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Symbolism of a Journey in Selected Ekegusii Proverbs

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Abstract

This essay examines how a journey is symbolically used to express different ideas in selected Ekegusii proverbs. The study analysed the forms of imagery used in the representation of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. Further, the study investigated the symbolic meanings of the journey in the selected proverbs. Data for the study comprised twenty-two proverbs making reference to a journey. The proverbs were obtained from a purposively selected collection of Ekegusii proverbs; Atemba (2011), *Ekegusii Wisdom Revisited*. A qualitative research design that involves a self-interpretive reading method was used to identify and select proverbs making reference to a journey. The acquired data were analysed using the Stylistics theory. The analysis revealed that various forms of imagery are used in the representation of the journey in the selected proverbs. The study also established that a journey is symbolically used to represent human activities, conditions, situations, and conditions. The study concluded that the journey in Ekegusii proverbs serves both as a stylistic and educational tool.

Keywords: *Ekegusii, imagery, journey, proverbs, symbolism*



1.0 Introduction

This study examines the symbolic representation of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. In this light, the focus of the study is on Ekegusii proverbs. The Gusii community is a Bantu group living in the western part of Kenya. According to Keragori (1995) the factors that determine the grouping of the Gusii among the Bantu are mainly their culture and language. Their language is called Ekegusii. Akama and Maxon (2006) call the language Gusii. Proverbs which are the focus of this study are called *emebayeno* in Ekegusii. According to Ayioka (2014) proverbs are part of 'the hidden ways of the Abagusii'. These are coded expressions of art Abagusii used to preserve their values, identity and important historical realities. Okemwa (2012) explains that proverbs among the Abagusii are mostly pronounced by the elderly to reflect deep knowledge and experience. In this light, Ekegusii proverbs belong to the category of the important traditional art found in most communities across the world. Proverbs according to Dundes (1977) are the oldest form of folklore found among peoples of the world. As an expression of their significance, Mieder (2005) posits that proverbs have long been a subject of interest among scholars right from the times of Aristotle. Much of this interest is manifest in the various attempts made by scholars in a bid to define a proverb. Finnegan (1970) defines a proverb as a saying in no more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. The idea of fixed form mean that grammatical units in proverbs cannot be replaced by other units. Norrick (1985) emphasizes this idea by defining a proverb as self-contained, pithy traditional expression with didactic content and fixed poetic form. The term pithy means that the fixed expressions are full of meaning. Further, Whiting (1983) defines a proverb as an expression which owing to its birth to people, testifies its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth in a homely language, often ornamented however, with alliteration and rhyme. In addition, Dorson (1972) adds that a proverb is an art with wit, sarcasm, humour and poetic value of language usage and have a quality imagery. These descriptions of a proverb demonstrate that proverbs have a quality of imagery, have contextual applications in society and stylistically they are characterised with figurative language. The purpose of this study is to discuss how imagery is used in the symbolic representation of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. Cohen (1973) defines imagery as a direct sense of appeal, a figurative of speech, or both which lead a reader by a process of association to combine at least two elements inherent in the figure. In addition, Preminger (1974) describes imagery as images produced in the mind by language, whose words and statements may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions or sense impressions. Further, Finnegan (1970) explains that African proverbs are a rich source of imagery from which other forms can draw. This

study attempts to analyse the imagery in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey as part of African proverbs. In the analysis the study aims to explain the various forms of imagery used to evoke the image of a journey in the selected proverbs and establish the symbolic meanings of the journey in the proverbs.

2.0 Problem statement

A number of scholars have variously published on Ekegusii proverbs, however, there is no study known to the researcher which has critically examined symbolism of a journey in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. This paper therefore, seeks to examine how the symbolism of a journey is represented in selected Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. The study aims to establish the imagery used to develop the concept of a journey and the inherent symbolic meanings. As a consequence, the study investigates the various forms of imagery that are used in the representation of the journey in selected proverbs. Further, the study endeavours to establish the symbolic meanings of the journey in selected proverbs.

3.0 Literature Review

This study was interested in examining the symbolism of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. Thus proverbs constitute the primary data of the study. There are several academic works on proverbs. This attests to the scholarly interest in proverbs. According to Mieder (2005) research interest in proverbs dates back to the times of Sumerian Cuneiform tablets, Solomon and Aristotle who considered proverbs a survival of an older wisdom. There are two branches of proverb scholarship namely; paremiography which deals with the collection of proverbs and paremiology which deals with the study of proverbs. Commenting on paremiography, Liyong (1991) echoes Finnegan's (1970) observation that there are thousands of proverbs collected and published across the world. Various scholars developed interest in proverbs for different reasons as shown in their works. Archer (1931) was interested in the definition of a proverb. Archer defined a proverb as a saying current among folk. This definition was taken up and tested by paremiologist Wolfgang Mieder in 1985. Mieder's study revealed that proverbs are a universal phenomenon used to express moral truths in communities from generation to generation in a fixed manner. This means that a proverb as a genre of oral literature is both an important cultural tool used to express known universal truths in a particular community and a carrier of social expectations. On the other hand, scholars like Bascom (1965) and later Dundes (1980) were exclusively concerned with the functions of proverbs. In Africa most of the available materials on African oral literature such as Liyong (1972) *Popular culture of East Africa* and Okot (1974) *Horn of my Love* and Finnegan (1970)

African Oral Literature reveal that African communities Abagusii included emphasize the importance of proverbs as part of the people's oral art. Bukenya and Odaga (1994) emphasise the importance of African proverbs and state that proverbs are used to warn, caution, teach and entertain. In this respect, proverb studies are important in the understanding of a people's cultural values for as Pachocinski (1996) says proverbs enshrine much of the cultural heritage of the people, their traditions, history, wisdom and ethics. Proverbs are rich in terms language, style and content, this enables them to communicate a lot of meaning in a few words. According to Finnegan (19770) proverbs are marked by terseness of expression and a form that is different from the ordinary speech. This has attracted a number of studies as scholars try to investigate specific proverb meanings, style and functions of proverbs. In this endeavor we have such studies as; Soi, (2016) a stylistic and pragmatic study of Kipsgis proverbs. Kobia, (2016) a research in Swahili proverbs with reference to chicken metaphors and Barasa and Opande (2017) a study on Ekegusii and Lubukusu proverbs used in reference to women. These among other studies demonstrate that proverbs are multifunctional and flexible instruments of expression. Proverbs implicitly convey their messages through different techniques. These techniques involve the use of various technical linguistic features. The focus of the current study is on symbolism used in Ekegusii proverbs with a journey. According to Finnegan (1970) there is a close connection between the proverbs and the oral narratives. Therefore, in some situations a proverb is used to summarise a narrative. This study contends that a journey is both a structural and symbolic technique in Ekegusii proverbs which need to be investigated. In the words of Finnegan (1970) proverbs are an important oral art that represent the popular wisdom belonging to a culture which help us to learn the values and shared beliefs held by a community. In this respect, the significance of proverbs in any community is an important subject to study. According to Atemba (2011) proverbs as a spoken art are a major part of the Abagusii culture which reflect all aspects of their life. The current study aims to explore a specific aspect of everyday human life; the journey, in selected Ekegusii proverbs. The study appreciates that various studies have been done on Ekegusii proverbs such as Oseko (2017) on the effective use of metaphors in Ekegusii proverbs, Barasa & Opande (2017) on stereotypes on women and girls in Ekegusii and Lubukusu proverbs and Otiso (2016) cultural values and wisdom in Ekegusii proverbs among others. However, the problem to be addressed in the current study is that although there is symbolism in Ekegusii proverbs with a journey, little has been done to investigate its significance. This is despite the fact that such a study will contribute to a better understanding of the norms and values of the Abagusii associated with a journey. This literature review demonstrates that scholars have examined proverbs from different

perspectives, however, there is evidential lack of sufficient information on the symbolism of a journey in Ekegusii proverbs.

4.0 Theoretical Framework

The study employed Stylistics theory to analyse the collected data. Fowler and Childs (2006) define stylistics as a critical approach which uses methods and findings of the science of Linguistics in the analysis of literary texts. Leech and Short (1989) explain that stylistics as a linguistic study of style is undertaken because the aim is to explain something and the literary stylistics has the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. These arguments were useful to the study as it sought to establish the effectiveness of the various forms of imagery used in the representation of the journey in the proverbs. Crystal and Davy (1969) explain four commonly occurring senses of the term style as follows. First, as some or all language habits of one person and secondly, as some or all language habits shared by a group of people at one time over a period of time. Thirdly, as the effectiveness of a mode of expression and finally, in terms of literary language as characteristic of good, effective and beautiful writing. This study utilized the third and fourth points as follows; to determine how imagery is used in the representation of the journey in selected proverbs. In brief, Stylistics theory was used to establish the symbolic meanings of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs by analysing the various forms of imagery used in the representation the journey in the proverbs.

5.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design that was mainly interpretive and explanatory in nature. According to Lindolf & Taylor (2002), qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyse the situated form, content and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations. The design suited the current study because the focus of the research was on the analysis of a stylistic feature of published proverbs. In this light, the study identified and analysed the forms of imagery used to develop the symbolism of the journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. The study employed purposive sampling procedure to identify and select the source of primary data. Kombo and Tromp (2006) define sampling procedure as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group is representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. The procedure was used to select Atemba (2011) *Abagusii Wisdom Revisited* as the source of primary data. The book contains four hundred and fourteen proverbs. From this number the study identified and collected twenty-two Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. The proverbs were identified and selected through a critical and self-interpretive method. The method

involved an examination of the basic features of a physical journey namely: the traveler, the messenger, the visitor, the host, the departure, the path, the obstacles and return or arrival.

6.0 Data Interpretation and Analysis.

Datton (1990) suggests that data analysis starts during the collection of data and this continues throughout the study. In this study, data analysis started with the identification and selection of Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey from the primary source of data. In addition, Hammerley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that in analysing qualitative data the initial task is to find concepts that make sense of what is going on. In the current study units of analysis were defined by the various forms of imagery that are used to represent the journey in the selected proverbs. A total of twenty-two Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey identified for the study were put in one list and translated into English using the Vinay (1958) translation procedure of equivalence. The proverbs were thereafter subjected to a stylistic analysis. While analysing the proverbs, the researcher examined the forms of imagery used to represent the “journey” and the symbolic meanings of the journey in the selected proverbs. To realise this goal, the study analyses the selected proverbs using the journey as the vehicle for the analysis. According to Campbell (1949) the trope of a journey has four main elements namely: the traveler, the departure, the means and the destination. Through these elements the study identified four symbolic meanings of the journey namely: a journey as a representation of; uncertainties, quest for freedom, choice and learning experience. The collected proverbs were categorised and analysed under the four symbolic meanings of the journey. Further, the study identified and explained the forms of imagery used in the representation of the journey in the selected proverbs. The following is a stylistic analysis of the collected data. The analysis involves a description of forms of imagery used in the representation of a journey and a discussion of four symbolic meanings of journey.

6.1 Imagery Used in the Symbolic Representation of a Journey

The study established that metaphors, similes, contrast, personification, symbols, analogy, irony, paradox and allusion are used in the symbolic representation of a journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of how these forms of imagery are used in selected proverbs. To start with, metaphors used in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey permit intricate relationships to be understood in concrete images. According to Abrahams (1985), a metaphor is a word or expression which in literal usage denotes one kind of thing or action is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing or action with asserting comparison. The following

proverb illustrates how a mediator serves as a bridge. *Esigani mboraro nka*. (A go-between is a bridge to a home). In the proverb *esigani* (ago-between) is metaphorically used to compare the role of a go-between to that of a bridge. A go-between and a bridge have one common characteristic; they both serve as a connection. A bridge connects two places that are separated by a river or valley thus making movement between the two places smooth. In the same way a go-between connects two people from different families enabling them to start a new family. The metaphorical reference to a go-between as a bridge is used to emphasise the role of a go-between. He/she has to maintain constant touch with the family he has helped to start to ensure that their partnership continues smoothly. Secondly, similes are used in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey to compare a physical journey with human activities. The aim is to pass on important messages in a more concrete manner. Shipley (1970) defines a simile as a comparison of two things of different categories because of a point of resemblance and because the association emphasises, clarifies or in some way enhances the original. The following Ekegusii proverb illustrates how a simile is used to express disapproval of a messenger's bad conduct. *Ochire enyoni nomoengwe* (Has gone like a bird and a stick) The proverb describes a journey in which a messenger is sent and delays as a bird which has escaped from a hunting stick. In this proverb 'like a bird and a stick' (*enyoni nomooengwe*) is a simile used to show that he has delayed just as a bird which flies away when you throw a stick at it. It never returns. Thirdly, personification is used in the proverbs to evoke images that generally could not be expected. The images serve to teach important lessons about life. Abrahams (1985) explains that personification is a situation in which an inanimate object or abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or human attributes or feelings. The following Ekegusii proverbs illustrate the content of this definition.

Nchera teri gotebi mogendi (A path does not tell a traveler)

Nguba emo tekoira ng'ombe roche (One shield cannot take cattle to the river)

In the first proverb, the path is endowed with the human attribute of talking *gotebi* (to tell). The path is shown to have powers to tell the traveler what it holds on the way yet it is not willing to reveal it. This leaves the traveler vulnerable to the whims of the path. The proverb shows that a journey is characterised with uncertainties. The message in the proverb is conveyed through the way the path is personified. In the personification the behaviour of the path represents the uncertainties affecting the decisions taken in life. In the proverb, a traveler represents a disappointed or betrayed person. The proverb can be uttered as an expression of disappointment or a consolation to a person suffering as a

result of a decision taken in life especially that involving marriage or partnership. The proverb can be used to encourage and advise those disappointed not to blame themselves. The second proverb symbolically employs personification where the shield (*nguba*) is personified. The shield is personified to refer to the person taking cattle to the river. A shield (*nguba*) is usually used for protection when facing an enemy especially in war. The informative function of this proverb lies in the words 'cannot take' (*tekoira*) where one shield cannot take the cattle to the river. The shield is personified to refer to an individualistic person in society. The individualistic person cannot achieve much because real human success depends on the contribution of others. This proverb exploits the framework of a journey to show how any noble task like that of driving cattle to the river is always faced with threats. The proverb calls for unity in order to overcome the threats to life and attain success. On the other hand, contrast is used in Ekegusii making reference to a journey to help define gender roles. Culler (2000) explains contrast as a situation where two very different things or ideas are placed side by side. The effect is that the difference in the two is emphasised. The following Ekegusii proverb demonstrates how contrast is used to define the duties of a woman.

Mokungu tana gotomwa sira (A woman is never sent to collect a debt).

The proverb describes a type of journey which is not supposed to be undertaken by a woman, that of collecting a debt. The proverb employs a declarative statement in which it can be inferred that the duties of a woman are being contrasted to those of a man. The term *omokungu* which refers to a woman is derived from the verb *gokunga* which means 'to take care of.' This means that the term is metaphorically used to refer to the one who is supposed to take care of things at home but not go out to gather. The term thus defines the duties of a woman as those which can only be accomplished within the homestead. In this respect a woman is expected to confine herself to the homestead and manage the affairs of her home. The tasks that a woman is expected to perform include; cooking, taking care of children and keeping the home tidy. This means that a woman is not supposed to be seen roaming away from her home. A journey involves travelling away from home, therefore, it is not within the socially recommended duties of a woman. Further, symbols are used in Ekegusii proverbs to express a set of traditional values and expectations. Gray (1984) describes a symbol as a trope in which a word, phrase or image represents something literal and concrete. The symbol may mean a number of things depending upon who is interpreting it. The following Ekegusii proverbs illustrate how symbols are emphasise the importance of social bonds.

Genda bwari buya na onnywe mache maya. (Go in peace and may you drink pure water)

Moirana matongo kegocha, tente etometi natache tairana (Whoever returns to the charm of the old homestead he had fled may get stuck and perish in the marshy plains)

The first proverb describes a journey in which one is traveling to a place of peace and goodness. '*Mache maya*' (pure water) is a symbol for something which is not contaminated. The proverb may be used to refer to a relationship without trouble. The proverb can be uttered as a blessing to someone who is leaving home to go and start a new life. Thus it expresses the social bonds that exist among people in society. The second proverb describes a journey in which a traveler returns to the homestead he had fled and gets stuck there. In the proverb the charm of the homestead (*matongo kegocha*) and get stuck (*natache tairana*) are used symbolically. The 'charm of the homestead' symbolises the luring nature of evil such as old company of evil doers. On the other hand, 'get stuck' symbolises the eventual destruction. The symbols used in the proverb suggest that a journey is a means of escaping from evil or getting separated from evil doers. However, when one returns there is a possibility of getting 'stuck' that is getting destroyed or punished. In addition, analogy is used in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey to illustrate how a physical journey reflects human life and activities. Gunter, (2001) defines analogy as a comparison in which different items are compared point by point usually with the aim of explaining something unknown by something known. In the selected proverbs analogies draw a parallel between a physical journey and life as journey where one is expected to make a number of choices before getting to the destination. The following Ekegusii proverb illustrates the idea of analogy:

Tonia ase kwaigamire (Do not defecate where you have sheltered)

Analogy is used in the proverb to advice people not to spoil where they have found help. This is because one may find oneself in a similar situation and it will be difficult to seek help from where you have messed up things. Further, irony is used in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey to convey meanings different from and usually opposite to, the professed or the ostensible one. The irony teaches that life entails finding alternatives to different challenges that we encounter in life. The following proverb illustrates how irony is used to teach people not to give up in times of difficulties.

Egiasireire nchera maate kerigerie nchera rogoro. (What you have lost in the lower path search for it in the upper path)

The proverb describes a journey in which a traveler loses an item. The item is lost in the lower part of the path but the traveler is expected to search for it in the upper path of the path. The lower path (*nchera maate*) and the upper path (*nchera rogoro*) are a direct opposite to each other. It is ironical in this proverb that one is being advised to search for what he has lost in the lower path on the upper path. Irony is used in the proverb to show that life involves finding alternatives especially when the going gets tough. Satire on other hand, is used to attack vice and mock folly in Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. Frye (1957) describes satire as a humourous form of expression whose aim is to explore and attack vice and folly. The following Ekegusii proverb illustrates how satire is used to criticise those who are proud yet they are lazy.

Omokungu omweanyi motarere toigo (Visit a proud woman during the rainy season)

In the proverb the term *omokungu* (*woman*) is used to refer to 'one who takes care of.' In the context of this proverb it refers to one who is expected to keep the home clean or tidy. However, the proverb employs satire to suggest that if you visit a proud woman during the rainy season, you will discover that she is untidy. The proverb sarcastically criticizes people who like bragging to others when they are away from where they are well known.

Further, paradox is used to show that events in life are unpredictable. Miruka (2003) describes paradox as an apparently self-contradictory statement, though which is essentially true. The following proverb demonstrates how paradox is used to teach that to err does not amount to being a failure in life.

Gosira nkomanya nchera (To stray is to know the right path)

The proverb describes a journey where a traveler gets to know the correct way by getting lost. This proverb employs paradox to show that in a journey you may stray off the path. This will lead to a delay in getting to your destination. However, you will get to your destination. The paradox lies in the fact that you will have learnt the right way through experience, meaning that you will be careful not to stray again. The literal meaning of the proverb is that in a journey a stumble may result in a pot falling thus breaking.

6.2 Symbolic Meanings of a “Journey” in Selected Ekegusii Proverbs

The study identified four symbolic meanings of a journey reflected in selected Ekegusii proverbs. These meanings are derived from what a journey symbolises. The following is a discussion of the symbolic meanings with illustrations of selected Ekegusii proverbs.

6.3 A Journey as a Representation of Uncertainties in Life

In many African communities, human life is compared to a journey which starts at birth and ends in death. In between birth and death, people do engage themselves in many activities. In many situations people find things happening the way they did not expect. This is because in many human activities, the future entails unknown information. This results in uncertainty. Uncertainty is inherent in every human activity because events in the future do not follow the course of the past events and knowledge of the future is always incomplete. The following Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey serve to prepare people for uncertainties in life.

Tiana masetoka totiana maseta (Swear on return not when setting off)

Nchera teri gotebi mogendi (A path does not forewarn a traveler)

Ase ogokwera maiga are (Where one is to die is welcoming)

The first proverb employs contrast to show that it is difficult to predict the outcome of any undertaking. The second proverb employs personification to demonstrate how people are vulnerable to forces beyond their control. The third proverb paradoxically illustrates that life is unpredictable. In these proverbs, the journey metaphorically refers to human activities. In life people set goals just as person sets off on a journey to accomplish a mission. These goals may or may not be realised. In light of the first proverb, one should not boast of starting something. This is because there are chances of failing and therefore, one may be embarrassed. The second proverb describes a journey in terms of the relationship between a path and a traveler. The path is personified by showing that it has the ability to forewarn the traveler but it is unwilling to do so. The fact that the path does not reveal to the traveler what to expect, leave the traveler vulnerable to the whims of the path. The third proverb employs the term *maiga are* (compassionately missing one) to show the paradox of the journey. This demonstrates how life is unpredictable.

6.4 A Journey as a Quest for Freedom

The quest for freedom always involves a desire to escape from evil or punishment. Sometimes, it is also a search for a new identity. This theme is summed up in a number of Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. In the proverbs, this quest symbolises

the desire of an individual to make radical, deviant and creative change in one's life. The following proverbs show how this quest reflects life as an unending cycle of discarding old ways for those which assume a new significance though sometimes in vain.

Kogenda enyoni nomoengwe (To journey as a bird and a stick)

Tamama amaiga ane akoranie (Flee but my cooking stones will bring you back)

Naikire omokendo oika boruma (I have reached where the tide settles into calmness)

The first proverb describes a journey in which a traveler goes and never returns as a bird that flees away from a hunting stick. In this proverb the bird represents a person who is under threat from some enemy. *Omoengwe* (the hunting stick) is a weapon used to kill birds. So it symbolises danger. The proverb suggests that when one is faced with danger he should escape and not return to the place of danger. The second proverb describes a planned journey where one wants to flee. The proverb suggests that even if the traveler leaves, he will still return. There is use of personification in the proverb. The cooking stones are personified. That when he leaves the cooking stones have the ability to bring him back. The cooking stones are personified to represent that which sustain us in life. This implies that to undertake the journey means to leave the security of the known world for the unknown which may seem more painful than staying back. The third proverb describes a journey where a traveler breaths a sigh of relief for reaching a point where there is no trouble. In the proverb there is use of contrast between a turbulent tide *Omokendo* and calmness *boruma*. Contrast is used to show that a journey is usually bumpy at the start but will at some point get to be smooth especially towards the end. The proverb also employs metaphor by indirectly comparing human activity to a flow of water in a river or stream.

6.5 A Journey as an Expression of Choice

Making choices on what to do or what not to do is a fundamental aspect of a person's life. Seemingly, this reality did not escape the attention of the Abagusii. As a consequence, it is captured in a number of Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey. The following Ekegusii proverbs illustrate how a journey represents the choices people make in life.

Kobwatia nchoke koria boke, kobwatia n'gi nkonyora bonyira. (To follow a bee is to eat honey, to follow a housefly is to get feces)

Nchera ibere nchaitete enyan'gau (Two paths killed the hyena)

In the first proverb the bee and the housefly represent types of leaders in society. *Nchoke* (bee) is known to be a hardworking insect. It struggles in collecting nectar from flowers which is used to make honey. Thus a bee represents hardworking leaders in society. These leaders lead their people into producing goods that are useful to people just like honey. On the other hand, a housefly is known to be a lazy and dirty insect. It is always drawn to the direction of any smell. It goes to the source of the smell eats and defecates there then flies away. A housefly therefore, represents those leaders in society who are not only lazy but also a nuisance. The housefly is not productive. It also contaminates what it finds. The proverb teaches people on how to choose leaders based on their qualities. The second proverb describes a journey in which hyena tried to get to a destination following two paths at the same time. It was not possible and the animal died after several attempts. *Enyag'au* (hyena) is a wild animal. It is a scavenger which is mostly considered foolish and greedy. *Nchera* (path) is a route leading to a specific destination. Two different paths can lead to the same place but one cannot use them at the same time. You can only use one at a time. The paths in the proverb are personified by being assigned the animate quality of having the ability to kill the hyena. Personification is used to emphasise on the power of the choices people make. The hyena found itself in a dilemma which it attempted to resolve without much thought. It failed as it ended ruining itself. The message in the proverb is that people's choices should be guided by reason rather than instinct, because every choice has a consequence.

6.6 A Journey as a Learning Experience

The quest to undertake a journey at times involves an acceptance to move from a familiar environment to a new environment. This may require one to rid oneself of the usual habits and even self-image in an attempt to suit the new environment. In this way a journey becomes a process of discovery in which a traveler learns and adopts new ways of doing things. The following Ekegusii proverbs illustrate these views concerning a journey as a learning experience.

Kegocha ngiati nsiongo (A stumble breaks a pot)

Ira magoro make (Take small legs)

Banto mbaumerani mbitunwa bitakoumerana (People do meet, only mountains do not meet)

In the first proverb *nsiongo* (a pot) refers to a traditional container made of clay which is usually used for fetching water or carrying the local brew. In the proverb both the pot and a stumble are used symbolically. A stumble represents an unforeseen obstacle while a pot symbolises something of great value. These symbols are used to demonstrate that if one is not careful enough to discern and avoid certain obstacles, he can easily lose something of much value. Therefore, care is needed when dealing with something of great import. The second proverb *magoro make* (small legs) is used metaphorically to refer to short pace. The metaphor is used to show that taking a short pace guarantees a safe journey. Similarly, in life any activity which is not done in a hurry is likely to be accomplished well. The third proverb describes a journey in which people encounter those they least expected to meet. In the proverb *bitunwa* (mountains) are personified to bring out human attributes. The proverb is informative in two ways: first, in life you may encounter people you never wished to meet. In this light, one should not wrong others and escape from them thinking that they will never meet. Secondly, if one loses a loved one there are chances of finding such a person in a place you least expected. Therefore, people should not give up in searching for their loved ones.

7.0 Conclusion

This study sought to examine the forms of imagery used in the representation of a journey and the symbolic meanings of the journey in selected Ekegusii proverbs. In the study, twenty-two Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey were analysed using the Stylistics theory. The analysis attempted to establish the interaction between the physical journey and the journey of life through which insight and comment can be expressed. The analysis revealed that the features used in the construction of the journey in the selected proverbs made reference to every sphere of nature and human life. From the analysis, the study established that the journey in the selected proverbs is prominently represented through the use of figurative language. In particular; metaphors, similes, personification, contrast and symbols are used in the construction of the journey in the selected proverbs. The study established that a journey is a representation of uncertainties, a quest for freedom, choice, and a learning experience. Further, the study established the nature, essence and function of the journey in Ekegusii proverbs as follows:

A journey is characterized with challenges or hardships thus demonstrates individual triumph and capacity to survive and sustain oneself in times of adversity. In addition, a journey serves as a means to self-discovery which help to assimilate one into the society.

The study also has attestation that symbolically, a journey is used in the selected proverbs to advise and instill morals that help to control human behaviours towards others and create unity in society. The proverbs serve to promote respect for the weak and generosity while expressing a rejection of evil. Further, they are used to rebuke and criticize wrong practices of some people by teaching good manners. They also encourage and inspire people to strive hard to achieve something and face life squarely despite all odds because the journey of life is full of challenges. In this light the study colludes as follows: the “journey” in Ekegusii proverbs is mainly represented by the use of imagery in the form of metaphors, personification, contrast and symbols. Ekegusii proverbs making reference to a journey are used to comment on various aspects of human existence more specifically on communal life, family ties and experience. The journey in the proverbs serves both as a structural and educational tool. It represents uncertainties, quest for freedom, choice and learning experience. The journey helps the proverbs to convey a lot of meaning and it empowers the proverbs with some aesthetic provocation which lead the reader to deeper reflection. The journey in the proverbs is valuable in enhancing our understanding and appreciation of the people’s environment, past life experiences, shared beliefs, norms and values. Following the findings of this study and bearing in mind there are many socio-economic and technological changes that are posing a major threat to the oral traditional arts, this study recommends; that scholars put more interest in Ekegusii proverbs. In particular, the study recommends that future studies consider other symbolic features that are common in Ekegusii proverbs especially the one on love and death.

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