

Amending Social Concerns through Language Communication in Selected Songs

Janet Kemunto Omwancha, Dr. Jane Ombati, and Dr. Yakub Adams
Mount Kenya University

Abstract:- The research analyzes the Ekegusii jazz band songs with specific reference to Bana Sungusia Jazz Band songs. Studies have been done on different songs focusing on different themes. The study determined how the language used in the songs is meant to amend the worrying social trends among the Abagusii. Critical Discourse Analysis theory by Norman and Lexico-semantic theory was used in analyzing the Ekegusii jazz band songs with specific reference to Bana Sungusia jazz band songs. Qualitative research design was utilized. Purposive sampling was used to select the study sample. The researcher selected and used 8 songs from the list of Bana Sungusia songs that have been recorded. The data was collected from recorded songs from CDs or video tapes and downloads from YouTube. The songs that were selected were then transcribed in the original language and translated into English language. The data was analyzed and interpreted based on the meaning and application of the themes in the Bana Sungusia jazz band songs. It was found out that the Bana Sungusia jazz band songs have used various words and phrases to pass messages on the concerns affecting the Abagusii. Language has been used to try to amend the worrying social trends addressed in the songs. The outcome of this research will go a long way in providing data to linguistic scholars, listeners of the Bana Sungusia jazz and songs, the participants and all the interested parties to understanding the meaning, social concerns and the great power of language in the song far as forming of character and character transformation is concerned.

Keywords:- Songs, Sungusia, Social trends, Social concerns.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kisii people also known as the Abagusii of the Bantu group of people inhabit two counties: Kisii and Nyamira (formerly Kisii district and Nyamira district in the former Nyanza province in western Kenya). Gusii was fondly referred to their homeland. Mogusii was culturally defined as the founder and patriarch of the Abagusii.

Ekegusii language itself is fairly homogenous amid the absence of isoglosses. The language is free of variations; varieties would normally be referred to as dialect and register. This is strictly based on the premise where a variety is seen as a smaller unit than a dialect. (Mulaudzi 1999:22) following this can be said there is existence of 'ekerogoro' (northern) and 'ekemaate' (southern) dialects of Ekegusii. The northern dialect is the standard variety; it is

the variety in common use in various domains such as media, church, funerals and weddings and was also a medium of instruction in lower primary school.

According to The Nation (Nairobi) 3rd Dec 2004, Bana Sungusia was founded by one George Kenyatta. The late Onsongo Omosongo was the vocalist and composer of the celebrated Kisii band his hit song being *Lady Nyaboke*. Sungusia was the name everyone was dancing to in the former Kisii, Gucha and Nyamira. The band had become so popular that two groups, one in Nyamira County and the other in Kisii County are now fighting each other over the name Sungusia. (ibid)

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary (1859), a song is a short piece of music with words that are sung. According to Nketia (2001), making music contribute to making human. All cultures make music. Not only that, every past culture has made music too. Musical instruments are amongst the oldest manmade objects ever found. Scientists have recently discovered that music affects many parts of our brain very deeply. Music gets under one's skin, it creates strong feelings. It also creates strong memories. Music is a language there is when normal language is of little use. Music is needed to say things any other ways with great joy or great sadness, music is needed to say important things. The more music is learnt the more it is easy to say things that could not be said in words. (ibid)

Dhiki (2017) said that "Bob Marley" songs described the lexical and contextual meaning that those researchers eager to know more about semantics will get help from in trying to attain the meaning of words and phrases as found in Bana Sungusia Jazz band music. Obwoye (2014) agrees that lexical semantics analysis of Ekegusii circumcision songs centered on aspects of language meaning in the realization of the context of circumcision.

Bohye (2016) examined and compared the amounts of sexual content in Korean music videos between now and 10 years ago to find the relationship between words and phrases and their semantic meaning and addressing the social issues affecting the Abagusii. A jazz band (Jazz ensemble or jazz combo) is a musical ensemble that plays Jazz music. Bands vary in the number of its members and the kind of Jazz they play. Smaller jazz bands also known as combos are common in night clubs and other small venues and are made up of three to seven musicians whereas big bands are found in dance halls and other large venues. Jazz bands usually have a band leader, in a big band settling there is more than one.

Jeff (2008) described how jazz as shaped through its history and tradition as far as its preservation is concerned. Jazz band music is about the language used and its role in addressing the social problems and how they can be amended. According to Keraf (1997:1), language is a means of communication between members of the public in the form of sound symbols. It is not only spoken and written language to communicate, but also with wide variety actions. Sometimes people do not only do communication directly but also communicate through songs, poems, prose etc. Song as a kind of literary work is a kind of musical expression in the form of oral and written form. We cannot separate music from human life. Some music needs good lyrics in order that the listener can enjoy it. The musician chooses words to make the lyrics become good enough to listen. The musicians use the meaning of the words in combination and the context in which they occur, and the writer tries to arrive at what the musician intended his message to convey. According to Greek history, "music occupies a part as expressing of thinking and feeling." Thus the language i.e. the words and phrases in Banasungusia Jazz band songs have messages they intend to convey to the Abagusii community. Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Discourse that sees language as a form of social practice. Scholars who work in the tradition of CDA generally agree on social practice and focus on investigating how societal power relations are establish and reinforced through language use. Fairclough(1989, 1995) model for CDA consists of three interrelated processes of analysis tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse. These three dimensions of discourse are:

- Object analysis (verbal or visual) object is produced and received (writing) speaking / designing and reading / listening and viewing) by human objects.
- The process by means of which the object is produced and received (writing\speaking\designing and reading \listening and viewing) by human objects
- The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes

According to Fairclough, each of the 3 dimensions requires a different kind of analysis: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation.)

A. Statement of the problem

"Critical Discourse Analysis" of Ekegusii Jazz band songs has not been taken serious. Obwoge (2014) indicated that lexical Semantic analysis of Ekegusii circumcision songs has not been done although there is evidence that other studies in different languages have been done using different approaches. This study focused on the role of the language usage in addressing the social concerns of the Abagusii in Bana Sungusia jazz band songs. Based on this aspect, there was need to examine how language communicated in the songs can help in amending the social concerns addressed in the selected songs

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The language that is used in songs can be used to amend the problems or social concern addressed in the songs by BanaSungusia jazz band. Bwonya (1998) investigated the gender dimensions in the Maragoli marriage ceremonies. Through the investigation, the clear depiction of bride and bridegroom as literary personal, the singers are able to comment on men's and women's breaking of society's moral laws in which the audience asses themselves and amend their behavior. The study will be useful since the study will also go further to see how language used in the BanaSungusia jazz band songs is being investigated to determine whether it's useful in amending the concerns addressed in the songs.

Monanti(2014),analyzed songs sung by children. He analyzed the possibility of children's oral poetry in the construction of acceptable personality traits among children. This will help in this research since the researcher tries to establish how the language used in BanaSungusia jazz band can be used to amend the social ills addressed by the language as it is used in the songs, it goes further to establish how the Abagusii as a community can be made a better place. Stephen (1995), says the power of music and how was utilized was of great importance for humanities existence. This also demonstrates the universality of music and its effects in the diverse societies of the world. He found out that the benefits of music were both communal and personal. This study will contribute so much to establish the benefits of the language used in BanaSungusiamusic and examine if it's beneficial to the Abagusii as a community. Thismeans that the language in the songs can be useful in trying to amend the problems affecting theAbagusii community.

Middleton (1995) says that the concept of language code is central. He explains that every language is coded in a way of communication understood a given generation or group of people at musical language even though they are useful at a starting point , they undertake the plurality of codes involved and the multiplicity of variables affecting every component sender , channel, context message and receiver .This implies that the language in BanaSungusia songs may be very vital to all the participants in the songs and the receivers which is the Abagusii community.

Mukasa (2005) points out that the society found that it could arm twist the musician to play for their tune in terms of style, language and themes to be tackled in the music. Musicians were compelled to be sensitive to the demands of the society. This will be relevant to this study since the language and themes in the songs by BanaSungusia are very sensitivein trying to address and social trends among the Abagusii and possibly try to show ways of amending those sensitive issues addressed in the songs.

Jazz period signifies the period of freedom and action. The jazz era made a lasting impact on virtually all people in either negative or positive way. America received change with jazz (a reporter who is not identified from Denver,

1962) in the present study, the researcher will also try to examine how the language in BanaSungusia jazz band songs can bring about lasting impact positively by trying to establish how the language is used in addressing the social ills that need to be rectified and how they can be amended

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study for it aimed at obtaining information concerning the prevailing status of a phenomenon. (Phelps 1980). Research data was used to obtain and describe information on words and phrases in the Ekegusii jazz band songs and the role of the language used in the songs. Qualitative researchers tend to work with an "interpretivist" philosophical position using methods of data generation that are flexible and sensitive to the social contexts in which the data are produced (Grix 2004). Qualitative research also involves the interpretation of data whereby the researcher analyses cases usually a few in number in the socio-cultural context. Under qualitative research, descriptive research design will be used. According to Martin (2008), descriptive research design, gives a better and deeper understanding of a phenomenon on the basis of an in depth study of phenomenon. Descriptive research design provides a basis for decision making. Descriptive research design is used to observe and describe a research subject or problem without influencing or manipulating the variables in any way. It is used to obtain a general overview of the subject.

➤ Study area

This study was centred on the themes found in BanaSungusia jazz band songs. The themes of love, marriage, family and relationships were examined to come up with the words and phrases that highlight the social problems among the Abagusii and how to amend them.

➤ Study population and target population

Study population is the subset of the target population available for the study. It is from the accessible population that the researchers draw their samples.

A population can also be defined as any set of persons or objects that possess at least one common characteristic (Busher and Harter, 1980) the target population in this study will comprise the songs that have the themes of love, marriage and family relationships mostly those that address the problems of unfaithfulness, domestic violence, irresponsibility and gossip. BanaSungusia jazz band have sang quite a number of songs recorded in different albums.

➤ Sampling procedure and sample size

This study employed purposive sampling. This is using personal judgement to collect sample that is representative, it is non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristic of a population and the objective of the study (American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 2016)

A sample is a smaller group or subgroup obtained from the accessible population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), this subgroup is carefully selected to be representative of the whole population with the relevant characteristics. For representation and acquisition of desired qualities and research attributes, the researcher selected eight songs out of the 102 songs in the 15 albums sung by BanaSungusia jazz band. The band has songs containing various messages but the selected songs contained messages of love, marriage and family relations under the subthemes of infidelity, irresponsibility, domestic violence and gossip.

➤ Data analysis

The recorded data will be transcribed. Transcription which is putting down in writing, the audio recorded data is data, is considered a part of the process of data analysis and a prerequisite in discourse studies that involve audio recording. Cameron (2001) notes that it is necessary to put down discourse in writing before we can say anything about it given that spoken language because of its ephemeral nature, it is difficult to analyse.

In addition, Gumperz and Berenz (1993, 94) assert that transcription is an integral part of an overall process of interpretive analysis that reflects the theoretical framework informing a given analysis. This means that a transcription is a means by which a researcher is able to bring into focus the characteristics of spoken discourse that are the object of study.

Therefore, being a native Ekegusii speaker, the researcher relied on own intuition in translating the songs and tried to be as close as possible to the original meaning of what the singer meant and where in doubt, especially on the meaning of some ancient or archaic Ekegusii or figurative language, consulted other native Ekegusii speakers.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

For CDA, language is not powerful on its own, it gains power by the use powerful people make use of it. This explains why CDA often chooses the perspective of those who suffer and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and also who have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions. For this reason, the following social evils addressed in BanaSungusia jazz music are explained. The ways to improve or change the bad social trends among the Abagusii as addressed in the songs are also explained.

➤ Gossip

According to Oxford English Dictionary, gossip is casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people typically involving details which are not confirmed as true. Synonyms include; rumour(s), whispers, stories, tales etc.

Cambridge English dictionary defines gossip as conversation or reports about other people's private lives that might be unkind, disapproving or not true. Some of the BanaSungusia jazz band songs collected, especially the ones involving the family have addressed this issue of gossip as a social concern among the Abagusii.

CDA in one of its approaches states that it is problem oriented thus the problem of gossip is discussed among the Abagusii community. Mukasa (2005) points out that society could arm-twist the musician to play for their tune in terms of style, language and themes to be talked in music. The language used in Bana Sungusia also addresses the problem of gossip as discussed below:

For instance, the song; *Omokungu*, the artist likens the men to women with long mouths' the go gossiping men to their own wives with the intention of winning them from their own husbands. He says; *Abasacha bande nigo munga abakungu emenua emetambe*. (Some men are like women, long mouths). *Okoimokagochabwoneaseomonginaone, ekeroomn gyeteng'ating'iyoy*. (you wake up to my home, to my wife when you know I'm not there.) *Kwamotobia omosacha oo nigo namotiga ase abakungu, naende bono kwamotobia chibesa abwate chiaereire ase amakembi, ngocha are bosa, omosacha oo ndoche ng'a tagokonyara*. (You tell her, your husband, I left him with women, and then you tell her, the money he had is finished by harlots, he is coming empty handed and your husband and I see he can't help you.)

The words above are pure gossip. Since the man telling the words to the women is not sure where her husband is but simply spreading rumours in order to win her. This bad trait among the Abagusii is amended in the same song when the artist goes further to say; *omosachankikiagochandagoreramokaochiangaabwekaneoy one*. (Man what is troubling you? Buy clothes to your wife so she resembles mine.)

Omosachankikiagochanda, tigaobochinga, omokunguoonerenomokungubunaondebwensi. (Man what's troubling you, stop nonsense; your wife is a woman just like any other. So men are advised to dress up their women smartly to avoid looking at other men's wives because they are just like other women hence avoid falling into the trap of infidelity.)

Stephen (1995) says the power of music and how it was utilized was of great importance for human existence. That the benefits of music were both communal and personal. The language in BanaSungusia jazz songs is very beneficial in aiding the Abagusii community members either individually or communally to amend their evil ways, including the evil of gossip.

In the song *Susana*, the man reassures his love for his women by name Susana, he tells her; *abagenkimbatemagokong'aina, Susana tobaisakobwati, bogenkimborigokonyakende, tiborikoagacha*. (when they try to lie to you Susana don't follow, gossip doesn't built. meaning its vain for someone to take heed to what people say are saying if there's no evidence for these may end up breaking families. Those listening to these lyrics may decide not to engage in this vice. Though not many songs selected talk about gossip but it's one of the concerns affecting the Abagusii that has been addressed by BanaSungusia jazz band songs.

➤ *Language use in amending the social concerns highlighted in the songs.*

The songs targeted the youths and adults since the themes and sub themes in the songs majorly affect the two groups among the Gusii community. In terms of social context, the Jazz band is majorly the music sang in the Gusii community at large.

The Abagusii just like most African communities are inclined too much towards their families and matters that affect their day to day life especially those that deal with love, family and social relationships. Therefore most of the songs, a part from mentioning the ills found among the Abagusii, they also teach the basics to a happy life and how some of those evils can be avoided or amended. Virtues such as faithfulness, honest and respect have been emphasized in most of the songs. Vices like infidelity, irresponsibility and domestic violence have been frowned at women are advised to be faithful to their own husbands thus: *Inyorachiirakwarieteekerokienyangi* (remember the vows you took during the wedding.)

V. CONCLUSION

The study concluded out that the language used in the songs is very significant in amending the worrying social trends among the Abagusii. The songs targeted the youths and adults as the themes in their songs majorly affect two groups in the Gusii community.

Some of the songs for example, the song *Abasubati*, tells young men not to joke around with girls to avoid the girls getting pregnant and thus committing murder. On the other hand the girls are advised in case they get pregnant to avoid throwing the children into latrines but instead give them to those in need of babies but can't get their own.

How to amend the worrying trends that include: infidelity, domestic violence, irresponsibility and gossip has been given for example, if its infidelity they have been advised in some of the songs to stick to their marriage vows. Respect in the family set up is also important if the families are to live in peace.

Further the study concluded that Banasungusia Jazz band songs are very relevant for the language in the song addresses the very sensitive problems affecting the Abagusii and goes ahead to give possible remedies.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bohye, T. (2016). *quarm Zaggy*(www.amazon.com)
- [2]. Bwonya, J. U.(1998). The Gender Dimension of Songs in Maragoli Marriage Ceremonies(<http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke>)
- [3]. Fairclough, N . (1989). *Language and Power*: London, Longman
- [4]. Fairlough, N .(1992). *Discourse and Social change*.Oxford polity Press.
- [5]. Grix, J. (2010).The Building Blocks of Research. The Foundations of Research, pp.57-76DOI: 10.1007/978-0-230-36490-5_5
- [6]. *Jeff, H. (2008).". World Wrestling Entertainment.. Retrieved June 25,*
- [7]. Martin, A. (2008). Digital Literacy and the “Digital Society”. In C. Lankshear, & M. Knobel (Eds.), *Digital Literacies: Concepts, Policies, and Practices* (pp. 151-176). New York: Peter Lang.
- [8]. Middleton, K. (1995)Community Alternatives Reconsidered. The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice(<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.1995.tb00822.x>)
- [9]. Mukasa, S. M.(2008).The African Women's Protocol : harnessing a potential force for positive change WorldCat member libraries worldwide.
- [10]. Mulaudzi, M. P.(1999) A multicultural approach to school guidance and counselling, University of South Africa, Pretoria,(<http://hdl.handle.net/10500/17534>)
- [11]. Nkeita,K.H.J. (2001). The Music Africa. World Cat member Libraries worldwide.
- [12]. Obwoye M. E. (2014). Robotics Innovation in Kenya as an Opportunity for Industrial Growth: Challenges and Prospects for TVET Institutions and Universities Volume 2, Issue 6,
- [13]. *Stephen, F.(2013). Actor, comedian, writer, presenter, and distinguished supporter of Humanism". British Humanist Association. Retrieved 7 June*