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## Application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the Analysis of Word Metaphors: A Case of Wamitilas Plays

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**Abstract:** Metaphors are an ambiguous and complex genre in Kiswahili Literature which slips into the forms of other literary genres and figurative language. This is portrayed in their definitions and manner of classification. Although metaphors are classified as a genre of sayings in Kiswahili oral literature their use goes above and below the saying. Kyallo Waddi Wamitila is one of the scholars of literature who besides having classified metaphors has also written literary works including plays. In his plays, words have been used to convey information metaphorically in context. This article shows the application of the conceptual metaphor theory in the analysis of word metaphors in Wamitilas plays. Though there are also other types of metaphors based on genre and use of figurative language such as play metaphors, narrative metaphors, poetic metaphors, songs, conversational metaphors, proverbial metaphors, simile metaphors, metonymy and quibbles.

**Keywords:** metaphor, word, conceptual

### INTRODUCTION

A metaphor is one of the genres of literature that has shown ambiguity with regard to its concept, scope and complexity. It is defined as an imaginative way of describing something else which is the same in a particular way [1], it's a figure of speech in which a word or a phrase is applied to an object or an action to which it is not literary applicable [2]. In this paper the metaphor is used to refer to the *fumbo* as used in Kiswahili literature which is described and classified as a genre of saying in oral literature [3, 4].

The word *fumbo* is a noun derived from a swahili verb *fumba* which means 'to veil'. *Fumbo* hence literally means to hide and is therefore used in this paper to refer to a text with a hidden meaning. Different scholars however have defined the metaphor in various ways. According to [5], in reference to [6] a metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from genus and applied to species or from species and applied to genus or from one species to another or else by analogy. The use of the word 'term' in this definition points at 'word metaphors'. In essence, word metaphors use ordinary words to refer to other objects in context hence developing contextualized meaning. According to [6] metaphors are usually new and unknown as they apply new words on totally different concepts. Metaphors have also been defined as words with hidden meanings, as such they call for further explanation [4].

Though there are numerous types of metaphors in language and literature, this work focuses on word metaphors. [7] identifies two types of metaphors namely riddles and word metaphors. He states that

riddles are complex metaphors which can be metaphors made of extra ordinary words which present complex problems which are difficult to interpret. Word metaphors on the other hand are based on words with two or more meanings. In this context the words have a hidden meaning hence qualify to get into the category of *mafumbo* as in Kiswahili literature.

Metaphors have also been defined as an element of grammar. This way metaphors become an aspect of ordinary language usage. In his analysis of the changes in students' second language use, [8] identifies linguistic metaphors. He asserts that students used pronouns, verbs and adjectives with hidden meanings in their sentences. The students' texts showed different types of metaphors which helped them to express their ideas consistently. In his study though linguistic, he states and classifies linguistic metaphors which were literally words. There are also onomatopaeic metaphors which occur in form of single words used among people of a common culture [9]. The above

mentioned scholars hence allude to the existence of word metaphors.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the use of word metaphors in Wamitilas plays using the conceptual theory of metaphor. In doing so, this article redefines the metaphor as any text with a hidden meaning so that the concept of the metaphor is not just confined to the saying as is the case in Kiswahili oral literature. The parer is therefore guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify word metaphors from Kyallo Wamitilas plays
2. To explain the contextual meaning of the words as used in Wamitilas plays
3. To present the word metaphors in relation to the conceptual theory of the metaphor.

The scope of this study includes words which have been used metaphorically. Such words have in some instances appeared as phrases to bring out a different concept as intended by the writer. The outcome of this study is believed to provide a good text for the study of the metaphor to help in the redefinition and reclassification of the metaphor .

The paper is guided by the conceptual theory of the metaphor [10]. [11] asserts that a metaphor originally referred to a word, a phrase or a sentence today it refers to various forms in the conceptual system. This theory is opposed to the distinction between literary and ordinary language and asserts that even the ordinary language can be metaphoric. According to [11], the following are some of the characteristics of the metaphor:

1. Our system of conventional metaphor is alive in the same sense that our system of grammatical and phonological rules are.
2. Our metaphor system is central to our understanding of experience and the way we act on that experience.
3. Metaphor is mostly based on correspondences in our experience rather than on similarity.
4. The metaphor system plays a major role in both grammar and lexicon of a language.

According to [13], characteristics of the metaphor in the conceptual metaphor theory are similar to the knowledge in philosophy and literature and also the general understanding of knowledge. As such we expect to find the use of metaphors in ordinary language and at all linguistic levels from the simple lexims to the most complex texts.

The primary tenet of the conceptual metaphor theory is that metaphors are a matter of thought and not

merely of language [12 ]. The foundational argument of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) applied in this paper can be summarised and termed the conventionality argument, the conceptual structure argument, the embodiment argument[13,11]. These three tenets guided the analysis of word metaphors. The conventionality argument holds that metaphors are pervasively and routinely used in everyday language in most if not all human languages. The conceptual structure argument holds that linguistic metaphors reflect how concepts are organized in our minds hence we not only describe but also understand one thing in terms of another by transferring knowledge about one thing to another. The embodiment argument holds that source concepts are concrete and posses some kind of bodily basis while target concepts are abstract and cannot be directly experienced or perceived. Hence metaphorical processes typically goes from more concrete to more abstract and not vice versa. This three tenets were useful in the analysis of the word metaphors.

## METHODOLOGY

The study embraced the analytical research design while its study area was the genre of play in Kiswahili literature. The study which was basically library based targeted literary language in Wamitilas plays. Saturation sampling was used to select Wamitilas plays. All the four texts were selected for analysis thus *Wingu la Kupita* (1999); *Pango* (2003); *Seserumbe* (2006) and *Sumu ya Bafe* (2006). Saturation sampling largely depends on the exhaustion of the target population or meaningful data [14]. According to [15] the sampling technique is also not stated. Secondary data was collected through document review and content analysis using a table of occurrence.

Purposive sampling was used to select word metaphors for analysis. Since in this study the term metaphor was used as a synonym for the swahili word *fumbo*, it refers to any text with a hidden meaning especially used to draw a comparison between one thing and another. Although various forms were evident, this paper focuses on word metaphors. The identification of word metaphors hence considered words used to draw a comparison metaphorically. This hence calls for interpretation of the intended meaning. A qualitative data analysis was carried out with the unit of analysis being metaphoric texts, word metaphors were also identified.

The selected metaphors were purposively categorized based on the existing genres. Word metaphors however did not fall into any of the genre categories and were hence classified as independent vocabularie which compose the word metaphors in this study. The analysis of this words was based on three tenets of the conceptual metaphor theory namely:

1. The conceptual structure argument
2. Embodiment argument
3. The conventionality argument.

### The conceptual structure argument

Metaphors are a reflection of how concepts are organized in our mind. They help us to understand one thing in terms of another by transferring the knowledge we have about one thing to another. According to [10], we not only describe but also understand one thing in terms of another by transferring or mapping knowledge about one concept (the source concept) to another (the target concept).

In the play *Pango* the following metaphors were evident:

#### Dirt

'Dirt in the cave' (*uchafu wa pango*) is a metaphor used to refer to people who don't deserve to be leaders. The cave in this respect is metaphorically used to refer to the country. Ngwese in the play compares himself to a storm. He tells his wife Sakina that he is the hurricane storm that sweeps the dirt in the cave. (Pg.50) Two word metaphors evident in this statement are 'dirt' and 'storm'. The storm here metaphorically represents Ngwese.

#### Forest

The forest is used to refer to Ngwese, the main character who is vying for the leadership of the cave (the country). His greatest opponent, Katango who is a young woman faces a lot of opposition and is harassed by Ngwese and his allies. Her grandfather, Babu on seeing her desperate situation advises her by saying, "Do not fear the forest my grandchild on seeing it has darkness" (pg.58). *Darkness* is also used metaphorically to refer to the evil and wickedness of Ngwese. 'Darkness' and 'forest' are therefore word metaphors.

In the play *Wingu la Kupita* father and mother are used metaphorically.

#### Father (Baba)

The word father is metaphorically used to refer to a leader. The writer however gives three identities of father in his presentation. The first concept arising from the word 'father' is the president of a country. 'Bosi' (a Swahili adaptation of the English word 'boss'), a character in the play gets annoyed of Jaribosi's position of opposing the eviction of the commoners living near the game parks without giving them alternative places of residence. Bosi hence tells Jaribosi, "Father knows about tomorrow because no one understands this country and its people. He is the father and the mother. So who are you to question a leader of that kind" (pg.45). As the president of the nation he has

ultimate powers and is rarely seen. In another instance, the boy (Mvulana) a school going child asks who gave instructions that new books should be written, Mother answers, "It's a big thing that lives up there and is seen on rare occasions" the boy (Mvulana) adds "like father" (pg.5).

Finally it comes out that even if he leaves his position and another one is elected, the father elect remains like the former. This is evident in Jaribosi's statement to the children (the common man) that their father died the previous year. Their mother however tells them, "But now you have another father who is just like your first father" (pg.2).

The second concept is a leader of an organization or an institution such as a family, company and boards of management of institutions. In the conversation between Jaribosi and the inmate concerning the wasted donor funds which led to the donors demanding a financial report. The inmates says, "...A committee had to be set up by our leader whom we all called father" Jaribosi in turn says "where I worked we were led by a manager who was called by the same name." (pg.35). When teachers and pupils are attacked by the police, Jaribosi explains to Mother that the police were brought by the chief and the chairman of the board who "is father since recently" as explained by the boy. (pg.72)

The word father is also used metaphorically to refer to irresponsible leaders. Although the public is faced with a lot of problems and difficult situations, no explanation is given because the leaders are unreachable. When the children are instructed by their teacher to ask their father the questions they had, their mother tells them, "Your father is not there, he has left" (pg.2). Although he be in power, father cannot offer solutions to the problems facing the community like lack of jobs. The girl (msichana) says, if father went up in the sky, "why can't he push the clouds away so that our grains can dry" (pg. 3) 'Going up to the cloud' in this case means ascending to power.

Although he is a leader, father is selfish and care less about the public (the children). When the children cry of hunger, their mother complains that their father has eaten the food that was available. She says, "Their father has eaten the food that was available, that is how fathers are today" (pg.13) Also, "Someone just thinking about himself, that is how fathers are nowadays" (pg.20).

They are hypocrites. The inmate explains that the donors insisted on seeing the reports of the financial accounting committee because, "...they know what, father knows how to bite and blow up" (pg.37).

Mother (mama)

Mother on the other hand is a word metaphor referring to leaders of lower cader. These leaders are responsible although they have no power hence they cannot meet the needs of the citizens (the children).

In the play *Sumu ya Bafe* we find:

Owl (bundi)

An owl is a kind of a bird from the order Strigiformes which are distinctive and fascinate birders and non birders alike [21]. There are many myths and superstitions about an owl. Most african communities believe that if one saw an owl or heard its hoot someone was going to die. The Swahili people of East Africa believe owls brings illness to children while the Zulu of South Africa know the owl as the witchdoctors' bird[22]. In this play the word 'owl' is metaphorically used by Mapepe to refer to a critic of his leadership, a young boy by the name *Mwapinduzi*. This is a Swahili word derived from the noun *mapinduzi* which means 'revolution'. When Mwapinduzi says 'the puffadder is not dead and is still alive' Mapepe is angered and refers to him as an owl saying "*When an owl appears to sing its songs of grief it is not cheered*" pg.6 The death of the puffadder is metaphorically used to refer to the new beginning of freedom with the leadership of Mapepe, a fact which Mwapinduzi refuses.

In this metaphor, the concept of an owl as understood in the African cultures is transferred to Mwapinduzi as an evil individual

In the play *Seserumbe*, sheep (kondoo) and goat (mbuzi) are equally used metaphorically. The sheep are the good people while the goats are the bad and evil people. This metaphor has its origin from the bible very early in the development of the Christian church. In the parable of the sheep and the goats [16], sheep are loyal. They follow the son of God, metaphorically as a shepherd. Goats on the other hand are disobedient and difficult. Goats are hence used as a metaphor for sin. This words are used by Seserumbe the minister as he warns his daughter Maribel against joining the workers union (the goats) since she is from the leadership class (the sheep). The word metaphors here are 'sheep' and 'goat'.

In the above analysis of the word metaphors, the concept of the words are used to help understand the things they represent metaphorically. In this case the word is the source concept used to help us understand the target concept [10]. The word metaphors are hence a reflection of how concepts are organized in our minds.

### **The embodiment argument**

Metaphors are used to draw a comparison between abstract and concrete concepts. According to [10], source concepts are often concrete while target concepts are abstract. Our understanding of metaphors

therefore largely depends on the physical environment in which they function. Word metaphors in Wamitilas' plays also portray the same character.

In the play *Pango*, the words 'spear', 'ogre' and 'game' have been used to represent abstract concepts metaphorically.

Spear (mkuki)

The spear being a weapon used for thrusting and throwing has been used to mean the oppression and evil conducted by the leaders on the throne. When Grandfather (Babu) is informed about the misuse of *Pango* (the countrys' throne) by his grandchildren Susa and Sota, he is annoyed by the fact that Katango could not speak after the humiliation. He says, "*How does a shield become a spear for thrusting*", (pg 70). The spear represents the oppression and the shield represent the leadership.

Ogre (zimwi)

The ogre represents neocolonialists and oppressors of the developing nations like Pango. Political oppression during the 20<sup>th</sup> century places ogres in satires where they morphed into bullying governments [17]. The giant threatens to bankrupt and bring down the economy of the nations. While referring to the 'growing words' Sota says, "*...They will grow and become big words that will spread in Pango. The words will bite a lot, they will grow and become ogres that will eat everything. Perhaps those ogres are the ones that will finish our honey!!!*" (uk79) Honey in this case is used to refer to the wealth of the nation. In this example, ogre and honey are word metaphors. According to [18], 'growing words' is metaphorically used to refer to the economic growth of the western nations, their increase in numbers and continued oppression of the African countries by upholding neo colonialism. (pg.78)

Game in the cave (mchezo pangoni)

'Game in the cave' refers to the general corruption and evils carried out in the country by leaders like Ngwese. Although the children ( the common citizens) including Katango (the young, female political candidate) are blamed for playing in the cave (being corrupt) it is finally discovered that Ngwese the leader is the one responsible. This finally leads to his arrest and removal from power.

In the play *Wingu la Kupita*:

The cloud (*wingu*)

The word 'cloud' denotes various meanings contextually. First, it is an oppressive leader with a lot of power bestowed on him like in the case of a president of a nation. Due to his oppressive tendencies the citizens do not get their rights. They however believe that his leadership is short lived. The children in

theis song sing, “ *A big cloud, black and heavy will pass, the sun will shine, the water will dry, and we shall bask in the*” (pg. 4). If he does not leave the leadership, he has to be removed, Jaribosi says, “ *All clouds do not pass on their own, others have to be made to pass*” (pg.73). The leader is finally removed from power as is evident in the song at the end of the play, “*Cloud, cloud...blocks the sun, deprives us of heat cloud, brings us darkness cloud, it shall pass cloud, we shall make it to pass cloud.*”pg.73

Secondly, its used to refer to the general problems facing the citizens. These include discrimination on the basis of socio economic class, embezzlement of public funds, illegal trade, kidnapping, poor educational policies, and oppression of members of the opposition. All these problems however are a ‘passing cloud’ ie. are short lived. While speaking to her friend ‘Woman’ about her stubborn husband, Mother says, “...*Your case can be said to be a passing cloud*”(pg.22). Mother however is seen to be heart broken since the husband has been in this state for a while. She says, “*If they are passing clouds, then they have been passing for a long time. Passing or not passing!*”(pg.22) Finally Mother agrees with the whole idea as sang by the children. She says, “*Nothing lasts forever, its now Im starting to believe the words of the children that whatever becomes passes, even the cloud! Nothing* ”(pg.59),She later repeats this statement. (pg.73). In this metaphor the ‘cloud’ metaphorically represents problems which a short like the passing cloud.

In *Sumu ya Bafe*:

The puff adder (*Bafe*)

In the play *Sumu ya Bafe* (The puff adders poison), The puff adder is a colonialist who invaded African nations. He was finally driven away when Africa got independence. According to the character Mapindu (a Swahili word for revolutionist), the story of the puff adder was narrated to him by ‘Bamkongwe’ (a swahili word for old father derived from two words; baba(father) and mkongwe(old). Mapindu says that Bamkongwe “...*took part in the process of killing the puff adder that invaded our land...*” pg.21. Later on they were not rewarded.

The puff adder also refers to oppressive leaders who uphold neocolonialism. Also its been used to refer to highly industrialized and powerful nations of the world. Such nations oppress the developing countries in various fields like education, business and lending institutions by putting tough conditions which cause a lot of suffering to the citizens. Mapepes’ children Dennis and Kamil talk of this matter as follows:

Dennis: Mother is it true that America is a powerful nation in the worl?

Kamila: Yees, it sits upon all other countries!

Dennis: Like that snake on the wall?

Kamila: ...Yeah! But that is not a snake, it is a scale puff edder.

Spit (spitting of the puff udder)

Spitting of the puff udder refers to the leadership tacticts used by the leaders. Two characters in the play: Kanda and Tantan – Belwa speak about the need for the public to be awakened. Tantan – Belwa says, “...*Talk of the puff udder spitting on them!Leadership today requires craftiness I tell you. When you see an enemy you swell your neck. If he moves closer you release the jets.Do you think we would live if people had vision?Be it in institutions,news stations, schools, Yes Mapepe has the tricks!*” (pg.33). This sentence also means that the puff udders saliva blinds people hence denying them of the ability to see the evil done to them.This is why they sing about the death of the puff udder when it still lives.

Death (*death of puff adder*)

The death of the puff adder is the liberation of the society from the oppressive regime and the problems associated with it. Its also used to refer to the uprooting of the oppressive leaders. Mwapinduzi says the following about the burial ceremony of the puff udder, “*A huge crowd accompanied it with cheers and joy, it sang with affection the songs of terror, the dirges I mean! The crowd that congragulated the sun rise of a new beginning*” (pg. 2). Mtu I (1<sup>st</sup> Person) on the other hand says, “...*This is a ceremony of a new birth by burying the puff udder!...*”(pg.3)

Burial of the the scale puff adder

‘Burial of the scale puff adder’ is metaphorically used to refer to the trick against the citizens that freedom has been achieved. It’s a deception that evil and oppression is ended and that there is a new beginning that brings to an end all their problems. Contrary to this, the citizens still face a lot of problems such as lack of jobs, harrasement of businessmen and closure of their businesses. After her father lost his job , Benta asserts, “*Mwapinduzi says they just buried a scale puff adder...*”(pg.10)

In *Seserumbe* the word metaphors revealed are :

The wind (*upepo*)

The wind refers to the state of affairs in the society. Kizito says “The wind that blows nowadays is full of suspicion , its hard to know who to trust. (Pg.74)

Chicken of status(*kuku wa hadhi*)

It is used to refer to status or power. Seserumbes mother Mamkuu advises her son to accept the wave of change in his life. She says, ‘Your chicken of status has been bitten by the rain of change. Her

feathers are stuck on her body. You must accept that' (pg.6)

In the above examples, concrete objects are metaphorically used to represent abstract concepts hence the knowledge about the objects is transferred and used to understand the abstract concepts.

### The conventionality argument

Metaphors are pervasively and routinely used in everyday language. Their use is not confined to artistic language as in creative writing. Due to this character of the metaphor they become part of the day to day language use hence are found in most texts whether oral or written. This tenet was used to show how word metaphors are evident in all the analysed texts hence showing how they are routinely used. Apart from the above examples that show the existence of metaphors in the analysed texts, the following word metaphors are also evident:

In the play *Pango*

The 'cat' is used to refer to Ngwese or a powerful leader while the 'rat' is used to refer to Katango. Ngwese says to his wife Sakina, "*Listen, foolishness and lack of experience are the things that make the rat to think that he can compete with the cat*" uk. 51

'Demon' is a colonialist, 'a secret' is education, while 'the educated' are the opponents of the existing leadership.

'Well' and 'water' are public resources [18]

In the play *Wingu la kupita* the following word metaphors are used:

'Spirits of Bepar' are the leaders who uphold neocolonialism.

'Children' are the citizens who are weak and can be manipulated.

'Sun' is the government resources

'Children' are the common citizens who are faced with a lot of problems.

'Passing of the cloud' is a temporary state of affairs. The phrase is used to refer to the problems and the oppressive leaders who are said to be temporary.

In the play *Sumu ya Bafe*, other word metaphors are:

'The puff udders poison' meaning the general problems in the society which come as a result of poor leadership.

'The puff udders children' are the leaders who uphold neocolonialism together with their puppets like the police

'Army ant' are the ruled class. They need unity so as to obtain freedom from oppression.

'Gulag' is slavery. 'Gulag' is a Russian word used to refer to a slave camp during the rule of Stalin 1930-1950 [19].

In the play *Seserumbe*, the following word metaphors are evident:

'Shoes' are the poor people of low status in the society.

'Water and oil'; 'cotton and fire' are metaphorically used to refer to a relationship full of misunderstanding.

'Puff adder' a powerful leader or a dangerous person who is capable of doing evil.

'The ear' is the ruled while the 'head' is the ruler.

The existence of word metaphors in all the texts is proof that metaphors are part of our day today use of language. Others are so conventional and are used in a similar way in most cultures. This situation hence defines the conventionality argument.

### CONCLUSION

Though there are many types of metaphors proposed by earlier scholars such as [3,9,7,20] for example riddles, word metaphors, simple, complex, proverbial, abstract and word metaphors, there are also other classifications. According to [23] word metaphors fall under the vocabulary criterion. Others are narrative metaphors, poetic metaphors, songs and conversational metaphors based on their genre; proverbial metaphors, simile metaphors, metonymy and quibbles based on the use of figurative language. This classification generally takes into consideration the changing trends in the form and concept of the metaphor. However the word metaphors still retains the earlier concept of the metaphor being a word, a phrase or a sentence [11]. It is hence clear that word metaphors can be analysed using the conceptual argument, embodiment argument and the conventionality argument of the conceptual metaphor theory.

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