

LITERARY STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FALZ'S SONGS

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

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BENIN CITY

NOVEMBER 2025

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE,
FACULTY OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF
ARTS (B.A.) (HONS) IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE**

NOVEMBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Veronica Iyobosa IMAFIDON (Miss)** in the Department of English and Literature under the supervision of **Prof. (Lady) Esther Nkiru Ugwu** at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria.

Date. _____

Prof. (Lady) Esther Nkiru Ugwu

(Project Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is first dedicated to God Almighty, whose love and grace made it possible. It is also for every bold artist who knows that their talent has a greater purpose, those who use their voices to speak truth, bring awareness, and inspire change. Your courage to use art for something meaningful, beyond just entertainment, continues to touch lives and open hearts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to God Almighty for His love, grace, and strength, which carried me through this research. This work would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my supervisors. My sincere appreciation goes to my main supervisor, Professor

Esther Nkiru Ugwu, for her mentorship and guidance, and I extend sincere thanks to my co-supervisor, Dr. Andrew Ikponwonsa Egba, for his constant teaching and corrections.

I owe a heartfelt thank you to my parents, Pastor Nelson Iyobosa Ikuvbogie and Pastor (Mrs.) Sharon Nelson Ikuvbogie, for their sacrifices, love, and constant spiritual support, which gave me the foundation to complete this journey. To my sister, Oghosa, I appreciate your emotional support. I am also thankful to my fellow co-supervisees and my study group for their encouragement and helpful discussions.

Finally, I am grateful to my friends and everyone who stood by me, Pastor Osas, Pastor Stefan, Favour, Kosisochukwu, Precious, Adedamola, Kelvin, Chinelo, Oluwatosin, Ayomide, and all others whose encouragement, big or small, made a difference and helped me stay motivated throughout this process.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative stylistic study explores how Nigerian artist Folarin Falana, popularly known as Falz, uses language and creative techniques in five of his songs— *This Is Nigeria*, *Talk*, *Confirm*, *Hypocrite* , and *Wehdone Sir* —to criticize corruption and moral decline in Nigerian society. Using Leech and Short’s “Style as Text” model, the study examines the songs at the grapho-phonological, grammatical, and lexico-semantic levels to show how Falz’s language choices reveal social issues, reflect moral decay, and challenge corruption as expressed through Nigerian English. The findings show that Falz deliberately employs local language features such as non-standard phonetic spellings, code-switching between Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin, simple sentence structures, and the use of irony to create a style that is both relatable and socially aware. The study concludes that Falz’s stylistic approach serves as a purposeful and effective form of social activism, turning everyday language into a powerful and accessible means of promoting moral reflection and questioning corruption and hypocrisy among both leaders and citizens.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This qualitative stylistic study examines how Folarin Falana, popularly known as Falz, employs language and creative techniques in five of his songs—*This Is Nigeria*, *Talk*, *Confirm*, *Hypocrite*, and *Wehdone Sir*—to criticize corruption and moral decay in Nigeria. The study answers the following research questions: what grapho-phonological features does Falz employ to expose corruption in Nigerian society? How does he use grammatical structures to reflect social criticism and moral breakdown? And, In what ways do his lexical and semantic choices reveal and challenge corruption as expressed through Nigerian English?

1.2 Scope of Study

This study focuses on Falz's use of graphological, phonological, grammatical, and lexicosemantic features in the five selected songs. Falz is one of the few Nigerian artists who blend music with social activism, using his lyrics as a mirror to expose injustice, leadership failure, and hypocrisy in society. Although Falz has composed hundreds of songs on different themes such as love, identity, and politics, these five were carefully chosen because they explicitly address corruption and social injustice in Nigeria.

The research limits its analysis to these songs to examine the linguistic patterns, stylistic devices, and narrative strategies Falz uses to criticize political irresponsibility, moral decline, and institutional decay. By studying his creative use of Nigerian Pidgin and English, the work shows how Falz's stylistic approach makes his social message more relatable to a broad audience.

1.3 Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research method, which is suitable for exploring how meaning is produced and interpreted in creative texts. As Shank explains qualitative research “as a form of systemic empirical inquiry into meaning” (Shank 5). This method aligns with the aim of the research—to investigate how Falz’s linguistic style serves as a tool for moral reflection and social criticism.

The primary data include five of Falz’s songs: *This Is Nigeria*, *Talk*, *Confirm*, *Hypocrite*, and *Wehdone Sir*. The lyrics were sourced from Genius.com and verified by repeated listening to ensure accurate transcription. The songs were analyzed through five stylistic levels based on Leech and Short’s framework:

Graphological level – layout, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Phonological level – rhythm, rhyme, and sound patterns.

Lexical level – word choice and diction.

Grammatical level – sentence structure and syntax.

Semantic level – meaning, imagery, and interpretation.

This framework provides a clear and systematic basis for examining how Falz uses language as both an artistic and ideological tool for change.

1.4 Theoretical Background

1.4.1 Definition of the Theory

This research adopts Leech and Short’s “Style as Text” model of stylistics, proposed in their book *Style in Fiction* (2007). The theory defines style as the linguistic characteristics of a

particular text, meaning that the study of style involves analyzing the language choices that make a text distinctive and meaningful (Leech and Short 31). In this sense, stylistic analysis links linguistic form to interpretation, showing how specific wordings express both meaning and attitude.

1.4.2 Background of the Theory

The concept of style has long been studied in both literary and linguistic traditions. In classical rhetoric, style was regarded as the “dress of thought,” while modern linguistics sees it as the systematic pattern of choices that shape communication. Leech and Short built on Halliday and Hasan’s functional linguistics, which view language as a social semiotic system, to create a framework that connects structure and meaning.

Their “Style as Text” model focuses on how different linguistic levels—graphological, phonological, grammatical, and lexical—combine to form a coherent text. It emphasizes that meaning does not exist apart from language; instead, it is shaped by the patterns and features used in a particular context.

1.4.3 Tenets or Principles of the Theory

The main principles of Leech and Short’s Style as Text theory include:

- 1. Integration of Language and Meaning:** Style cannot be separated from meaning; linguistic features directly shape interpretation.
- 2. Multilevel Analysis:** Style operates at multiple levels—graphological, phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic—and each level contributes to the overall effect of a text

3. **Contextual Dependence:** The meaning of stylistic choices depends on the situation, purpose, and audience.

4. **Functionality:** Every stylistic choice performs a communicative function, whether aesthetic, emotional, or ideological.

5. **Objectivity and Systematicity:** Stylistic analysis should be systematic, relying on observable linguistic evidence rather than subjective opinion.

1.4.4 Proponents of the Theory

The main proponents of this approach are Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, whose work *Style in Fiction* (2007) established a detailed framework for stylistic analysis in both literary and non-literary texts. Their ideas were influenced by scholars such as M. A. K. Halliday, who emphasized the functional role of language, and Roman Jakobson, who highlighted the relationship between form and meaning in the poetic function of language.

Other scholars, including Paul Simpson and Roger Fowler, have expanded stylistic theory to explore how social and ideological meanings are embedded in language use. These contributions support the view that stylistic study bridges linguistics, literature, and social criticism.

1.4.5 Relevance of the Theory to the Present Study

Leech and Short's *Style as Text* model is relevant to this research because it provides a systematic method for analyzing how Falz uses language at different levels to communicate social criticism. The model allows the study to examine how Falz's word choice, sentence structure, and sound patterns contribute to meaning and emotional effect.

Through this framework, the study shows that Falz's creative use of Nigerian Pidgin, mixed with English, is not only an artistic style but also a deliberate tool for reaching a wide audience and passing moral messages. The model helps explain how his stylistic decisions—such as repetition, rhyme, and code-switching—build a coherent message of resistance against corruption and hypocrisy.

1.5 Stylistics

Stylistics is a field of applied linguistics that studies how language functions in different kinds of texts. It examines the relationship between linguistic structure and literary effect. Leech and Short define stylistics as “the linguistic study of style” (9), emphasizing that it focuses on how meaning is shaped by language. Turner adds that stylistics investigates the creative and purposeful use of language (Turner 7).

Historically, stylistics grew from classical rhetoric and poetics in ancient Greece and Rome. Thinkers like Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus discussed how language could persuade, entertain, and elevate emotion. In the 20th century, Russian Formalists such as Shklovsky and Jakobson redefined stylistics by showing how artistic language differs from ordinary speech.

Modern stylistics now extends beyond literature into areas like music, media, and advertising (Simpson 3). Leech and Short advanced stylistics by creating methods that analyze vocabulary, grammar, and discourse patterns to show how language constructs meaning.

1.6 Limitations of Stylistics

Even though stylistics offers organized methods for examining how language works in texts, it is not without its criticisms. Anthony C. Oha observes that Functional Stylistics, shaped by M. A.

K. Halliday, has often been faulted for concentrating too heavily on linguistic description and giving less attention to interpretation.

According to Stanley Fish, Halliday's approach also gives limited room to the reader's role in creating meaning. In *Language as Social Semiotic*, Halliday classifies the functions of language into ideational, interpersonal, and textual categories (Halliday 112; Birch 56; Weber 88). Fish, however, argues that meaning arises mainly from the reader's act of interpretation, which led him to propose *Affective Stylistics*, a model that focuses on emotional and psychological responses to texts (Fish 14).

Toolan challenges Fish's position, pointing out that *Affective Stylistics* assumes all readers share the same interpretive habits, which is difficult to prove (Toolan 126). Even though Fish later introduced the idea of "interpretive communities" to explain shared reading norms, Toolan maintains that people's linguistic competence and cultural background differ widely.

Building on this, O'Halloran combines corpus-based techniques with Halliday's transitivity framework to show that adding quantitative evidence can make stylistic studies more precise and less subjective (O'Halloran 89).

Mackay also cautions against describing stylistic research as completely "objective" or "scientific." He argues that counting word frequencies cannot, on its own, define style, since style depends on an author's creative linguistic choices rather than on numbers alone (Mackay 3).

In response to these issues, Short, Freeman, Van Peer, and Simpson explain that stylistics seeks objectivity only through consistent and transparent methods, not through universal or fixed rules (Carter et al. 5).

According to Simpson, these debates have actually improved stylistics rather than weakened it. They have encouraged a variety of methods and the rise of new branches such as Critical, Cognitive, Feminist, and Corpus Stylistics. Despite continuing differences between linguistic and literary traditions, stylistics remains a flexible and cross-disciplinary field for studying how language shapes meaning (Simpson 32).

1.7 Review of Related Literature

Music, especially in the Nigerian context, has long served as a voice of resistance and a mirror of society. Scholars have continuously explored how artists use lyrics as tools for social awareness, cultural expression, and political critique. Within this expanding body of scholarship, attention has turned to Folarin Falana—popularly known as Falz—whose music blends satire, activism, and linguistic creativity to challenge Nigeria’s socio-political realities. The following review examines selected studies that have investigated Falz’s artistry from various linguistic, cultural, and ideological perspectives.

Ademilokun and Bamigbade examine social consciousness in the lyrics of Folarinde Falana (Falz) using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Analyzing nine songs including *Talk, This Is Nigeria*, and *Wehdone Sir*, they reveal that Falz uses everyday language, satire, and slang to criticize corruption, religious manipulation, and leadership failure in Nigeria. The study shows that his music continues the tradition of Nigerian protest art, turning hip-hop into a medium for activism and social reform (Ademilokun and Bamigbade 44).

Similarly, Aikoriogie and Idegbekwe investigate the intertextual relationship between Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Folarin Falana (Falz) in their socio-political songs. Drawing from Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and heteroglossia, they analyze five songs—three by Fela (*Shuffling and*

Smiling, Teacher No Teach Me Nonsense, Army Arrangement) and two by Falz (*This Is Nigeria, Talk*). The study reveals that Falz's lyrics echo Fela's tradition of using music to criticize government corruption and social injustice, showing that Falz extends Fela's legacy by adapting protest discourse to a modern Nigerian context (Aikorogie and Idegbekwe 66).

In a related study, Bamigbade conducts a pragmatic analysis of Falz's *This Is Nigeria* to explore how language and music function as tools of linguistic activism. Using frameworks from speech act theory and discourse analysis, the study shows how Falz uses code-switching between English and Nigerian Pidgin, satire, and audience-oriented diction to critique corruption, religious hypocrisy, and systemic injustice. The paper concludes that the song serves as a mirror of Nigerian society and a vehicle for civic engagement and social reflection (Bamigbade 1).

Likewise, Igwebuike and Eburuaja analyze impoliteness strategies in Falz's *This Is Nigeria* using Jonathan Culpeper's politeness theory. The study identifies four of the five impoliteness superstrategies—bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and sarcasm—to show how Falz satirically attacks corruption, religious hypocrisy, and government failure. The researchers conclude that Falz's song functions as subtle protest art, using linguistic impoliteness to question Nigeria's moral and political order (Igwebuike and Eburuaja 335).

Furthermore, Oseni and Ishola carry out a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Falz's songs *E No Finish, Brother's Keeper*, and *Talk* using Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach. The study examines linguistic features such as rhyme and repetition to reveal Falz's ideology on corruption, selfish leadership, and government incompetence. Their findings show that Falz's music exposes power relations and leadership failure in Nigeria, using language as a means of challenging political irresponsibility (Oseni and Ishola 142).

In addition, Ibiroko and Olatunji explore the interaction between Falz's music and Nigerian society, focusing on how his songs influence public perception and inspire social reflection. Using focus group discussions, they find that Falz's music addresses issues such as corruption, gender roles, and leadership failure, sparking both praise and criticism depending on listeners' ideologies. The study concludes that Falz's art promotes social dialogue and activism, underscoring the transformative power of music in Nigerian society (Ibiroko and Olatunji 64).

Similarly, Ianga et al apply Speech Act Theory to analyze Falz's *This Is Nigeria*, focusing on how language in the song functions to criticize corruption and social decay. The study identifies assertive, directive, expressive, and declarative acts that expose poverty, exploitation, and failed institutions. By using locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, Falz provokes reflection and calls for systemic reform in Nigeria's capitalist system (Ianga et al 1).

Also, Ofubu investigates the role of Nigerian pop music as a tool for socialisation through Falz's Moral Instruction album. Using textual and thematic analysis within the framework of socialist realism, the study reveals how Falz employs satire, Afrobeat, and indigenous language to address corruption, moral decay, and political injustice. The research concludes that Falz's music promotes critical thinking, moral awareness, and civic engagement, positioning him as a socially responsible artist driving national transformation (Ofubu 156).

In the same vein, Akinwotu analyzes language and ideology in selected Hip-hop songs by Falz using van Leeuwen's socio-semantic model. Drawing from eight tracks, the study identifies five categories of social actors—individuals, public servants, professionals, leaders, and groups—portrayed as agents of corruption, fraud, and injustice. Through nominal and pronominal

elements, verbs, and adjectives, Falz's lyrics expose, accuse, and condemn social ills, showing Hip-hop's power in promoting social reformation and national development (Akinwotu 54).

However, while these studies have provided rich insights into Falz's linguistic activism, ideological stance, and social engagement, they have largely focused on discourse, pragmatics, and ideology rather than the stylistic mechanics of his language. None has offered a detailed grapho-phonological, grammatical, and lexico-semantic analysis Falz's songs. This gap is what the present study fill by examining how Falz employs these elements in *This Is Nigeria*, *Wehdone Sir*, *Talk*, *Hypocrite*, and *Confirm* to convey social criticism and moral commentary.

1.8 Thesis Statement

This study argues that Falz employs grapho-phonological, grammatical, and lexico-semantic elements in his songs, *This Is Nigeria*, *Wehdone Sir*, *Talk*, *Hypocrite*, and *Confirm*, to expose corruption in the Nigerian society.

CHAPTER TWO

GRAPHO-PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FALZ'S *TALK*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a grapho-phonological analysis of Falz's song *Talk* . Graphology deals with the writing system, including spelling and punctuation, while phonology examines sound

patterns like rhythm and pronunciation. The song *Talk* is a sharp social commentary on hypocrisy, unfulfilled political promises, and the self-approval of both the leaders and the citizens. Falz's deliberate use of graphological and phonological features serve as tools for delivering his message effectively. This analysis is guided by Leech and Short's (2007) *Style in Fiction*, which views style as a means of interpreting meaning through linguistic patterns. Thus, the analysis examines how graphological and phonological choices in Falz's *Talk* contribute to its message.

2.2 Graphological Analysis

Graphology focuses the study of how the visual appearance of language, things like spelling and punctuation, adds meaning to written text. In Falz's *Talk* lyrics, two main features stand out: his creative use of non-standard spelling and his strong use of punctuation. Together, these features make his social messages feel real, emotional, and deeply connected to Nigerian life.

The issue of proper compensation and minimum wage is immediately highlighted through the song's verse structure:

EXCERPT 1 verse 3

Month don end, oga pay salary

Eh eh, oga pay salary

In 2019, Nineteen (19) eight (8) alawee

Eh eh, Nineteen (19) eight (8) alawee (lines 1-4)

Non-standard spelling: Falz replaces the standard English word "allowance" with "alawee" , spelling it the way Nigerians commonly pronounce it. This is not a mistake, it is a deliberate choice that reflects everyday Nigerian speech.

By spelling the word phonetically, Falz connects directly with his Nigerian audience. The word alawee immediately reminds listeners of the small stipends given to youth corps members, often seen as too little to survive on. This spelling choice turns a simple word into social commentary. It adds humour and familiarity while highlighting the serious issue of low pay and economic struggle. It also shows Falz's pride in local expression, proving that Nigerian English can stand confidently within artistic and social conversations.

Punctuation: The use of parenthesis for emphasis

The use of numerals in parentheses "(19) eight (8)" is a graphological device for emphasis. It draws the reader's eye to the specific, small amount of the allowance ("alawee," a Pidgin word for salary). The phrase "cash and carry" is spelled in its standard form, but its meaning is contextual, graphologically representing a common Nigerian idiom for corruption.

EXCERPT 2: verse 4

"We dey suffer, we dey smile" (line 13)

Punctuation: The use of comma for contrast

Falz uses a comma to connect two opposite actions — suffering and smiling

The comma separates two ideas that don't seem to fit together, yet they exist side by side in real life. It shows the contrast between pain and hope, hardship and endurance. The pause created by the comma allows the listener to feel both emotions at once, that is, the irony and the strength behind the Nigerian spirit. With just one simple mark, Falz captures a reality where people go through tough times but still find ways to stay cheerful.

EXCERPT 3: Verse 4 Outro (Final Line)

"Na me talk am o!" (line 20)

Punctuation: The Final Exclamation Mark

Throughout the song, Falz repeats "No be me talk am o" ("It's not me who said it") in a joking way, as if he's avoiding blame. But in the final line, he changes it to "Na me talk am o!" ("It's me who said it!") and ends it with an exclamation mark.

The exclamation mark gives the line energy and boldness. It marks a turning point — Falz drops the humour and takes full ownership of his message. The punctuation adds force, showing anger, courage, and conviction. It transforms the ending from playful talk into a fearless statement of truth. This final mark makes it clear that Falz is no longer just observing the problem; he's openly speaking against it.

2.3 Phonological Analysis

The phonological analysis examines the sound patterns, including rhyme, rhythm, and different Pidgin pronunciations.

EXCERPT 1: The Intro/Verse Structure

"Anything I talk make you talk am again / Eh eh, talk am again"(line 1-2)

This structure creates a clear call-and-response rhythm a core phonological feature in African and Nigerian music. The lead line is sung, and the background voices respond with "Eh eh, talk am again," creating a conversational, communal feel. The repetition of "talk am again" phonologically strengthens the song's central theme of echoed words without action.

EXCERPT 2: The Hook

"Na you talk am o / No be me talk am o"(lines 1-8)

The hook is built on a simple, repetitive rhyme scheme where "o" sound ends every line, creating a catchy and memorable melodic phrase. Phonologically, the constant use of the vowel sound "o" gives the hook a melodic, almost chanted quality. This represents the phonological feature of added terminal vowels common in Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous languages.

EXCERPT 3: Verse 1

"Brother Muric shout finish, we no see am for court / Election don dey come, they go need your support"(lines 1-4)

There is a clear end-rhyme between "court" and "support," which helps maintain a smooth rhythmic flow despite the code-switching between English ("election," "support") and Pidgin ("we no see am," "don dey"). The pronunciation of "dey" /de/ is a distinct phonological marker of Nigerian Pidgin, different from the Standard English "they" /ðei/.

EXCERPT 4: Verse 4 (The Final Outro)

We dey suffer, we dey smile

We dey fear to talk

...

Na me talk am o!(lines 13-20)

The triplet "we dey suffer, we dey smile, we dey fear to talk" uses repetition of the "we dey" /wɪ de/ structure to create a powerful rhythmic and phonological pattern, emphasizing the collective experience. The final shift from the hook's "Na you talk am o" to "Na me talk am o!" is a major phonological climax. The stress and intonation on "me" signals the artist's decision to break the cycle of fear and finally speak out.

2.4 Stylistic Implications

The grapho-phonological features in *Talk* are not random, they serve specific stylistic purposes. The use of non-standard spelling and Pidgin phonology creates originality, and makes the song directly relatable to the everyday Nigerian. The call-and-response structure and repetitive hook mimic the patterns of gossip and public discourse, stylistically reinforcing the theme of empty "talk." The gradual phonological shift from a mocking, indirect tone (blaming "you") to a direct, confrontational climax ("Na me talk am!") stylistically reflects the song's narrative part, from observing societal problems to courageously calling them out.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the grapho-phonological analysis of Falz's *Talk* reveals a deliberate and skillful use of language. Graphologically, the lyrics are characterized by non-standard spellings that capture the essence of Nigerian Pidgin. Phonologically, the song employs rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and distinct pronunciation to create a compelling and memorable soundtrack.

Together, these features work flawlessly to deliver a powerful social critique, making the song a powerful piece of musical commentary that is both artistically sound and culturally rich.

CHAPTER THREE

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF FALZ'S *HYPOCRITE AND CONFIRM*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the grammatical analysis of Falz's *Hypocrite* and *Confirm*. It examines how Falz uses grammar as a tool to express social messages and expose issues such as hypocrisy, corruption, and the importance of hard work in the society. In both songs, Falz mixes Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin to create meaning that is direct, relatable, and culturally relevant. This analysis focuses on how sentence structure, pronoun use, verb forms, rhetorical questions and code-switching contribute to the overall message of the songs. By studying these grammatical features, we can better understand how Falz's language style strengthens his social criticism and connects him with his audience.

3.2 Grammatical Analysis of Falz's *Confirm*

Confirm is a song that promotes hard work, honesty, and self-discipline. Falz uses grammar creatively to challenge those who seek quick wealth through fraud or shortcuts. By mixing Standard English with Nigerian Pidgin, he speaks directly to ordinary Nigerians in a relatable way. The grammatical features examined here include sentence structure, pronoun use, verb forms, rhetoric questions and code-switching. These elements help to strengthen Falz's message of moral responsibility and social awareness.

EXCERPT 1: Chorus (Sir Dauda)

Nothing wey you wan talk

Nothing wey you fit explain

You no work but you wan chop

You wan score but you no get game.

Rise up, homie, rise up

Wise up, better change your plan

You better confirm o.(lines 1-14)

The chorus, by Sir Dauda, presents the main message of the song. It uses short, clear sentences and commands that sound natural in Nigerian Pidgin. The grammatical mood shifts between Declarative (stating facts) and Imperative (giving commands).

The first two lines are declarative sentences that express denial or impossibility. In Pidgin, “wey” joins the subject and description, “Nothing wey you wan talk” which means, “There’s nothing you want to say.” The verbs “wan” (want) and “fit” (can) replace English modal verbs like “want to” or “can,” keeping the structure short and simple.

The next two lines are compound declaratives joined with “but,” which creates contrast — showing people’s desire to gain without effort, “You no work but you wan chop.” The negative word “no” comes directly before the verb (“no work,” “no get”), which is typical of Nigerian Pidgin grammar. Altogether, these lines deliver a strong moral statement against laziness and deceit.

Following the next two lines, the tone changes to imperative (commands that push listeners to act). The subject “you” is not said but implied, which makes the message sound urgent (“you rise

up"), instead of ("rise up"). The word "homie" is used as a friendly address, softening the command. "Better change your plan" functions as advice, where "better" means "you should." The repetition of action verbs ("rise," "wise," "change") builds a motivating rhythm.

The repeated last line is another imperative sentence, urging the listener to "confirm" — meaning to check or reflect on their actions. The word "o" is a common Pidgin ending that adds emphasis and emotion. Repeating this phrase "you better confirm o," throughout the song reminds the listener to examine their choices and make honest decisions.

EXCERPT 2: Verse 1 (Falz)

Ha

Internet gangster

This brother just hammer

He collect from one maga

Him steal person money."

Na him wan dey form swagger

Everyday for the thief one for karma

So you happy when you log into your online haven

And when you're getting richer off another man's saving.

No excuse you fit give dem

No, you no be hustler, that one no be work sir

Get your ass up before you end up for detention(lines 1-21)

Falz's first verse uses grammar to expose dishonest behavior and challenge wrong attitudes. His sentences sound like conversation, and he mixes Standard English with Pidgin to keep the tone natural and relatable.

In the first seven lines, Falz employs code-mixing, he mixes English and Pidgin. "Internet gangster" is an English phrase, while "hammer" in the Nigerian context means "suddenly become rich." "Collect from one maga" means "cheat a victim." The pronoun "him" replaces "he," and auxiliary verbs like "has" or "is" are dropped, as is normal in Pidgin. He uses an imperative sentence to warn the fraudster, "everyday for the thief one for karma."

This grammar gives the song a raw, street-like flow (slang), matching the topic of fraud and its consequences. Falz shows the benefits that comes with fraud, but he also shows that there's a consequence for every action taken. The use of slang shows Falz's connection to everyday Nigerian speech.

In the next two lines, Falz uses conditional and descriptive clauses with "when" to show the thief's temporary success. The sentence describes the situation directly, without long explanations. It sounds conversational but still carries moral judgment.

The sentences in the subsequent lines are negative declaratives. "No excuse you fit give dem" translates to "You have no excuse to give them." The use of "no" as a negative marker and "fit" as "can" are examples of Pidgin grammar. The repetition of "no be" ("is not") strengthens the

criticism. “You no be hustler” clearly separates real hard workers from pretenders. The polite address “sir” at the end adds emphasis while keeping the tone conversational.

The last line is an imperative sentence, giving a direct warning. The last phrase, “for detention” uses the Pidgin preposition “for” in place of English “in” or “at.” (“get your ass up before you end up in detention). The command creates urgency, closing the verse with a call to action and responsibility.

EXCERPT 3: Verse 2 (Falz)

"No be say I holy pass / No, I'm far from that person"(lines 1-2)

The second verse moves from criticism to advice, using short, wise sayings and comparisons to teach discipline and patience.

In the first two lines, Falz begins with a comparative structure in Pidgin (“No be say I holy pass” which means, “It’s not that I’m holier than others”). This shows humility. He then switches to Standard English (“I’m far from that person”), using code-switching to sound serious and sincere.

EXCERPT 4 verse 2

"My guy, this life no be level playing field / Just run your own race"(line 5-6)

These are short declarative sentences that act like proverbs. “No be level playing field” (life is not fair) and “run your own race” are moral lessons expressed through simple grammar. The use of “my guy” makes the message friendly but firm.

EXCERPT 5 verse 2

"For the little wey I get, Baba God nagode / I'm steady grinding because I need to get the pepper"(lines 11-12)

In these lines, Falz mixes languages here, Pidgin, Yoruba, and Hausa, showing code-switching and lexical borrowing. "Baba God nagode" means "Father God, thank you." "Pepper" is Pidgin slang for "money." This mixture of languages makes his advice sound genuine and locally grounded.

EXCERPT 6 verse 2

"Abi they told you Rome was built in one day?"(lines 17)

This is a rhetorical question, used to mock the idea of quick success. The question does not expect an answer; instead, it reminds listeners that progress takes time and effort.

3.3 Grammatical Analysis of Falz's *Hypocrite*

This section examines how Falz uses grammar in *Hypocrite* to express his criticism of double standards in society. The song combines Nigerian Pidgin, Standard English, and code-switching to highlight the difference between people's actions and the values they claim to hold. Through sentence types, pronoun use, and tense markers, Falz exposes false religiosity, corruption, and social pretense.

EXCERPT 1: Pre-Chorus: Dammie Vee

"People just dey do like say they no dey shit / People just dey do like say they no dey breathe o"(lines 1-2)

The pre-chorus uses repetition and continuous verb forms to describe people pretending to be perfect. The structure is simple but effective, allowing Falz's message to sound natural and familiar to a Nigerian audience.

These lines show clear use of Nigerian Pidgin grammar. The verb "dey" marks the continuous tense, meaning "are doing." The phrase "like say" means "as if."

Both lines begin with the same pattern — "People just dey do like say..." — creating grammatical parallelism and rhythm. The negative marker "no" comes before the verb ("no dey shit," "no dey breathe"), showing denial.

By using these simple repeated structures, Falz and Dammie Vee mocks those who act as though they are without fault. The grammar captures the everyday speech of Nigerians while emphasizing the message of hypocrisy.

EXCERPT 2: Verse 1 Falz

"People just dey do like say na dem be Jesus / People so wicked but they so religious"(lines 1-2)

Falz continues his social criticism by showing how people act holy while being morally corrupt. His grammar blends English and Pidgin, using direct statements that sound like open accusations.

The pronoun "dem" means "they," and the phrase "na dem be Jesus" translates as "they act like they are Jesus." This is a declarative sentence but carries irony — it states something to mean the opposite.

The next line uses contrast: "People so wicked but they so religious." The conjunction "but" connects two opposite ideas, showing the difference between appearance and reality.

Both lines are short and clear, which makes the criticism sharp and direct

EXCERPT 3 : Verse 2 Falz

"Pastor wey dey do like say e no be sinner / See the speck in your eye no dey point finger / And what about even you voters, wey dey act like say you only see two jokers"(lines 1-4)

In this verse, Falz turns from describing hypocrisy to offering correction. He uses commands and relative clauses to make his message sound firm and instructive.

The first line follows a typical Pidgin pattern: "wey dey" means "who is," while "e" means "he."

The sentence means "The pastor who acts as if he is not a sinner."

The second line uses an imperative structure — "See the speck in your eye, no dey point finger."

The command form "no dey" replaces "don't be," and it gives moral instruction.

Together, these two lines combine declarative and imperative moods to criticize religious hypocrisy and encourage self-reflection. The grammar mirrors biblical phrasing, strengthening Falz's moral tone.

Falz broadens his criticism beyond leaders and religious figures to include ordinary people, especially voters. The grammar here combines Pidgin and English to sound inclusive and conversational.

The third line blends both English and Pidgin structures. "Wey dey act like say" means "who act as if." The clause works as a relative clause, describing "you voters."

By using “you,” Falz speaks directly to listeners, involving them in the moral discussion. The sentence looks declarative but functions like a rhetorical question, since it challenges the audience without expecting a response.

The grammar here helps Falz shift the blame from only leaders to everyone in society.

EXCERPT 4: Outro Demmi Vee

"Of course I know truth is bitter / Bitter gidi gan pass bitter leaf"(1-2)

The song closes with a simple statement that mixes English with a Yoruba expression to make the message strong and relatable.

The first line is a declarative sentence in Standard English. The second line mixes English with Yoruba: “gidi gan” means “very much” or “extremely.”

The grammar is straightforward, but the code-switching adds emotional power and Nigerian identity. The comparison (“bitter... pass bitter leaf”) uses a familiar proverb-like structure to express how truth can be hard to accept.

3.4 Stylistic Implications

Falz uses his way of structuring sentences in *Confirm* and *Hypocrite* as a powerful method for both art and social critique. He blends Nigerian Pidgin with Standard English so that his music reaches two audiences at once: the well-educated and the everyday listener.

In *Confirm*, Falz and Sir Dauda use short, plain sentences and Pidgin structures like “you no work but you wan chop” (meaning, you haven’t worked, but you expect to eat). This creates a tone of calling out bad behavior mixed with firm advice. His use of command words like “Rise

up,” “Wise up,” and “Better confirm” gives the song an energizing push for people to act and correct themselves. This grammatical choice makes the advice feel urgent yet familiar, encouraging listeners to work hard and avoid dishonest shortcuts.

In *Hypocrite*, Falz uses repeated ideas, negative expressions, and continuous-action markers such as “dey do like say” (acting as if something is true) to point out pretenders and expose fake living in Nigerian society. The sentence structure sounds like everyday speech, giving the song a real, biting, and sarcastic tone. By using pronouns such as “people,” “dem” (them), and “you,” he spreads the blame across everyone—from leaders to followers. This inclusive language style makes listeners examine their own actions rather than simply blaming others.

Across both tracks, Falz skillfully balances formal language with the rhythm of casual speech. By combining statements, commands, and reflective questions, he manages to sound both trustworthy and relatable. These songs also show the power of code-switching—moving between English and Pidgin—to express identity, emotion, and truth. This flexible grammar is not just a language choice; it is a social statement. It proves that everyday Nigerian speech can carry serious moral and political messages.

3.5 Conclusion

Both *Confirm* and *Hypocrite* show how Falz uses simple language and grammar to talk about serious social issues. In *Confirm*, Falz and Sir Dauda encourage hard work and integrity, while in *Hypocrite*, Falz and Demmi Vee expose pretenders and moral corruption. His use of Nigerian Pidgin and English makes the songs sound natural, direct, and full of meaning.

Through his simple but powerful grammar, Falz turns everyday speech into a tool for teaching, correction, and social change.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF FALZ'S *WEHDONE SIR* AND *THIS IS NIGERIA*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a lexico-semantic analysis of Falz's *Wehdone Sir* and *This Is Nigeria*.

Lexico-semantics studies how word choice and meaning work together to communicate ideas.

Falz uses this link between vocabulary and meaning to pass strong social messages about corruption, hypocrisy, and moral failure in Nigeria. By looking at his words, figures of speech, main areas of meaning, and their cultural background, this chapter shows how Falz turns language into a clear voice for protest and reflection on Nigerian life.

4.2 Lexico-Semantic Analysis of “Wehdone Sir”

In *Wehdone Sir*, Falz uses sarcasm and irony to expose false lifestyles and hypocrisy, especially among fraudsters and religious leaders.

EXCERPT 1: The Title and Chorus

Wehdone Sir

So I say Wehdone Sir

Wehdone Sir

Tell am say Wehdone Sir (lines 1-16)

The phrase “Wehdone Sir” is a Pidgin version of “Well done, Sir.” It is a simple but powerful expression, as Falz repeats it to highlight different forms of hypocrisy.

Lexical Choice: The word “Sir” reflects Nigeria’s deep culture of respect and authority. Adding “Wehdone” gives it a sarcastic local flavor, shifting it from genuine praise to ridicule.

Figurative Language: The phrase works through sarcasm. While it sounds like admiration, it is actually a biting comment on people who cheat, deceive, or exploit others.

Semantic Field: This repetition builds a field of false respect and irony.

Contextual Meaning: Falz cleverly uses everyday speech to challenge moral pretenders—people who receive admiration despite wrongdoing. In a society where titles and appearances often hide corruption, this sarcastic “praise” becomes a form of protest.

EXCERPT 2: Verse 1

You dey pop bottle when we dey club

But your rent e dey hard you to pay up

Meanwhile you ne h'internet fraudster (lines 1-12)

This verse contrasts the fake luxury of nightlife with the reality of financial struggle.

Lexical Choice: Falz mixes urban slang (“pop bottle,” “big baller”) with local Pidgin (“dey hard you to pay up”). This blend connects to both elite and grassroots listeners.

Figurative Language: The line is ironic—the speaker mocks people who pretend to live large while struggling to pay basic bills.

Semantic Field: This builds a field of pretense and financial irresponsibility, reflecting the habit of showing off wealth that does not exist.

Contextual Meaning: This part of the song mirrors the Nigerian social reality where people, especially the youth, often chase appearances to gain respect, pretending to be who they are not, and living fake life. Falz exposes this behavior as self-deceitful and destructive.

EXCERPT 3: Verse 2

In your small salary you will pay your tithe

Fellowship in the day, Crusade for night

So you out there looking for more cheese

But apostle's getting on Forbes List.

Gomina dey go

Buy house for Jand

When man no Get

Shingbain for hand(lines 9-17)

This verse shifts the focus from individuals to religious leaders and institutions.

Lexical Choice: In the first four lines, Falz mixes religious terms (“tithe,” “crusade,” “fellowship”) with economic symbols of wealth (“Forbes List,” “private jet”). From the fifth to eighth line, Falz uses words, such as “Gomina” (Governor), “Jand” (slang for the UK), and “Shingbain” (kobo, any small amount of money) create strong contrast between the rich and poor.

The clash between these two kinds of worlds shows a moral contradiction.

Figurative Language: The metaphor of the “private jet” represents excess and greed disguised as faith. While the mention of “Shingbain” serves as a metonymy for lack of basic necessities.

Semantic Field: The first four lines of this verse belongs to a field of religious corruption and exploitation, exposing pastors who enrich themselves through their congregations. While the last four lines, belongs to Political Corruption and Neglect.

Contextual Meaning: Many Nigerians can relate to this verse, as it reflects a growing concern about how religion is used for profit. Falz’s criticism is subtle but bold—he questions the moral integrity of those who preach humility while living in luxury. Also, Falz exposes how politicians steal public funds to buy houses abroad while citizens live in poverty.

EXCERPT 4: The Bridge

Excuse me I beg your pardon

Oga, this your story no dey add up

This your Fabu e dey mad gan

But who am I to take h’action?(lines 1-4)

This short but sharp bridge captures Falz’s use of humor, frustration, and truth-telling.

Lexical Choice: Everyday Pidgin words like “Oga” (boss), “Fabu” (lie), and “e dey mad gan” (it is completely crazy) make the message sound direct and relatable.

Figurative Language: The line “No dey add up” is a metaphor, comparing lies to a broken calculation—something that fails to make sense.

Semantic Field: This part fits within the field of dishonesty and silent frustration.

Contextual Meaning: The tone reflects the reality of speaking truth to power in Nigeria. Many people recognize the wrongs of their leaders but feel helpless to confront them. Falz's use of local speech captures this emotional conflict perfectly.

EXCERPT 5: Outro

"You are a member of the ladies of the night / But you still call yourself an entrepreneur"

Lexical Choice: The polite phrase "ladies of the night" contrasts with "entrepreneur," highlighting wordplay and irony.

Figurative Language: This is verbal irony — a sarcastic way of showing how people justify wrong actions.

Semantic Field: It contributes to Moral Decline and Self-Justification.

Cultural and Contextual Meaning: Falz criticizes the growing acceptance of immoral lifestyles as "hustle" or "business," reflecting blurred ethical boundaries in modern society.

4.3 Lexico-Semantic Analysis of *This Is Nigeria*

This Is Nigeria takes a more serious and documentary tone. It functions like a lyrical report on national chaos—covering corruption, insecurity, police abuse, and moral decay. Falz's word choice is sharp, his tone urgent, and his message clear.

EXCERPT 1: The Chorus

"This is Nigeria / --- / Everybody be criminal"(lines 1-3)

Lexical Choice: The simplicity of “Everybody be criminal” is what gives it power. The word “criminal” becomes a national label, showing how widespread wrongdoing has become.

Figurative Language: This is hyperbole. Falz exaggerates to express how deeply corruption has entered daily life.

Semantic Field: It builds a field of moral breakdown and collective guilt.

Contextual Meaning: Falz does not accuse every Nigerian of being corrupt. Instead, he points to a system that rewards dishonesty and punishes integrity. It reflects a nation where corruption feels normal, and even victims sometimes become participants.

EXCERPT 2: Verse 2

"Wey da Madam Philomena / Money vanish from your office / 36 milli you talk say na animal"(lines 79)

Lexical Choice: The use of Pidgin expressions like “talk say” (said that) and “na animal” (it’s an animal) brings humor and disbelief to the narrative.

Figurative Language: This is satire, based on a real Nigerian news story where a civil servant, Philomena Chieshe claimed that a snake swallowed millions naira from Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board(JAMB) office in 2018.

Semantic Field: It belongs to the field of absurd corruption.

Contextual Meaning: This allusion to a real scandal makes the song politically charged. Falz uses humor to expose the ridiculous excuses often used to hide government theft.

EXCERPT 3: Verse 3

Pastor put his hands on the breast of his members

He's pulling the demons out.

Fulani Herdsmen still dey slaughter

Carry people dey massacre(lines 3-12)

Lexical Choice: The mix of religious (“pastor,” “demons”) and violent (“slaughter,” “massacre”) words reflect the coexistence of moral decay and physical danger in Nigerian life.

Figurative Language: The first two lines use irony to show the abuse of power in religion, while the second two lines use imagery to depict national violence.

Semantic Field: Together, they create a field of abuse, insecurity, and human suffering.

Contextual Meaning: Falz bravely connects two sensitive issues—sexual misconduct in churches and killings in rural communities. This mixture of topics shows how he uses music to expose social and moral disorder.

EXCERPT 4: Verse 3

"SARS stop me for road any explanation you go talk am for station o"(line 22)

Lexical Choice: “SARS” (Special Anti-Robbery Squad), “stop me for road,” and “station” are familiar terms in Nigerian policing, giving the line authenticity.

Figurative Language: The phrase carries dramatic irony. The listener knows that “explanation at the station” often means extortion or violence.

Semantic Field: This forms a field of police brutality and oppression.

Contextual Meaning: Before the #EndSARS movement, this line reflected the fear and frustration of many Nigerian youths. Falz gives voice to those silenced by constant harassment, showing how music can become a form of social resistance.

EXCERPT 5: The Outro

But what happens everyday is that, the system has allowed it. For instance there is no law that allows you to take money from the church, invest in business, and privatize it. No. It is only in Nigeria where you can take money from the church, money contributed by poor congregation members. You go and set up a university that the members cannot attend. Cannot send their children to. It's against the rule and the law of God. It's against the constitution

Lexical Choice: Falz uses a direct, powerful, and serious tone in this part. Words such as “law,” “church,” “money,” “business,” “constitution,” and “God’s rule” combine words from both legal and religious contexts. The repetition of the phrase “It’s against” strengthens the tone of authority and final judgment. The reference to “poor members” introduces an emotional element, highlighting empathy and concern for ordinary believers.

Figurative Language: Falz uses irony to expose hypocrisy. The irony lies in how certain church leaders use offerings collected from members to fund personal enterprises and private schools that the same members are excluded from, contradicting the moral values they promote.

Semantic Field: This forms a field of Religion, Law, and Corruption or Misconduct. Religious terms like “church,” “God,” and “members” build a sacred setting. Legal expressions such as

“law,” “constitution,” and “allowed” introduce a moral background. However, references to “church money” and “members cannot attend” link the discussion to exploitation, inequality, and social injustice.

Contextual and Cultural Meaning: This outro captures a well-known issue in Nigerian society—the commercialization of religion and the misuse of church funds by wealthy pastors and leaders. Falz’s criticism is not just about individuals; it targets a system that allows such practices to continue unchecked. The mention of universities built from church offerings touches on a real and painful reality, institutions funded by ordinary people are often priced beyond their reach.

4.4 Stylistic Implications

Both songs share Falz’s style of singing, mixing English with Nigerian Pidgin to balance seriousness and humor. How songs serve as comic relief to some extent. In *Wehdone Sir*, he uses irony and sarcasm to expose greed and false appearances. In *This Is Nigeria*, he uses direct accusation, hyperbole, and imagery to highlight injustice and violence. The code-switching between languages gives his music power and emotional honesty, making the message accessible to both educated and ordinary listeners.

4.5 Conclusion

The lexico-semantic analysis of *Wehdone Sir* and *This Is Nigeria* shows Falz as a voice who uses simple, everyday language to confront big social problems. In *Wehdone Sir*, he mocks personal hypocrisy and religious greed. In *This Is Nigeria*, he exposes political corruption, insecurity, and the abuse of power. His choice of words, use of irony, and realistic expressions make his songs easy to understand yet deeply meaningful. Through his work, Falz shows that music can serve as a tool for entertainment, education, and socio-political criticism.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

This study has examined the grapho-phonological, grammar, and lexico-semantic elements used by Falz in his songs, *This is Nigeria*, *Talk*, *Confirm*, *Wehdone Sir*, and *Hypocrite*, to expose corruption in private and government systems in the Nigerian society.

The study used Leech and Short's Style as Text model (2007) to examine how Falz uses spelling, sound, grammar, and word choice to talk about corruption, moral decay, and hypocrisy in Nigeria.

The analysis showed that Falz's songs reflect what is happening in Nigerian society. By mixing Nigerian Pidgin and English, using satire, repetition, and rhythm, Falz combines entertainment with social criticism. Leech and Short's model helped to show how his use of language expresses

meaning, attitude, and message. In all, Falz's music is not just for fun—it also teaches, corrects, and speaks against wrongs in the country.

5.2 Findings

Based on the research questions, the study found the following:

1. Grapho-Phonological Features:

Falz uses informal spellings, punctuations, repeated sounds, and Pidgin expressions like “dey,” “na,” and “no be.” These show how people really talk in Nigeria and help him connect with his audience. Repetition, like “talk am o” and “eh eh,” gives rhythm and makes the song sound interactive. He also uses capital letters, numbers, and punctuation marks to stress certain points, especially where he criticizes corruption or poor leadership.

2. Grammatical Structures:

Falz moves easily between Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin. He uses short, direct sentences that make his message clear and easy to understand. His sentence structure is simple so everyone can relate to it. Repetition and similar sentence patterns make his message stronger and more memorable.

3. Lexical and Semantic Choices:

Falz uses simple everyday words, humour, irony, and local sayings to talk about corruption and social problems. He mixes political, religious, and street language to show what ordinary Nigerians face. His word choice also reminds listeners of the old protest music of Fela Kuti. These language choices help Falz to expose corrupt leaders, challenge social hypocrisy, and call for moral change.

Altogether, these findings show that Falz's style joins creativity with purpose. His songs are not only for entertainment but also serve as tools for awareness, truth-telling, and change.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, Falz uses everyday Nigerian language as a way to speak out against corruption and bad leadership. By using Pidgin and English together, he creates a style that speaks to both educated and ordinary people.

His use of spelling, sound, grammar, and word choice helps him pass his message clearly and powerfully. Falz shows that music can be more than fun—it can correct, educate, and push people to think differently.

In short, stylistic analysis helps us see how Falz uses language to speak truth to power. In *This Is Nigeria*, *Talk*, *Confirm*, *Hypocrite*, and *Wehdone Sir*, he calls out corruption and hypocrisy and challenges Nigerians to become more conscious and responsible citizens.

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