

The Significance of Metaphor in Ekegusii Proverbs

Oseko Winnie Nyaboke, Dr. James Mayaka, Dr. Nicholas Goro-Kamau

Department of Literary and Communication Studies, Laikipia University, Kenya

***Corresponding Author:**

Oseko Winnie Nyaboke

Email: winnieosekogmail.com

Abstract: Styles used in various genres have to be placed in context to relay the message effectively with language playing the key role. The research focused on investigating the effective use of metaphors in passing the message in Ekegusii proverbs. The research was based on the fact that even though other researchers have done a lot such as categorizing Ekegusii proverbs and studying their meaning; little has been done to show how effectively metaphors have been used to relay the message. This is despite the fact that the use of figures of speech is important in communicating meaning in Ekegusii proverbs. The study was informed by the stylistic criticism theory in which principles of stylistic criticism were used to identify the linguistic and metaphorical features of Ekegusii proverbs as well as the context in which they are used. The theory benefited the study in terms of its practical approaches, perspectives and analytical tools. The acquired data was analyzed and described qualitatively with the guidance of tenets of language and themes. In the analysis of data, the researcher identified metaphors and analyzed how effectively they relayed the message in relation to the context they were used. The beneficiaries of the study findings will be researchers in the field of oral literature by expanding their knowledge on the relationship between language and content depending on the context used. This study will inspire a further investigation on the role played by language in relaying message in various genres such as riddles in different communities.

Keywords: Ekegusii, Proverb, Metaphor, Effective, Message, Elderly.

INTRODUCTION

The use of stylistic devices in various genres of oral literature is one way of revealing ideas and emotions that could not be noticed without their use. Proverbs are among these genres that portray life in its realistic form through the use of various stylistic devices Makori [1]. Proverbs play a key role in the day to day conversation among the members of the society. Proverbs look at crucial aspects in the society such as historical background and culture that are the pillars for the continuation of various genres of oral literature of the society. They play a key role in the preservation and continuation of the society's culture through the themes that are presented using stylistic devices such as metaphors.

As Okindo [2] puts it, literature is portrayed by various aspects of the society. A society's culture their historical background relays their approach to life and the environment that surrounds them. Proverbs get their resources from a particular environments and natural phenomenon where they are used. Metaphors used in them are formulated from their surroundings. The translation of a given proverb depends on the context it's used in . If put out of context it will disrupt its meaning.

Proverbs have the attribute of preserving the society's philosophy and giving background to the societal chores and it is a treasure of the history and tradition of past and old generations in society. Proverbs are one of the genres of oral literature that are known for using stylistic devices such as metaphors with the aim of concealing the educative information. They were commonly used by elders with the intention of educating the young the historical background of their society and culture. Okumba [3] says it's normal to find elderly people using proverbs with stylistic devices that conceal the information in their own conversation and even when conversing with other people. This is due to their long life experience and their day to day contribution to the formation of various genres of oral tradition including proverbs.

Robert and Jacob [4] say that when metaphors are used in various genres of oral literature they reveal ideas and feelings that could not be felt without their use. The researcher agrees with them since that is the purpose of metaphors when used in oral literature. Therefore, the use of language and especially metaphors is a peculiar aspect in relaying the message contained in various types of oral literature in the society.

The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. Classifying the use of metaphors in Ekegusii proverbs.
2. Analyzing their effectiveness in relaying the message of the proverbs.

The research's discussions are significant in elaborating how effective the metaphors have been used in terms of their context to relay meaning in Ekegusii proverbs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research operated within the theoretical framework of Ngara's Stylistic Criticism Theory that was important in identifying and analyzing how effective metaphors were used in proverbs. Stylistic criticism looked at literature linguistically and has its foundation in structuralism. After perusing through linguistic books the researcher discovered that stylistic criticism peaked when it portrayed itself in language and literature in Europe and America in the beginning of the 16th century Kumar [5] quotes Sebeok [6]. Stylistics critiqued literature on the basis of linguistics and science. Stylistics looked at literature by laying emphasis on different levels of language for instance phonology, suprasegmental morphology and vocabularies. The research was based on the analysis of the terms that are used in metaphors on the Ekegusii proverbs and how effective they relay the message. Specifically that tenets of language use and themes were used in the data analysis. In language the researcher looked at language use in a text for instance a sentence, similes, metaphors, imagery and other additives in linguistics like indication. Ngara, after enlisting these forms of language, view was of the were that linguistic devices used in a text were influenced by the context. This research focused on metaphors and in this stylistic device, the aspect of selection of terms used was looked at. This aspect insists that a term used in a metaphor should put the information precisely because there could be no chance of explaining further the information to the receiver. Wyrick [7] says that the choice of terms used in a text can cause a great difference in the effectiveness of communication. This tenet benefited the research since the researcher was in a position to examine the effectiveness of the vocabularies that were used in metaphors in Ekegusii proverbs in relaying the intended message. According to stylistic criticism, themes in any genre of literature originate from the deeds and the historical happenings of a given society. It considers themes and stylistic devices to be of the same weight even though it goes further to insist that themes play a key role in developing various stylistic devices used in the genres Ngara [8]. This tenet benefited the researcher since she was at a position to examine how metaphors developed from various themes in Ekegusii proverbs and how effective they relayed the intended message.

The data analysis was based on these tenets. Even though the research was on examining the effectiveness of metaphors in relaying the message we couldn't avoid themes since the used metaphors originated from the themes.

DATA

The paper's data constituted of 50 Ekegusii proverbs. Proverbs were collected through a questionnaire and analyzed qualitatively the main purpose being to show how effective the metaphors used relayed the message in the proverbs. While analyzing the researcher paid attention to answering the following questions:

1. How are metaphors classified in Ekegusii proverbs?
2. How does effective use of metaphors in proverbs contribute to relaying the intended message?

Ekegusii proverbs use various stylistic features in communicating their message. In relation to this study we categorized them according to their literal comparison. There are those that compared human beings with other human beings, their body parts and even emissions from their body; human beings with food.

DISCUSSIONS

This section analyzed various metaphors according to the specific category they belonged. There are those that compared human beings with other human beings and all that is entailed in their bodies like body fluids. Human beings with animals, tools, situations in human life, plants and food. In the analysis the researcher looked at the deep meaning of the proverb in relation to the metaphor that was used.

Reference to human beings

In this category the researcher analyzed proverbs with metaphors that compared human beings with themselves, different parts of their body like mouth, thigh and skin. Human beings with fluids from their body like mucus, and animals with humans. The categorization was based on the deep meaning of the proverb, analysis was based on the context the metaphor was used.

Chiombe n'abana
(Cows are children)

Cows were directly compared with children. The Abagusii community value children especially after the traditional wedding is done. This is because once a child is born, he or she is named after a deceased member of the community that upheld good morals. By calling them these names they believe that the departed continued to exist through these newborns.

Cows were among the animals that were taken as dowry. Dowry itself was referred to as 'chiombe' meaning cows. A man who married many women could have many children and hence was respected in the community. The animal that was valued in the payment of dowry was a cow. For instance, the groom's family could be told to pay five cows, two goats and one sheep. This showed the value they had for this animal compared to others.

In this community, all children belonged to the father. After dowry had been paid, that was a sign that a woman had been assimilated and all she had including names were for her husband. The expected results were children. Without the dowry paid for a woman then there could be no children in that case. This was the agreed procedure and also biologically the two were crucial for child bearing.

Comparing children to cows laid emphasis on the value that this community had for children the same way it valued dowry. This metaphor passed the message effectively than if another one was used. It was also used to show that it was through payment of dowry that a woman could be married and bear children. If it were not for the dowry 'chiombe' that was paid according to the traditional norms children could not exist since this animal purchased a woman.

Momenyi boko noyonga Gisore.

(One who can stay with inlaws is like Gisore.)

This proverb compared someone who could stay with his or her in laws with one of the community members called Gisore. Gisore is a name referred to a man who was well known because of his immutable behaviors hence was used as an example to insist on good morals.

'Boko' is home for a married woman. A married man calls home for his wife 'boko'. This is a respected place according to norms of the Abagusii. It is not a place that is to be frequently visited especially by the man who is married there. This was due to the high standards of respect that are required especially to the parents. When a man goes to 'boko', he is supposed to be careful since it is easy to mess due to the set norms that are to be followed. There are various foods he cannot eat while there like chicken; various types of clothes couldn't be worn while there hence staying in such a place needed one's carefulness on actions and morals.

Gisore, a name that referred to men in this community is an effective metaphor in relaying this proverb's message. This is because, its men who married in this community hence they are the only ones capable of having a place called 'boko' (Home where

he marries). From the known history on his morals he is known to be a man that had good morals.

This metaphor was effective in relaying the message of good morals. This is because Gisore was one of the members of this community hence they interacted daily at all levels of life and were conversant with his moral uprightness. Comparing somebody who could stay where he married with Gisore showed how effective it was for one to uphold good morals especially in areas it was needed. The metaphor therefore showed precisely the importance of upholding good morals by using one of them as an example.

Abakungu nabaya ne emewa ayabasaririe.

(Women are good it's only their mouths that make them bad.)

This proverb compared the badness of a woman with a part in a human body the mouth. This part is used for various functions one of them being to communicate. The day to day interrelations of human beings entail communication hence it plays an essential role in the normal continuation of human life.

This part of the body is well known and its functions in the human body. It was used metaphorically in an effective way to show that all that comes from our mouths could play a role in building good or bad relations with people we relate with daily.

The mouth was also used to lay emphasis that a woman could look good physically but what came from her mouth for example gossip could make people to hate her. Mouth is the only part of the body that can be used to weigh ones goodness or badness since it reveals what is in somebody's heart hence it was an effective metaphor used to weigh the goodness of a woman among the Abagusii. The mouth has been personified to emphasize in importance on the proverb, that anything coming from it can either build or destroy human relations. This assisted in building the required picture of events.

Reference to animals

In this category the researcher analyzed proverbs with metaphors that compared human beings, human situations and their actions with different animals like dogs, cows, elephants, sheep, python, bees and hens. Parts of a human body were also compared to animals like the stomach. Human actions were also compared to those of animals like swearing. The metaphors were analyzed according to the context in which they were used.

Gotiana mono nkwagorera mbori mato.

(Swearing a lot is like plucking leaves for a goat.)

A goat is an animal that is reared for milk and meat which are food for human beings. This animal enjoys eating leaves in relation to other feeds like barks of trees. Swearing is the act of saying some words with surety that they will happen. Most of the times it involves the name of God all anything that is believed to have same powers like God to show that what is said is true and will come to pass. One could swear to do good or bad. This act was a taboo especially if what was being sworn for were lies. They believed that a punishment was administered mysteriously to someone who swore lies for instance could be struck by thunder. Someone could be heard saying, 'Aki Nyasaye oyomo, onye ninche akorama komochierande mong'ente.' (I swear before the living God if it's me she is abusing I will strangle him/her.)

According to the context of this proverb, swearing here entailed something bad. As one uttered words while swearing on what you were to do for the opponent, you were making it easier for him to attack you since it could be heard and known. The same applies to when you plucked leaves for the goat it could enjoy eating since you reduced its task of getting them from the branches hence made work easier for it. The opponent also enjoyed when one swore since she could get ideas on how to counter attack him.

Comparing the act of swearing with that of plucking leaves for a goat showed precisely how work was made easier. In that as you swore you gave ideas to your opponent hence making it easier for him just as plucking leaves for a goat the only task that was remaining was eating. The action of plucking leaves for the goat was used metaphorically to warn the Abagusii against swearing unnecessarily.

Enda n'esese.

(A stomach is a dog..)

The stomach is part of the body whose function is to preserve food from the mouth that gives the body energy to carry out various activities. For the body to have energy the stomach has to receive food after a specific period of the time.

A dog is animal that is reared for various domestic purposes the main one being to provide security. This animal has a unique character of being forgetful when compared to other domestic animals. It is believed that this animal forgets very fast after something happens. For instance, it can take food like ugali after feeding and getting satisfied, bury's the rest for future use. It's unique that even after it gets hungry it will not remember of the food it buried but will go elsewhere looking for food.

In the context of this proverb, the stomach that is referred to here is that of a human being. The

stomach is compared to the dog because both of them have a common character of forgetting. The stomach after feeding, will forget after a while and require more when one feels hungry. This is normal biologically since the body requires energy to carry out daily activities. That's why this community has a sequence of eating, breakfast before they take off to their duties, lunch and supper after the day's activities. The tendency of taking three meals according to them is due to the forgetfulness of the stomach. The stomach is personified to be able to forget like human beings in order to show precisely the need after a while.

Comparing the stomach to a dog clearly explained the act of forgetfulness, hence relaying the message that anything little needed to be preserved for tomorrow. This is because even if the stomach was given food after every minute it could still need when a new day began. This also motivated the Abagusii to work hard since they knew at no point the stomach could stop asking for their sweat.

Bana bake nchoke nyeregani.

(A young child is a proactive bee.)

This community compared young children to a fast moving bee from one place to another. A bee is an insect that chose to stay voluntarily in a beehive on a tree or was reared at home for domestic purposes. It fed on nectar from the flowers hence it had to move fast from one place to another in search of the flowers. Its movement is fast especially when looking for nectar. This insect is also known to be hard working and cooperative especially in beehive building and honey production.

The proactive bee has been compared to a young child. When human beings are in their early stages of life, they tend to be proactive in all their deeds. They are also active in search of their daily bread when compared to when they grow old because of problems like deteriorating health status and old age that make them weak hence costing their activeness.

This community therefore compared young children to a proactive bee to instill in them the need to be haste in all that they did since the community's economy relied on them. They therefore needed to be active since laziness was an unexpected character in them.

Comparing these children with a proactive bee portrayed vividly their expected ways of working than if another metaphor was used. Therefore the way a bee could move from one place to another very fast in search of nectar, these children were also supposed emulate the same in all that they engaged in since the growth of economy depended on them.

Reference to tools

In this category the researcher looked at proverbs with metaphors that compared human beings and their actions with different tools. The tools used however are the ones that they used on their daily activities hence they effectively represented him and his actions. The (tools) were for instance, axe, pillar, skin and (leso).

Tangori baba abe egesire kegotua natieri naateri roiko.

(I wish my mother was an axe that gets blunt I sharpen and use in splitting firewood.)

In this proverb a mother is compared to an axe. This is domestic use that is used for cutting trees for various purposes. A panga is also used for the same but what does it more efficiently is an axe.

After firewood is split it was used as a source of fire for cooking. The mother makes sure the tasks are accomplished according to the task specialization of this community. A mother is compared to an axe a tool that could be used and get blunt after a while then get filed and regain its sharpness. It's a tool that could stay for long.

This metaphor is used effectively to show how this community valued the mother figure and wished she could stay if possible forever(not get old) like an axe, so as to continue accomplishing her tasks in the community.

Food that was cooked using firewood that was split using the axe gave a mother an upper hand in relating with children when compared to a father who according to task specialization could not associate with this tool except where he couldn't avoid keeping away from kitchen tasks. This metaphor is effective since a mother is compared associated with it in her daily activities.

Comparing a mother to an axe showed the situation of human weakness in terms of death, in that if it were not for death everybody could wish to have their mother alive forever.

Reference to situations

This category compared different situations in life with human beings. For instance, problems were compared with heavy rains, devil to unseen situation, easiness to brightness, human beings and the moon and slavery to strength. Many of these situations that formed metaphors were imaginary and relayed the messages according to the context they were used.

Moibori omino, nkerecha kere enyasi.

(A co-wife, is a devil on the wall)

In this proverb, a co-wife is compared to a devil and not only a devil but one on the wall of the house. The Abagusii tradition allows a man to marry more than one wife. It was believed that anybody who married many wives was rich and respectable in the society. Most of the times when a family had more than one wife there were wrangles among them due to the competition for the husband. In most cases either of them could feel neglected by the husband and believed this was caused by the fellow co-wife. When such circumstances occurred either of them wished the other evil like death so that one of them could remain to possess all that was owned by the husband. If by bad luck either wife's child died even if it was a natural death, the first suspect of the cause was the co-wife. The same applied even when a child was sick. This increased the level of hatred.

With regard to that, each one of the wives was viewed as a devil by the other was a devil to the other. A devil is an imaginary being that is believed to cause evil deeds to human beings. A wall is part of the house. The way a wall remained part of the house until it was demolished the co-wife was also part of the family as long as she was alive. This was due to the traditional norms that did not allow divorce without precise evidence of committing a crime.

Comparing a co-wife with a devil on the wall portrayed the level of hatred that existed among the two. This is because each of them saw the other as the cause to the problems they faced in their family life. The use of the metaphor a devil on the wall, built an image of problems that could never end that's way they were permanently on the wall where they could be seen daily, meaning you were to stay with your co-wife until death part the two of you, and even after death members of the community could still remember she was your co-wife. This metaphor therefore relayed the message effectively than any other that could be used.

Reference to crops

In this category two proverbs were analyzed. The plant that is referred to here is a tree. The metaphor is used appropriately to relay the message.

Omote nigo ogokumbwa kore omoke/omore.

(A tree can only be bent when young.)

Abagusii being a community that specialized in farming planted trees. Trees were planted for various purposes, some serve as firewood, others are planted as a way of earning an income. Many of the purposes served by trees require them to have an upright posture. When trees are planted many together as they grow they lean on each other resulting to a curved shape. It is the responsibility of the farmer to prune and remove the weaklings then straighten them to continue growing uprightly.

A tree in this case is compared to a child. Mandi [9] and Otiso [10] observed that a child was to be rectified morally while young because it could be difficult to do the same once they grew up. It is a parental responsibility to ensure this even though in this community it is a collective responsibility for all parents. Regardless of this, when a child turned out to be indisciplined the biological parent was put to task.

The way the farmer ensured a tree grew taking an upright posture, as parents were also supposed to instill good morals to their children as they grew up. This is because it could be difficult to rectify the posture of a tree once it had grown since it could break in the process. The same way a child could not see any value of administering good morals if it was not instilled in them as they grew up.

Comparing a child to a tree in terms of how they grew explained precisely the act of enlightening. It enlightened parents in that just as they did for trees as they grew to ensure they took an upright posture, they were to do the same to children to ensure they grew up morally upright. This metaphor relayed the message of enlightening effectively than if any other could be used.

Reference to food

In this category the food that was used metaphorically is meat. The act of a piece of meat sticking between teeth is used to explain the level of unity among members of this community hence relaying the message effectively according to the context it is used.

Ekianyabamo nyama yachire rino.

(For relatives is like a piece of meat between the teeth.)

In this proverb meat between the teeth is used metaphorically to refer to evils for instance quarrels, or anything that can cause disunity among relatives. A tooth is part of a human body used to chew food before it is swallowed. They are arranged in order close to one another and they assist each other in chewing. When a piece of meat sticks in between the teeth it causes discomfort but it cannot stop them from chewing. The way the teeth are arranged close to one another and even how they assist each other when it comes to chewing, is the same way most relatives are in this community. They assist each other in all tasks of life since they are related by blood hence causing disunity between them may be an up task.

Human weaknesses like greed and wrangles could prevail among them and disunite them even though the disunity could not last long before they are reunited again. Anybody who comes in when this wrangles exist to worsen them got ashamed after a while after discovering they returned in their united

state. The same applied to the teeth in that when a piece of meat sticks between two of them, it causes discomfort while once it was removed the two continue chewing food and life continues normally.

Comparing the relationship among relatives with that of teeth metaphorically showed how the community valued unity among its members in all life situations. The metaphor of meat between teeth was used to show human weaknesses that even prevailed among relatives even though they did not disunite them completely hence anybody who came in to worsen the situation could not succeed. This metaphor explained the themes of love and unity effectively than if any other was used.

CONCLUSION

Language goes hand in hand with communication. The two aspects interrelate with one another. Proverbs are among the key aspects used in oral literature to pass values of any community from one generation to another. Proverbs use various stylistic features to assist in relaying the intended information effectively. In the Ekegusii proverbs, metaphors have been used widely to assist in relaying the message effectively as portrayed in the above analyzed proverbs. Metaphors used in these proverbs matched the meanings of the proverbs. The metaphor selected to be used in a proverb relied on the context of the meaning of the proverb. In other proverbs, metaphors portrayed themselves one on one either on how they were stated or by relating with the meaning. In others the metaphor was portrayed through other figures of speech like vivid description, imagery and hyperbole. This shows there is no proverb in this community that relayed its message without using a metaphor since most of them compared one situation to the other while relaying the intended morals.

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