making features and freely combine them to potentialize meaning-making, cognitive engagement, creativity and criticality. Translanguaging refers to the act of languaging between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them. As such, translanguaging is transformative and creates changes in inter-active cognitive and social structures that in turn affect our continuous languaging becoming. (García and Wei 2014: 42)

These terms and the approaches they imply are highly useful for multilingual countries and societies as we often find them on the African continent.

In multilingual Zimbabwe, youth language is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon involving mainly the languages

Shona, Ndebele and English (see Hollington & Makwabarara 2015).[2] Depending on the local set-up and context of the various communities of practice, the mix of resources that form an individual's repertoire can vary. For instance, while youth language practices in Harare (the capital city of Zimbabwe and center of Mashonaland) are mostly Shona-dominated, Bulawayo, the capital of Matabeleland, exhibits a stronger focus on Ndebele and an orientation towards South Africa (see Ndlovu 2015 for Bulawayo-based youth language practices referred to as S'ncamtho). English, or rather various Englishes, also play an important role in Zimbabwe, on the one hand as the former colonial language, while on the other hand there are influences from various world Englishes through contact and global flows. This is especially evident in youth language and in music. Apart from translanguaging practices, youth in Zimbabwe engage in a range of common strategies of linguistic manipulation such as metaphor or semantic shift which also find their way into Zimdancehall lyrics (for more details and examples see Hollington & Makwabarara 2015).

Section 2 will introduce Zimdancehall in more detail and discuss the music genre with regard to its Jamaican influences and its musical context in Zimbabwe, while Section 3 will look at the lyrics of three Zimdancehall songs by Winky D, Da Ruler Mambokadzi and Bounty Lisa. The discussion in Section 4 will reconsider the creativity of youth languages in comparison to other linguistic practices, followed by a short conclusion.

## 2. Zimdancehall and its emergence in the Zimbabwean music scene

Zimbabwean music is a versatile and complex phenomenon.[3] While it is sometimes common to distinguish between 'traditional' and 'popular' music, these labels are also problematic and the two are by no means clearly distinguishable from each other. For instance, 'traditional' Zimbabwean music is usually strongly associated with the *mbira*,[4] to the extent that the instrument is regarded as *the* symbol of Zimbabwean music. In the development of popular music in Zimbabwe, the *mbira* also plays an important role and features in many music genres and styles from *Chimurenga* to Zimdancehall. *Chimurenga* is regarded as one of the earliest pop music genres in Zimbabwe and was created by Thomas Mapfumo during the liberation war against colonial rule in the 1970s. The Shona word *Chimurenga* means 'struggle' and stands for anticolonial war against the White imperialists.[5] *Chimurenga* music, which combines Shona music featuring the *mbira* and other African instruments with Western instruments such as the electric guitar, became popular among

[2] These three languages constitute the major languages of Zimbabwe. However, it should be pointed out that there is a range of minority languages and that the country recognizes 16 official languages.

[3] The complex history and development of Zimbabwean music cannot be recounted in this article. The interested reader is referred to contributions such as Berliner (1993), Turino (2000) or Chikowero (2008, 2015).

[4] The *mbira* is a musical instrument of African origin belonging to the class of lamellophones (also classified as 'plucked idiophone'). Sometimes referred to as a 'thumb piano', the instrument is made of a wooden board and metal keys which are plucked with the two thumbs while holding the instrument with both hands. The board is usually placed in a calabash which serves as a resonator and amplifies the sound.

[5] The 'first Chimurenga' is associated with the Ndebele and Shona uprising against colonial rule at the end of the 19th century. The 'second Chimurenga' refers to the guerrilla war from 1966 to 1979, which resulted in the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980.

the Zimbabwean freedom fighters.[6] With the evolution of the music industry, other pop music genres came up such as Afro-Jazz or Sungura (a Zimbabwean version of Rumba). In the second half of the 1980s, Jit emerged as a highly popular genre through the high profile of the Bhundu Boys. In the 1990s to 2000s, Urban groove (Zimbabwean Hip Hop) became the most popular music style (Mate 2012). Jamaican Reggae had been popular in Zimbabwe since the late 1970s, especially since the release of Bob Marley's song *Zimbabwe* in 1979, which expressed solidarity with the Zimbabwean freedom fighters ("so arm in arms with arms we fight this little struggle") and the subsequent independence of the country at whose celebrations Bob Marley played in April 1980. Since then, numerous Jamaican Reggae and Dancehall artists have performed in Zimbabwe. Moreover, Zimbabwean Reggae (and later Dancehall) artists and bands arose and became popular in the 1980s. Over time, this music scene built the foundations for the emergence of Zimdancehall, which has evolved in the last decade under the influence of Zimbabwean popular music, and of course with strong parallels to the Jamaican Dancehall scene. Zimdancehall thus evolved in a context of Jamaican-Zimbabwean cross-fertilization spiced up with influences from other music genres, such as Zimbabwean urban groove (Hip Hop), Sungura and South African Kwaito.

In Jamaican Dancehall culture, producers create *riddims* ('rhythms', i.e. instrumental tracks) and have several artists (i.e. singers) voice the same instrumental *version* with their respective lyrics. This means there are usually several songs by various artists on the same *riddim*. The *riddims* are usually named and there are riddim mixes that compile various artists on the same riddim, mixed by *selectahs* (i.e. 'disk jockeys') or *soundsystems*. These practices were adopted and adapted by Zimdancehall producers who have created instrumental tracks such as the award-winning *Zimbo Flavor Riddim* produced 2013 by Levels/Chillspot Records featuring artists such as Soul Jah Love, Ras Pompy, Qounfuzed, Tocky Vibes among others (for more details see Hollington forthcoming). Zimdancehall artists have also adopted, reshaped and recontextualized other Jamaican Dancehall practices, including *deejaying*,[7] certain similar themes in the lyrics, clothing style, dreadlocks and other symbols of Rastafari identity (such as the colors red, gold and green or the Lion of Judah) attitudes (and resistance) to *Babylon* (a term which stands for oppression, colonialism/neo-colonialism, corruption, exploitation, *sufferation*[8] etc.). In some cases, Jamaican *riddims* are used by Zimdancehall artists. The great majority of the *riddims* used in Zimdancehall however, are local productions by Zimbabwean producers. While some *riddims* resemble Jamaican Dancehall *riddims* very closely in terms of the musical set-up and structure, other *riddims* show a clear Zimbabwean flavor, incorporating Zimbabwean melodies and/or instruments (such as the above-mentioned *mbira*). Thus, Zimdancehall

[6] While Mapfumo's lyrics supported the war against the colonizers during colonial times, the singer continued to make songs about social and political injustice after Zimbabwean independence.

[7] The term *deejaying* refers to a singing technique which is characterized by fast, melodious speech-singing (akin to rapping) over a *riddim*.

[8] A term adopted from Jamaican Rastafari discourse which stands for the suffering of the oppressed masses.

is not a mere copy of Jamaican Dancehall but also contains lots of features that reflect its Zimbabwean context and community of practice and constitute new creations that reflect transatlantic cultural ties.

### *2.1 Zimdancehall, language and youths*

With regard to lyrics, Shona (ChiShona), the African *lingua franca* of Zimbabwe, features most prominently in the lyrical practices of Zimdancehall artists. However, English and especially Jamaican are also used in the lyrics. While some artists confine themselves to the use of a few emblematic expressions that index Jamaican as an international symbol of Reggae and Dancehall[9], other artists combine Jamaican and Shona in very creative ways, while some artists perform songs which are entirely in Jamaican/English (e.g. Spiderman *She love me*). The use of Jamaican, the international and dominant language of reggae, also serves to mark authenticity and connection to the original Jamaican reggae and dancehall scene, as some examples in the next section will illustrate. On the other hand, content and language of the music also express a strong focus on the local context. The comparability of Jamaican and Zimbabwean practices in this regard is also due to shared cultural and social experiences including colonialism, white supremacy and ghetto life with its daily struggles (see Hollington forthcoming).

The linguistic choices in Zimdancehall also reflect the cultural politics of the country (Mate 2012). In 2001, a Broadcasting Services Bill was passed that demands "75% local content" from local broadcasters. This may have triggered or reinforced a stronger focus on Shona in the Zimdancehall lyrics and can be seen as an attempt to control language practices in public media. As Samy Alim states: "We begin with language as power, that is, the view that language *is* the revolution, a powerful discourse in and of itself. We know that the most powerful people in society tend to control speech and its circulation through mass media" (Alim 2006: 10). Practices of banning songs and censoring lyrics, as has commonly occurred in Zimbabwe, testify to these politics. However, Zimbabweans including Zimdancehall artists have a great repertoire at their disposal and have many ways with words, so that political and cultural restrictions and social expectations relating language and music practices do not prevent the youths from "doing their thing", and nor does censorship. One strategy is to use manipulations like metaphor to make 'critical statements' or to talk about socially unacceptable topics. Moreover, youth language also helps the mostly young artists to bond and express solidarity with their young listeners and fans.

While it is an oversimplification to equate Zimbabwean youth language practices with Zimdancehall lyrics and performances, the two are certainly connected and influence each other. On the one hand, artists use youth language practices in their lyrics and on the other hand they also lead changes through innovative linguistic behavior and their role as models for many youths. Thus youth language practices are commonly employed in Zimdancehall lyrics by the artists as cutting

[9] This might be due to limited knowledge of resources from Jamaican language practices, as linguistic repertoires can contain "bits and pieces" of linguistic resources (see Blommaert 2010).

edge language and style, as a manipulative strategy to express things more indirectly and as a marker of identity. At the same time, expressions coined or popularized by Zimdancehall artists may be taken up by listeners and become popular among youths.[10] One example of a linguistic practice which is fruitful in youth language as well as in Zimdancehall is the use of labels to denote groups of people (in-group and outgroup). As youths often want to set themselves apart from other parts of society, they may create labels to denote themselves and others (Kießling & Mous 2004, Hollington 2015). With regard to Zimbabwe, a common label used for Zimbabweans is the term *zimbo* (see also *zimbolicious* and the discussion of the term in Veit-Wild 2009). In analogy to this word formation, the Zimbabwean community on Twitter are referred to as *twimbos*.[11] Moreover, there are labels such as *matsaga* (*masaga*) and *mabonga* to refer to 'rural people' or 'people who are not switched on', people who do not know what is going on. The term *matsaga* literally means 'sack' (according to a common belief that sacks are used more often in agricultural contexts, i.e. in the countryside), while the word *mabonga* denotes a wild cat, which is associated with the countryside. The term *masalad*, in contrast, is used for 'people with money and swag', who listen to Urban Grooves, speak more English than Shona and belong to the middle class (and who, unlike most Zimdancehall-associated people from the 'ghetto', are believed to 'eat salad', a habit that is associated with the middle class). The term *manosebrigade* refers to people who 'speak through the nose', as they intentionally change their accents and try to imitate a British accent. While some of these terms (such as *manosebrigade*) are quite old and have been in use for some decades, others (like *twimbos*) were coined more recently. In the context of such labels, Zimdancehall artists have also come up with terms to denote and address their fan-base and the people from their 'ghetto'/part of town. 'Ghetto identity' plays an important role in Zimdancehall, as the music is associated with Harare's 'high density' areas.[12] Artists and others proudly refer to the place where they grew up and thus claim their 'ghetto roots' as part of their identity.[13] For instance, the artist Winky D, who comes from the 'high density' area Kambuzuma in Harare, coined the term *maninja* ('ninjas'), and more recently also the term *gafa* ('boss'). While these labels are strongly associated with the singer and are used by him in his songs and when addressing his fans and audiences, they are also finding their way into the linguistic practices

[10] This point was also made by Vierke (2015) for Kenyan Hip Hop and Sheng. In this regard, it is especially interesting to look at aesthetics with regard to conscious linguistic choices and practices and to take the poetic function of language into consideration (Vierke 2015, Jakobson 1981).

[11] It seems that the term has been widened to include Zimbabweans active on other social media besides Twitter. See for instance the group *Twimbos giving hope* on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/Twimbos-Giving-Hope-1046101418749325/].

[12] It should be pointed out that Harare (like other urban centers in Zimbabwe and beyond) is divided into so-called 'low density' areas (where middle and upper class people live) and 'high density' areas (which are often referred to as 'ghettos' by Zimbabweans). To identify with the 'ghetto' proudly and openly is a common practice of Zimdancehall artists which also finds parallels in the Jamaican dancehall.

[13] This also has parallels with reggae and dancehall scenes and practices in Jamaica and other parts of Africa, especially since reggae is often believed to be music that defends and speaks for the poor and oppressed.

of youths, especially of those who listen to his music and identify with Kambuzuma. In a similar vein, the term *mabhanditi* ('bandits') is used by Seh Kalaz, a Zimdancehall artist from Mbare, Harare's biggest 'ghetto' and the stronghold of Zimdancehall. Therefore we can conclude that the place where people grow up or associate with plays an important role with regard to Zimdancehall identity.

### 3. Zimdancehall lyrics – creative linguistic practices

This section will examine Zimdancehall lyrics by looking at three songs. The three songs have been selected because they represent artists of varying levels of popularity, different gender and especially; the songs exhibit a spectrum of phenomena analyzed here with regard to the thematic of this contribution. As already mentioned, Zimdancehall lyrics constitute a site of linguistic creativity and playfulness. One of the most popular and long-standing artists in the Zimdancehall scene is the already mentioned Winky D (aka 'Di Bigman', 'Musarova Bigiman', 'Dancehall Igwe'). Born Wallace Chirumiko, the artist states that his stage name, Winky D, is a nickname given by his fans and is derived from 'Wicked Deejay'.[14] The Jamaican term *deejay* (not to be confused with the 'disk jockey' reading of DJ) refers to an artist in terms of his or her singing style: *Deejaying* is a usually fast and melodious speech-singing or 'toasting' over a riddim.

In his songs, Winky D uses a multilingual repertoire drawing mainly on resources from Shona, English and Jamaican. This is already evident when looking at some of his song titles:

Table 1: Winky D songtitles

| **Jamaican/English** | **Shona-English** | **Shona** |
|---|---|---|
| *Head ina war*<br>('Head in war') | *Pakitchen*<br>('In the kitchen') | *Tinokurura*<br>('We will beat you up') |
| *Buss di shot*<br>('Fire the shot') | *Type Yezvimoko*<br>('Type of girls) | *Isusu*<br>('Us') |
| *Ghetto sufferation*<br>('Ghetto suffering') | *Musarova Bigiman*<br>('Don't beat up Bigiman) | *Ndini Ndakatanga*<br>('I started it') |
| *Girl dem plenty*<br>('The girls are many') | *Taitirana Pafirst sight*<br>('We did each other at first sight') | *Vashakabvu*<br>('The Dead') |

[14] See [http://www.newzimbabwe.com/showbiz-4758-The+Truth+About+Winky+D/showbiz.aspx].

While the song titles in the right column are in Shona, the left column shows the strong Jamaican influences in Winky D's music, and the column in the middle shows creative combinations and translanguaging, bringing English and Shona together. Taking a look at the lyrics of his song *Woshora*, these practices become more evident:

| | |
|---|---|
| Hanzi kurikupisa kunge *oven* | they say it's hot like an oven |
| Huya kuno *often* | come over often |
| *Prezha* tirikutambira pa*open* | we are having pleasure/playing in the open |
| *Life* ichi*kik*a se mu*china* zhong zheng | life is kicking like a Chinese Zhong Zheng |
| Ndabvisa …. *Abortion* | I took out/I removed… abortion |
| Zvimoko zvondi*bhid*a kunge *auction* | ladies bid for me like at an auction |
| Asi kune twzvirwere pa*rotation* | but there are diseases on rotation |
| Ndinotya kuzorwa kunge *lotion* | I am afraid of being used like lotion |
| Ndinoda kutamba *summer* ndiri *healthy* | I want to enjoy summer being healthy |
| Ngavondimbundira totora ka*selfie* | let them surround me we take a little selfie |
| Nekuti mu*summer* gafa rinodhura | because during the summer things are expensive |
| Fanga Taurus paakaenda ku*Chelsea* | just like Taurus's move to Chelsea |
| | |
| Tapinda *summertime* | we have entered into summer time |
| Usingazive zvatinoita chimbo *googol*a | if you don't know what we do I suggest |
| | you google us, |
| Tapinda *summertime* | we have entered into summertime |
| Vasikana vakapfeka hembe dzino pinza mhepo | the girls are wearing outfits that allow |
| | free air ventilation |
| | and yet you complain |
| Iwe wo shora | you will regret it when the yellowbones |
| Uchanzwabhata ma*yellowbone* akutosvora | reject you |

Winky D, *Woshora*

In this song the artist plays with words and language but also with fun and morals: the song is about sexual activities during summertime, which are desirable and enjoyable on the one hand, but are also dangerous and may have consequences on the other. Winky D, while exploiting his Jamaican repertoire in other songs, uses very 'Zimbabwenized' English in these songs and adapts many English words to Shona phonology in terms of pronunciation (see also his 2016 hit song *Disappear* for more examples of that type). In the excerpt of the lyrics shown above, the English and English-derived words are written

in italics. The adaption of English words to Shona phonology, which can also sometimes be seen in the spelling, is evident in cases like in the third line where 'pleasure' becomes *prezha* (there is no /l/ in codified standard Shona). Other examples include English verbs that end in a consonant and that receive the paragogic vowel *-a*, which not only produces the open CV syllable structure common in Bantu languages, but also marks the verb as indicative. In the excerpt above we find *googola* 'to google' in the chorus, *ichikika* ('as it kicks' involving Engl. 'kick') in line 4 and *zvondibhida* in line 6. The latter comprises the verb 'bid', which becomes *bhida*; the spelling with *bh-* also indicates Shona phonology and orthography, as <bh> is pronounced [b] in Shona while <b> represents the bilabial voiced implosive and would be pronounced [ɓ]. The latter examples also exemplify smooth translanguaging practices, where English words are not only pronounced according to Shona phonology, but they also receive Shona morphology, as also in the examples *kaselfie* ('small selfie') and *mayellowbones* ('the yellowbones', 'the light-skinned'), where English words receive Shona noun class prefixes. This is also common practice with Shona locative classes, which can be attached to English words like *paopen* ('in the open' line 3), *parotation* ('on rotation', line 7), *musummer* ('in/during summer', line 11) and *kuChelsea* ('at/to Chelsea', line 12).[15] Extensive translanguaging involving Shona, English and Jamaican is common in many Zimdancehall songs, in Zimbabwean youth language practices and also in everyday communication between Zimbabwean multilinguals, as shall be illustrated below.

The next example is the song *Goodbye Taks* by Da Ruler. Da Ruler Mambokadzi, born Dorothy Karengo, started her musical career in 2010. While she was supported by the popular Zimdancehall artist Lady Squanda, for whom she had done backing vocals, she is now among the popular Zimdancehall artists herself. Translanguaging and bricolaging are essential in Da Ruler's songwriting and lyrical ways with language. These practices often reflect the creative and boundless usage of a multilingual repertoire, a phenomenon about which a range of scholars have written already, also with regard to youth languages (see Nassenstein & Hollington 2016). Many of these practices also clearly illustrate the deliberate nature and creative potential of social semiosis. This becomes evident when looking at the artist's stage name. While choosing a stage name is certainly an act of identity (as the name stands for the self), it can also reflect various sign-relations on the indexical, iconic and symbolic level. Da Ruler Mambokadzi combines resources from English/Hip Hop and Shona in her name. *Da Ruler* certainly draws on US-Hip Hop language where the modified *da* (from standard English 'the') occurs frequently and is an emblematic and stylistic marker of Hip Hop linguistic practices. *Da Ruler* in this context can be seen as a title which indexes greatness and power ('to rule over others'). Interestingly, the term 'ruler' is more frequently used by or associated with men. In this regard, the female appropriation of a male-dominated title also expresses a discourse of legitimization and the struggle of female voices in a male-dominated scene. The other part of the artist's stage name,

[15] Such practices are also sometimes referred to as "morphological hybridization" (see Kießling & Mous 2004).

*Mambokadzi*, renders the title in the Shona context and overtly expresses the female gender:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *mambokadzi* | < | *mambo* | *mukadzi* |
| 'queen' | | 'king, ruler' | 'woman' |

Such titles or stagenames are also very common in Jamaican music culture, especially in the Dancehall scene, where various kinds of titles (in the broadest sense) are attached to or appropriated by artists (e.g. Bounty Killer → "di (five star) general", "Ghetto Gladiator"; Vybz Kartel → "di worl' boss"; Chuck Fender → "poor people defender"; Turbulence → "the future", and many more). This is also common among Zimdancehall artists – recall for instance Winky D's bynames outlined above.

In her song *Goodbye Taks*, Da Ruler performs bricolage in various ways. Singing and *deejaying* on the *partial riddim* (a popular Zimdancehall riddim in summer 2015), the artist starts the song with an intro, which is certainly influenced by the styles of Jamaican Deejays, with a tremolo voice (which has been in vogue in the Jamaican dancehall in the past years) in the long end parts of words or lines. The use of autotune, a strongly audible effect on the singer's voice, follows the standard set by the Jamaican dancehall years ago.

chorus
Husiku wakenda usina kundiita *goodbye*
Waiti unondida asi yave *bye*
Tichasangana chete *one day*
Uripo ndaifara kunge mwana aripa *Holiday*

Wakasiya wandipinza pama*one*
*Life* haicha nakidza ndiri *one*
Moyo wangu unobaikana
Mmm unobaikana

verse
Hazvicha *meka sense*
Zvino pane *distance*, wachinja mmm wave *different*
*U always there pon mi mind* handidye
Usipo *life* hainakidze
Ndikukufunga ndichivata
Chandakatadza handizive
Pane vamwe vakomana
ndiwe wegawandanga ndachiva
Uri ikoko garauchiziva
Moyo wangu urimudziva rerudo
Anokwanisa kuutira ndiwe mudiwa

chorus
In the night you left without saying goodbye
you used to say you want me but now it's bye
we will meet for sure one day
when you were there I used to be happy like a child on holiday
you left me in a (crazy) situation
life is no longer nice being one (alone)
my heart is bleeding
Mmmm it is bleeding

verse
It doesn't make sense
Since this distance, you have changed you are now different
U always there in my mind I don't eat
When you are not there life is not nice
I think of you when I sleep
What I did wrong I don't know
Of all the men that were there
you were the one that I desired
wherever you are just know
my heart is burning with love
and the one who can switch it off is you

Da Ruler Mambokadzi, *Goodbye Taks*

The excerpt of the lyrics outlined here (and also the earlier example from Winky D) illustrates how poetics and aesthetics determine choices of words when it comes to the construction of rhyme. In the song Mambokadzi draws stylistically on Jamaican dancehall culture and deejaying techniques and combines them with a Zimbabwean flow. Shona predominates in the lyrics of the song and Shona intonation and pronunciation practices also have an impact on the flow of the song. Moreover, the song shows translanguaging practices in which the artist incorporates resources from English and Jamaican (or combinations of both, as in line 3 of the verse). We also find that word choices can be determined by rhyme: In the chorus, Da Ruler constructs rhymes with English words and the respective rhyming sounds at the end of each line [baji], [dɛji] and [wan]. At other points, the lyrics are constructed with rhyming Shona words at the ends of the lines. Thus the sound, pronunciation and phonotactics of the linguistic resources used play an important role with regard to the lyrics. Once started with a rhyme scheme based on English words (and thus sounds/intonation/phonotactics), the very sound of these words impacts the choice of the rhyming words and the translingual options at the end of the following lines (e.g. line 5 and 6 of the chorus where 'being one' is used to express 'being alone'). Such practices, as well as other pronunciation practices like the 'Bantuization' or adaption to Shona phonology of English words discussed above (here for instance in the first line of the verse: *meka sense*, where the verb acquires the paragogic vowel), help to achieve greater similarity in the sounds of the rhyming words. Drawing on Jakobson, Clarissa Vierke argues that "the poetic function becomes particularly spelt out in a striving for symmetry or similarity […]. Thus, in contrast with ordinary speech, the selection of lexical items to be put in a sequence governed by syntagmatic relations is not random, but comes about by a paradigmatic concern for similarity […] (Vierke 2015: 239–240). Or, to use the words of Roman Jakobson himself: "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson 1981: 25). The paradigmatic repertoire from which the artist can choose becomes bigger and more versatile in a linguistically diverse or multilingual context, where resources from various languages can be employed, exhibiting and enabling a greater variety of sounds and poetics.

Finally I want to introduce another young female Zimdancehall artist, Bounty Lisa (born 1993 as Lynette Lisa Musenyi), who used to practice rather hardcore deejay styles (especially in her early career, although she has extended her stylistic repertoire more recently, not least through collaborations with the artist Soul Jah Love). She chose her name with reference to the Jamaican deejay Bounty Killer, who she said was her favorite artist when she was growing up.[16] Her music is strongly influenced by Jamaican dancehall, which can be heard in her deejaying styles, her shouts and her social transgression (the

[16] See [http://www.pindula.co.zw/Bounty_Lisa].

latter making her a subversive and controversial artist in Zimbabwe). Paired with the clothing and life style depicted in her first videos and performances, the music and appearance of the artist were much commented on and discussed in Zimbabwean media. [17] Despite such responses and critiques, the artist embodies the transgressiveness of Dancehall culture, the glocality (being global and local at the same time) of Zimdancehall and the linguistic and musical creativity and style that emerges from these practices. *Basa Rangu*, one of her most popular songs, illustrates the use of youth language practices and translanguaging (see p. 119).

In the song *Basa rangu* ('my work') Bounty Lisa starts with an intro which is strongly influenced by Jamaican Dancehall practices: her shouts are in Jamaican and her way of introducing herself and 'bigging up' the crew (record label, producer etc.) is reminiscent of the Jamaican Dancehall. This includes mentioning her own name several times during the song and also mentioning names of producers, promoters and other crew members (in bold in the excerpt of the lyrics). Interestingly, Bounty Lisa mentions not only members of the Zimbabwean Zimdancehall crew (like the well-known producers Levels, Propa Bless and Jusa) and the infamous Zimdancehall recording studio Chillspot Records, but she also 'bigs up' the Jamaican artists Tanya Stevens and Tommy Lee Sparta. Thus she directly references her role models or influences and marks a connection to the Jamaican dancehall. The intro is then followed by Shona-dominated lyrics in a Zimbabwean flow, with the lyrics legitimizing her linguistic, musical and stylistic practices as *basa rangu* 'my work'. The lyrics are mainly in Shona, but feature translanguaging involving English and Jamaican (in italics). The pronunciation of English words is sometimes also adapted to Shona phonology, as with *Koka Kora* 'Coca Cola' in the last line of the first verse. Moreover, her lyrics contain expressions and metaphors[18] which are commonly used in youth language and would be known and understood by her young listeners. For instance, one youth language metaphor that involves several aspects of manipulation is found in lines 1, 2 and 9 of the verse, where she uses the English word 'tip'. In Zimbabwean youth language *tip* means 'tell' ('give someone a tip (i.e. hint)' → 'tell'). Here, the English noun becomes a verb, which is not only inflected with subject and object prefixes, but also suffixed with derivational morphology and (contrary to the indicative *-a* attached to verbs and illustrated in the discussion of Winky D's song above) the subjunctive *-e*:

(1) *ndi-va-tip-ir-e*
1SG-3PLO-tip-APPL-SUBJ
'let me tell them'

(2) *ndi-ma-tip-e*
1SG-CL6-tip-SUBJ
'I (should) tell them'

[17] See for instance [http://www.herald.co.zw/bounty-lisas-makeover-life-in-the-suburbs/].

[18] It should be stressed though that metaphor is a very common device in Zimbabweans' communicative practices and features prominently in all kinds of speech and contexts. However, some of the metaphors used here are specific manipulations created and used by youths.

Intro 1
*Mi name* **Bounty Lisa**
*Repesenting* **Chillspot Records**
*Big up* **Propa Bless**, *big up* **Jusa**
*Outa dehya… yuh see mi?*

Intro 2
*Mi name* **Bounty Lisa**
Anotimisa tomupisa
Gore rino tirikutyisa
Big up **Jusa**, yo **Proper Bless**
Eh yo **Tanya Stevens**
Yo big up **Sparta** *blame di yutes*
Ayo lecoo kaboom

Yo **Levels**, **chillspot** *tell sem seh*
Chorus
Ibasa rangu **Bounty** ndiro zita rangu
Musandivhiringidzira pabasa rangu
Mondivengera mangoma kubasa kwangu
*One to dem* kutaura wevavengi vangu

Verse 1
Rega ndiva*tip*ire matsaga mabonga
Ndima*tip*e **Bounty Lisa**
Ndini ndaakutonga
Rangu itarenda, haridi mushonga,
Kubva kare muchizviona makapenga
**Bounty Lisa Duppy Lady** zita ndatora

Tiri pa**Chillspot** ne*gang*a chakatyora
Zvekuimba *steady* ne *lyric* rinotyora
Ayo **Sparta**, mira ndima*tip*e magora
Ndipe *mix* ne *leaf* ndimbosunga chamba

Zvangu zvauya vavengi
Motojamba jamba
Ndiri kuvava kunge tea yawanda masamba
Wese wekuMbare imombe yemudanga
Wakaita dzungu murukova vokunhonga
*Flow* rangu rinonyudza kunge rukova

Hatikwate ndinenge lacto ndakakora
Murivapfanha ndokutumai
Kunotenga *Koka Kora*

Intro 1
My name is Bounty Lisa
Representing Chillspot Records
Big up Propa Bless, big up Jusa
Outta there… you see me?

Intro 2
My name is Bounty Lisa
Who steps up – we will burn them
This year we are scary
Big up Jusa, yo Proper Bless
Eh yo Tanya Stevens
Yo big up Sparta blame di yutes
Ayo lecoo kaboom
Yo Levels, chillspot tell sem seh

Chorus
It is my work, Bounty is my name
Don't disturb me at my work
You hate me? Music is my job
One to dem: talking to my haters

Verse 1
let me tell them matsaga mabonga
I tell them Bounty Lisa
I am the one who is ruling
Mine is a talent, it doesn't need witchcraft
From way back you saw yourself off the hook
Bounty Lisa Duppy Lady the name that I took

We are at Chillspot with the gang chilling
To sing steady with lyrics that will break you
Ayo Sparta let me tell those haters
Give me the mix with leaf I roll a blunt of weed

My time is here the haters
Tremble (jump up and down)
I am bitter like tea with many tea leaves
Everyone from Mbare is a cow from the kraal
If you are confused in the stream they will pick you up

My flow is deep like a river
We are not afraid, I am thick milk, I am thick
You are small kids
I can send you to buy Coca Cola

Bounty Lisa, *Basa Rangu*

These examples (and the ones above) illustrate the smooth translanguaging practices which sometimes make English words unrecognizable for the non-initiated, as they can involve combinations of semantic, phonological and morphological manipulations. Other youth language expressions that illustrate semantic manipulations include the use of the verb *tyora* in line 7 of the verse. In Shona, *tyora* means 'break', while in the youth language it usually reads 'chill' (this metaphors works especially in the past tense; something that is broken 'chills' because it cannot move). Moreover, she uses *magora* in line 9 of the verse, which means 'haters' among youths and adolescents but 'vultures' in Shona. She also uses the common youth language expression *hatikwate* 'we are not afraid' (lit. 'we are not boiling'; boiling water 'trembles' and trembling is seen as a sign of fear) in line 17 of the verse. These are just a few examples of youth language use in these lyrics. Here, the semantic change is already established among the youths of Zimbabwe; youths can thus understand the lyrics and identify with the artist's linguistic style, while Bounty Lisa may express her linguistic identity as a young artist from the 'ghetto' through this kind of language use.

## 4. Being linguistically creative: youth languages and other practices

The examples discussed in the previous section have shown numerous creative strategies associated with youth language. The last two sections have revealed that Zimdancehall is a popular arena for youth language practices and youth culture and language and popular music are closely related and influence one another. The creativity in the youth language practices in Zimdancehall has been demonstrated with a focus on two aspects: translanguaging (involving Zimbabwean multilingualism as well as transnational dimensions) and semantic manipulations, as these are the most common practices in the examples cited.

I want to argue that these very practices are also commonly found in other language practices in Zimbabwe (and of course elsewhere), that they are not new and not typical of youth language only. In fact, linguistic creativity is not something that is only practices by special people in particular contexts: As Carter (2004) illustrates, creativity is pervasive in all forms of everyday language. Drawing on numerous examples from many different contexts of spoken language, the author shows that "linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people".

With regard to the creative language practices discussed in Zimbabwean youth language in this paper, I want to turn to language practices in other contexts in the same country. In their inspiring paper, Makoni, Brutt-Griffler and Mashiri (2007) show creative practices in Zimbabwean language use: As the authors illuminate the complex historical and colonial construction of the language named "Shona", they also show the more fluid ways in which speakers actually use language. By drawing on examples from what they term "chiHarare", a so-called urban vernacular, they state that urban Zimbabwe is characterized by multilingulism, migration and fluidity and show that translanguaging has been a common feature of everyday speech for a long time and not only in recent years:

(3) Translanguaging in chiHarare (Makoni, Brutt-Griffler & Mashiri 2007: 36)
*chiChewa* is in italic, ***chiShona*** is in bold italic, **English** is in bold roman

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Mr. Phiri: | ***Amai ndiri*** *kupita kunchito.* |
| | 'My wife I am leaving for work.' |
| 2 Ms. Phiri: | *Zikomo* ***fambai zvakanaka***. |
| | 'It's all right, go well.' |
| 3Mr. Phiri: | *Antu ambiri masiku* ***ano***. *Kulibe* **mabhazi**. |
| | 'People are many these days. There are no buses.' |
| 4 Ms. Phiri: | (nods in agreement) |
| 5 Mr. Phiri: | *Antu amavhuta.* ***Vanopindira*** makiyu. *Antu ambiri masiku ano. Kulibe* ***mab hazi*** *(sic). Antu amavhuta.* ***Vanhu vanopindira pama*****queue**. |
| | 'People are restless. They jump the lines. There are many people who use public transport these days, yet there are very few buses. People become restless and jump the lines.' |
| 6 Ms. Phiri: | *Masiku ano zintu zikuvhuta.* ***Hakuna****, kulibe* **transport.** |
| | 'These days things are hard. There are no adequate buses.' |

Apart from translanguaging, the authors also shed light on semantic processes like metaphor and metonymy, e.g. mu*face* (Shona prefix *mu-* and English *face*, in this context 'my acquaintance', ibid.: 37) and other processes commonly found in youth language such as truncation (ibid.: 38). While this example reflects spoken language in an urban context, the authors deconstruct the urban/rural binary and state that these kind of practices are not exclusive for cities but can also be found in the countryside (ibid.: 39ff). These examples illustrate that the same linguistic creativity strategies analyzed in youth language practices are found among older speakers in urban and rural Zimbabwe. In fact, when taking a closer look at the various dialogues that Makoni, Brutt-Griffler & Mashiri discuss and analyze at length, one can detect highly skilled multilingual practices and creative as well as context-bound language use.

## 5. Conclusion

We have seen how Zimdancehall artists engage in translanguaging, youth language and other creative linguistic strategies in order to create a stylistic bricolage which can be observed linguistically and musically. Zimdancehall reflects the glocality of Zimbabwean youth culture and the youths' translanguaging illustrates creative and conscious usage of their cultural and linguistic resources. In this regard we have seen conscious practices such as the creation of a stage name and lyrical bricolage with choices from the repertoire based on emblematicity, style, rhyme and aesthetics. Moreover, we have seen how Zimdancehall artists, as leaders of linguistic change, can bring new terms into youth language, such as the labels used for ingroup identity which are then adopted by listeners and fans and thus spread to wider society. While these processes

make use of cutting-edge linguistic and other communicative resources which are in vogue among youth, they are as such not exclusive to youth language practices. Strategies such as linguistic manipulation and multilingual juggling are common practices in many societies, in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. The songs discussed in this paper also show that music is often unbounded and transcends languages, cultures and places. It is therefore an interesting site to study phenomena of globalization with regard to cultural, linguistic and social practices.

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