

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE OF METAPHOR AND SIMILE USED TO PRESENT WOMEN IN THE SELECTED DHOLUO OHANGLA SONGS

¹Odhiambo Anne Abiero*, ¹Omondi Odera, ¹Damaris Gechemba Nyakoe

*Corresponding Author: anneabiero@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2647-652X>; <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4529-8282>; <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9181-6944>

¹Rongo University, P.O. Box 103-40404 Rongo, Kenya

Abstract

Metaphor and simile are rhetorical devices employed by musicians to depict female representations. This is primarily because they effectively evoke emotions and convey sentiments associated with the respective imagery. Furthermore, they serve as potent interpretative tools that shape the context of the female representation. In African context, particularly in Kenya, Obangla artists have utilized metaphor and simile to illustrate women through various portrayals. While numerous studies have explored the use of metaphors and similes in presenting women across different songs, there remains a paucity of research examining how these figures of speech reflect femininity within Dholuo Obangla music specifically songs sung by Wuod Fibi. The study adopted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on examining language in connection to society, ideology, and power. (Fairclough, 1992). Qualitative Content Analysis was used to analyze textual data of this major artist. It employed data in the form of words downloaded from You Tube. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the songs known for their emotional, cultural depth and have wealth of lyrical content. The study sought to address an objective such as; identifying the instances of metaphor and simile within the chosen Dholuo songs. The study aimed to advance knowledge of language use in African music, specifically Dholuo. The findings of the study indicated that women are degraded socially. They are portrayed as vessels that can be taken advantage of in various discourses in Obangla music for instance, Wuod Fibi describes a lady as a potato, sugarcane, among other descriptions. He terms these notions as 'nonsense' such that in case a lady/woman accepts the descriptions and decides to give a chance to any male who is rooted into these opinions, they again refer to them as; worthless, imbecile beings. To mean, the terms he presents in his music can never be 'nonsense' they cannot be terms to listen to and brush over due to the fact that listeners listen, and comprehend the words which can be used negatively against women and the ladies. He leaves great social impact on the audience listening and to the ladies who remain 'useless' as far as the impact created goes. The observations made led to the conclusion that, the singer's aim can be inferred from the context of an utterance.

Key words: Metaphor, simile, femininity, obangla, women portrayal.

Introduction

The term "figurative language" describes expressions that use words in ways that are more powerful, creative, or dramatic than their literal meanings. It frequently uses analogies,

exaggerations, or symbolic connotations to communicate concepts in a way that appeals to the audience's emotions or creativity (Hasanah, 2018). Figurative language as Colston, & Gibbs, 2021) states, is very useful as it allows authors and

speakers to connect abstract ideas to concrete experiences and elicit deeper degrees of understanding. Human communication is greatly aided by language, which may be used to express emotions, identity, and culture in addition to facts. In the same way, the application of artistic terms like metaphors, similes, and symbolism that is, the figurative language is used to produce exceptional effects and make abstract concepts more approachable and easier to understand.

African languages have long served as a medium for emotional expression, societal criticism, and cultural preservation, particularly among the Luo people of Kenya. One well-known Luo singer, John Okumu who is popularly known as “Wuod Fibi” which literally means “Son to Fibi” who hails from Nyakach is known for his lyrical and culturally relevant lyrics that make extensive use of figurative language. As with its use in music, this indicates a lot about a community's language. Numerous studies on music have been conducted throughout history, in both Western and Kenyan cultures among others but not on figurative language: metaphors, simile as used by Luo artists to present women.

Likewise, most popular songs by Luo artists have been recorded and are commonly played on the vernacular (FM Radio stations like Radio Lake Victoria (Nam Lolwe) and Ramogi FM and Radio Mayienga FM among others but, there is no sufficient study that has been done on literary work based on the figurative language used in their songs.

For instance, Koech(2013) studied figurative language use, mainly in selected Kipsigis songs. He focused on lexical pragmatic analysis and used lexical pragmatic theory. Some of the aspects he discussed include lexical borrowing and lexical narrowing. This study was relevant to the present study with respect to this figurative language usage which form the core in one of the objectives. However, it differed from the study in terms of its data which are typically Kipsigis lexical items. This study specifically concentrated on metaphor and

simile as figurative languages used in Dholuo from the chosen compositions to present women.

The lexical pragmatic study of metaphorical language in a few chosen Kipsigis songs was the main emphasis of Koech (2013). This study as well also benefited from his methodology, particularly in the analysis of metaphors. He claims that linguistic references to sexual actions and love are frequently employed figuratively in the chosen Kipsigis songs. The artists substitute metaphors for words that are considered taboo. His work highlights the singer's purpose in employing metaphors. This being a component of this research on figurative language styles it added more knowledge into the researcher's study.

Onyango (2014) examined an analysis of *A Lexical Pragmatic Approach to Ohangla Music: A Case of Metaphors*. He also discussed aspect of lexical borrowing and narrowing with reference to Luo artists such as; Onyi Papa J and Lady Maureen. With close reference to metaphorical use in Luo music, this study referred to an artist like Wuod Fibi among others to bridge the gap between Dholuo figurative language use of metaphors and similes in music but mainly on how they are used to refer to women.

Additionally, Adhiambo (2017) in her study which is one of the significant works on metaphor, she carried out: A comparison of Ochieng' Kabaselle and Atomi Sifa's conceptual metaphors and metonymies of love in a few Dholuo Benga songs. Her study mainly focused on metaphors of love generally, while this study checked on metaphoric language use and simile with relation to ladies in Ohangla songs.

This study was regarded as significant because it intended to analyze the figurative devices in the chosen songs using an approach of critical discourse analysis, thus filling in the knowledge gap of the presentation of women, which was considered as an emerging issue, as well as an existing issue since time immemorial. It aimed at advancing knowledge of language use in African music – Dholuo in specific. It anticipated that the results were to deepen our understanding of this

Nilotic language, shed light on the intricacy of Dholuo music, and have useful attempts to preserve and teach more about the language.

Research Methodology

This study employed Qualitative Content Analysis which was used to analyze textual data of the songs to find the linguistic styles, devices, and meanings from the lyrics used. According to Mayring, (2000), this research approach is suited for the study because it allows the researcher to examine and evaluate meanings from Luo-specific symbolic and cultural features found in media, documents, and interviews.

Two songs from Wuod Fibi, an Ohangla Dholuo artist mainly were the subject of this study on the language use. The study constituted of two linguistic figurative styles as its main target population that the researcher identified from the songs selected. This study entailed a collection of two songs from one Luo artist. These songs were acquired from the Internet. To download the chosen songs of the main study artist, the researcher employed search engines, primarily Google and YouTube were used in reference to the area of study.

As listeners made requests from radio stations to play Ohangla songs particularly of those that are very popular; John Okumu (Wuod Fibi) being one of them. The researcher was guided by requests from listeners of Dholuo radio stations, including Radio Ramogi, Mayienga Radio, and Radio Lake Victoria on the best selected songs to focus on for the study.

The data collection procedure constituted of song's selection that are known for their emotional and cultural depth and have a wealth of lyrical content was done using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows researchers deliberately to choose participants for their studies based on particular traits, expertise, or experiences. According to Patton (2014), this approach guarantees that the sample is in line with the study goals, allowing thorough investigation of the findings. This was in consideration of criteria such as; popularity,

cultural significance, and variety in lyrical themes and styles as realized from the selected songs.

The researcher listened to two main songs entitled 'Mari Mara' and 'Mago Nonsense'. Figurative expressions of metaphors and similes among others were recognized. Thereafter, the lyrics were divided into phrases or lines. The relevance of figurative metaphorical expressions and similes in expressing emotions and cultural identity, referring to women, was also examined and analyzed. This was on the basis of textual data, as Krippendorff (2018) emphasizes systematic categorization and interpretation as part of content analysis of the identified frequency in Ohangla songs.

Results And Discussions

In every expression lies a meaning. This was the case, as evidenced in Wuod Fibi's lyrics as the artist under study for this research. He not only used metaphor and simile as figurative languages but there were interpretations attached to them as their meanings for instance: He used metaphor in his song 'Mari Mara' to give direct and straight comparison between a lady or woman and a vegetable or river water and a traditional scarf, respectively which he terms as 'leso'.

According to intentionalist approaches to interpreting utterances, language serves the function of allowing the speaker to express her beliefs and desires to the listener. As a result, intentionalists maintain that the speaker's intentions primarily determine the meaning of an utterance. (Leth, 2021).

For instance, there may occasionally be a miscommunication or misinterpretation of the speaker by the listener if the listener's perception differs from the speaker's intended meaning or if the listener reacts in a way that the speaker believes is unacceptable. For instance, the hearer may pass a jacket to the speaker if he does not comprehend the speaker's meaning to urge the hearer to close the room's window when he says, "It is too cold." In this situation, Leth (2021) says, we can start to question the communication's efficacy and

concentrate on the discrepancy between the speaker's and the hearer's meanings.

Significantly, this thought contributed to the present study due to its main focus being the speaker's intention of communication. The present study had the selected music artist referred to as the speakers who have their lyrics in use for communication which was then used to derive the figurative use of metaphors used to be analyzed.

This strategy differs from the intentional strategy, which is known as the anti-intentional strategy in contrast. In general, there are two ways to explain the hearer-centered understanding of utterance meaning in communication: relevance theory and incorrect interpretation of the Gricean implied. What relevance theorists refer to as ostensive-inferential communication still primarily relies on the speaker "making manifest" both a communicative and an informational aim, despite their somewhat increased interest in the hearer's perspective (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, p. 54).

Realistically, though, the hearer can occasionally decipher the meaning of a remark without the speaker's explicit meaning. Gricean implicature, on the other hand, occurs when the hearer does not understand what the speaker intends to say in a given situation. Leth (2021). The same statement, "You are such a nice person," for instance, could be constructed favorably or unfavorably in various situations, or it could even be used as a call for assistance. An inability to discern the intended meaning in particular will result in a communication breakdown.

The artist Wuod Fibi used the term "Nyadundo" to praise the beautiful one, that is, the beautiful lady whom he in turn compares directly to veges. With reference to the intentionalist approach as illustrated above, to interpreting utterances, whereby the language serves the function of giving the audience the opportunity to hear the speaker's opinions and desires, the listener or the audience could interpret this as the short beautiful lady yet this might convey more than just the exact statement of the singer's choice of words.

The anti-intentionalist approach on the other hand, explains more of this as it brings in support of the speaker who in this case is the singer to have less control over the hearer, thus the hearer has more freedom to adopt their own interpretations in relation to what they perceive.

For the anti-intentionalist meaning is fundamentally public, while the speaker's intention is private and unavailable to the hearer. Therefore, anti-intentionalists believe that the hearer's access to common conventions or a variety of contextual clues determines the meaning of the speaker's remark. What the hearer can comprehend from a speech determines its meaning (Leth, 2021).

Thus, the short one "nyadundo" could be a beautiful lady but the aspect of being compared to as vegetables in the market would either imply that she becomes one who is easily available just like vegetables are known to be green plants and always found easily in every market area. Hence, men would visit the market areas to go buy this beautiful "mboga" as Swahili terms it. Ironically, it is not fond of men to visit the market, this then, still implies further that the presence of a beautiful one is what perhaps would push them to go visit this market where she would be found.

The singer once again refers to the beautiful girl as a river metaphorically. But, no one is expected to go and fetch from this river as Wuod Fibi says, "Chwo duto" meaning "all men" not women this time round as the African and social cultural perspective expects of them to do the house chores including fetching water but "men" and not just one, all of them would go and fetch water only and only if this beautiful girl would be a river.

Intentionality would have a lady referred to as a river to mean her endless beauty just like the singer says it. This can be implied from the fact that a river always flows with water. This lady can then be expected to be one so beautiful and fresh like water flowing in a river but, the anti-intentionality approach brings in the negativity of "Why only men?" rushing to fetch from this beautiful girl termed as a river. Women could as well fetch but

‘all men’ makes it more negative for a fact that the singer is a man so, the statement cannot be a nonsense. When perceived by the hearer or the audience it does not build the pure aspect of the beautiful lady.

In interpreting this data, the hearer or listener must comprehend how significant ‘vegetable’ is in a market place in order to interpret this info. It is of great importance that a good buyer cannot miss to pick vegetables home for his/her diet, health benefits. The market notion can be expanded to include the ad hoc concept of "VEGETABLES," which is a metaphor that demonstrates a great deal of freshness.

That is, some green vegetable in place for sale. Vegetables symbolize the beautiful lady in the market area; her availability would make ‘all men’ to come out from wherever they are to go fetch her. She is regarded as a very important one in the market. Likewise, culturally women are regarded as very important beings.

All these are praises aimed at making us have the image of how beautiful this lady that Wuod Fibi refers to is. No trousers for men in his vivid description, they better do a “leso” to display the beauty of this girl this is the intentional view. On the other note of intentionality, the hearer could interpret the ‘leso’ being that it is a cloth wrapped around the waist by women from a cultural view to be one that would be wasted so much if she was a lady. Remember, this singer does not refer to this lady in the plural form. No, he refers to her in singular so how about all men dropping their trousers to replace their clothing with one ‘leso’ she is then rendered a wasted one.

In summary, “Mari mara” in this context as is translated as Yours is mine would as well be used to refer to the exchange that would take place in return to show the consequences caused by the beauty of this lady. Such that;

If she was a river, men would react by going to fetch water, if she could be vegetables they would prefer going to the market even if it means buying her off for an exchange. Lastly, if she could happen to be a

“leso” they could all rush for this “leso” and do away with their trousers in exchange. “Whatever she is would be theirs”.

In another song, he describes a lady using simile as a style as was identified to refer to her as a mango, sugarcane and potato. All these he refers to in his song ‘Mago Nonsense’ which means those are nonsense to console the girl child not to be affected by such descriptions but still they leave a negative impact of ‘why are they just referred to as objects for one and not any other objects, edible objects. Of course. Objects that are rendered valueless after eating, that is, after chewing sugarcane what remains are the wasted peels. The same applies to potato and mango after eating a mango, we have a seed left nothing more. Potatoes on the other hand, also have peels that sometimes are thrown away. These are the objects that the lady or woman is compared to.

Socio-culturally, the thought of a lady in her beauty of the traditional scarf might influence how the listener interprets the music ‘lesos’ that mainly are usually wrapped by women around their waists. The traditional prints that are shown on ‘lesos’ and the mixed colors that display its beauty. Her beauty is very evident from the description given. Considering the data above, the climax comes at the point where men could have the ‘lesos’ replace their trousers. Such that, if she is a ‘leso’ they better have the ‘leso’. Negatively she is just referred to as a ‘wrap round’ just as she is referred to as a river and vegetable, though termed as the beautiful one. A man cannot be termed as a wrap round, mango or vegetable or anything closer to that, for them they are termed as brave beings whereas a lady/women are referred to using feeble things and objects.

This singer within the cultural view of a village set up in comparing this beautiful one to a river signifies her importance in a big way. The hearer can be able to use his/her knowledge of the social cultural background knowledge of beauty to interpret. In that, each and every person needs water for life and normally it’s the women who fetch water from the rivers but ironically here is a

case where men would go fetching as a result of having this beauty symbolized as a river. The singer represents the lady as a very important one in life just like water but contrasting the situation to a river where all men can head to creates the negative aspect of a situation where she might be taken advantage of.

In comparison, the song *Msichana wa Elimu*, one of the most well-known performers of the 1970s, Daudi Kabaka, asks, "Oh Lady of such exquisite beauty, what makes you not to be married? You have a degree; you have travelled overseas and returned. What prevents you from getting married?"

Since the lady is presented as cognitively capable, there is a good portrayal of her in this instance. Therefore, woman can read and acquire cognitive skills like men in the society. Daudi Kabaka seems to have addressed the socioeconomic reality of the time, when the majority of dads did not provide education for their daughters. As a result, he is grateful that women can attend schools and receive an education just like men.

Thiong'o(2015), says, it's important to note that fathers, who headed the majority of households, immediately focused all of their resources on educating the boy kid after Kenya got its independence. In order for the youngster to achieve a good job and lift the family out of poverty, the family wanted him to complete his schooling. The artist makes people more aware of the fact that girls may attend school and receive an education. But like all other male artists, we feel that the educated woman's reputation is being tarnished by a bad stigma. "You have gained knowledge, you have travelled overseas, and you have returned," he asks in what seems to be a rhetorical inquiry. What's preventing you from marrying someone? This inquiry seems to imply that even though the woman has received education, she lacks discernment and is not getting married because she is either too happy with her education or because her status as an educated woman has caused her to turn down male suitors. It is also possible that those who could have asked her for a hand in marriage have avoided her because of her newfound status.

It seems that despite women's education, men in society should still have a say in or even control over the decisions that women make in life. Therefore, the proposal that she should get married is the rhetorical question. The protagonist in the song thinks he is helping the lady make a decision when he advises her to get married since, in his opinion, the woman is incapable of making decisions on her own, even if she is educated. (Thiong'o, 2015).

This socio-cultural portrayal of men wanting to dictate to women what they should do shows that the character seems to have a silencing attitude towards the woman, viewing her as having flaws in her thinking, and that he should serve as an advisor in her decision-making.

In the same way, Wuod Fibi through the use of simile describes women to be like a mango, sugarcane and potato. Both are edible objects. Just like a mango she is compared to an appealing and appetizing fruit that one, anyone and more especially men would yearn to have for a bite. In his second line of the song he renders the audience to interpret too in a manner that she is one that is never given room to mature up. He says "If you wait for her to mature up, others prefer her raw". Potato is again an edible crop and right from the garden someone can eat it raw or even enjoy eating it cooked. For a fact it can either be eaten peeled or unpeeled. The singer with the description of a lady like a potato again creates the social image of just an object to be misused and cannot stay long enough. Her stay ends up with eating and wastage of a nothing important after. Finally, in his description he talks of a lady as sugarcane. Something that you can eat and throw away, the only evidence in place that remains after are the peels that are as well thrown away. She is not regarded as of great importance as the previous song referred to her as the beautiful flowing river and vegetable. Things regarded to be of value health wise.

In his description he terms them as 'Public properties for public use, a lady does not belong to any person' to imply that people can easily pull or

pick sugarcane from farms, same to mangoes. Someone can pick a mango from a tree as long as it is available and the tree is reachable. Such descriptions cannot be classified as nonsense as he tries to nullify them for a fact that they are statements that portray women as worthless beings as he later on justifies in his lyrics that;

‘In any case a lady gives a chance to man and taints her name and image as result of these statements, she then is referred to as worthless, imbecile and useless.’

In as much as the artist under study tries so much to cover the women as beautiful creatures by further contrasting and comparing them to the bright morning star and the rose of Sharon which produces sweet fragrance, the negativity left by the impact created by his lyrics and choice of words are not erasable, the impact of having women presented as objects to be wasted and to be taken advantage over remains intact and irreplaceable. Through Critical discourse analysis theory as the study majored on for its analysis, the listener still has chance to decipher his or her meanings based on inner grounds of lyrics used.

The lady being a raw one as the artist says ‘manumu’ to mean unripe implies a young immature girl. Once a mango is eaten it is thrown away. Mango here as the study aimed at its findings is symbolizing a lady using the simile.

‘A lady is like a mango’

In his statement, this immature girl’s mind might be corrupted, the other genders mind might also be socially corrupted and the lady might as a result belittle herself as a worthless and valueless one. This is also the same case with his reference to a lady as sugarcane that isn’t a must to undergo the unpeeling process some can even eat it unpeeled or peeled.

In conclusion, in as much as Wuod Fibi, the singer terms these notions as ‘Mago nonsense’ ‘Those are nonsense’ incase a lady or a woman accepts the descriptions and terms used and decides to give a chance to any male who is rooted into these

opinions, they again refer to them as; worthless, useless, imbecile beings. To mean, the terms he presents in his music can never be ‘nonsense’ they cannot be terms to listen to and brush over by a listener due to the fact that listeners listen and comprehend the words which can be used negatively against the women and the ladies. In as much as his composition of lyrics are good to listen to the images he portrays are negative and not appealing on the ladies and women who are referred to directly and vividly from the choice of words he uses. He leaves a very great and alarming social impact to the audience listening and to the ladies who remain ‘useless’ as far as the impact created goes.

Conclusion

Wuod Fibi through the use of simile come metaphor describes women to be like a mango, sugarcane and potato. Both are edible objects. In his description he terms them as ‘Public properties for public use, this is to mean a lady does not belong to any person’, that is, she does not belong to any man in specific. This is to imply that people can very easily pull or pick sugarcane from plantations even farms, same to mangoes and as well as potatoes. Someone can pick a mango from a tree as long as it is available and the tree is reachable. Such descriptions cannot be classified as nonsense as he tries to nullify them for a fact that they are statements that portray women as worthless beings.

In as much as the artist under study tried so much to cover the women as beautiful creatures by further contrasting and comparing them to the bright morning star and the rose of Sharon which produces sweet fragrance, the negativity left by the impact created by his lyrics and choice of words are not erasable, the impact of having women presented as objects to be wasted and to be taken advantage over remains intact and irreplaceable.

In conclusion, through Critical discourse analysis theory as the study majored on for its analysis, the listener still has chance to decipher his or her meanings based on inner grounds of lyrics used.

The observations made led to the conclusion shown using the critical discourse analysis that, the singer's aim can be inferred from the context of an utterance. It is also not appropriate to examine the metaphor in a vacuum. The singer's goal might also be revealed through the listener's shared knowledge background. Hence, it is the listener's prior knowledge that enables them to correctly deduce the message and the meaning.

Recommendations

The study may provide more insights to the linguistic educators, language and literature into understanding the impacts of figurative language usage among speakers and listeners.

Declarations of Generative AI And AI-Assisted Technologies in Writing Process

The author, while preparing this work, partly utilized ChatGPT for spell checking and grammar refinement. After using AI tool, the author carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assume(s) full responsibility for the publication's content.

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Ambuchi- Writing- review & editing, writing-original draft, methodology, data curation. Beth- Writing- review & editing, conceptualization. Charles- Writing- review & editing, methodology. Dennis- Writing- review & editing conceptualization.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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