

SEMANTIC DEVIATION IN AMAEKE ITEM WAR SONGS

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ABSTRACT

Songs are so captivating. Its rich values are cherished by people. Songs are part of oral literature; its performance are desired when the lyrics are given a deep semantic attention. For this work of art to bring out its intended meaning in communication, some of its linguistic features have to be analysed. The aesthetic values of these songs are embedded in the choice of linguistic elements and deviations used by the song writers. It is on this note that this paper was carried out to explore the semantic deviations found in the Amaeke Item war songs. The work is anchored on ethnopoetic theoretical framework. To achieve the objectives of this study, a descriptive survey research design that uses random sampling techniques were used. The analysis of the linguistic features of the songs revealed a lot of foregrounding irregularities that occurred at the semantic level in order to achieve the desired meanings. From the analysis of the data, it was found out among other things that there are lots of semantic deviations in the songs. The most commonly used ones include the personification, metaphor, euphemism and synecdoche. It is recommended that research on our traditional songs should be encouraged in order to unveil and retain our historical values.

KEYWORDS: Semantic deviations, War songs, Aesthetics

INTRODUCTION

Songs explore the feelings and emotional state of people. It is highly appreciated by humanity. Songs unveil the thoughts and wishes of mankind. There are some vital issues in the society that cannot be addressed through speech presentation but through songs, the message can be well communicated.

There are various issues in life that occasioned the composition of various songs such as when there are ills in the society, joyous moments or abominations by the traditional rulers. In order to correct the ills, the women pass the message to the public through satirical songs. During joyous moments, melodious songs are sung as well.

Consequently, when mothers want to cuddle their babies to sleep, they sing lullaby songs. There are also motivational songs that are used in work places in order to gladden the heart of the workers for greater productivity. During traditional marriages, songs are also sung by the young girls to the celebrant. Through songs, they make known their wishes, desires, advice and prayers for the celebrant in her matrimonial home.

Many countries have engaged in wars at different times; this has necessitated the composition of war songs. War songs are songs that communicate to the nation or society that there is danger. The war songs are sung when people fight for their rights.

During the Centenary Anniversary of the Invasion of Amaeke Item by the Royal West Africa Frontier Force (RWAFF) on the 28th of December, 2016, the people sang some war songs used during the war in order to recast their past experience. A close attention to the lyrics of these songs prompted the examination of the semantic deviations that are embedded in the songs in order to bring to the limelight its aesthetic values.

Knowledge of the history of *Amaeke* and their war songs will give a clearer view of the study at hand. It is a very prominent clan in Old Bende Division of Eastern Nigeria. It migrated from Abala Ebe/Potopo in Akwa Ibom. The item people were led by an offspring of four brothers called Uwanni Eke, Okwe and Akpa. In their journey to their present abode, they got to a place where some of their kit and kin settled which is called Ozuitem (where Item people rested). The rest of the Item people continued their journey to the place presently called Item. The four brothers spread their hands in order to occupy their inheritance. Uwani moved to a place presently called Apuanu, Eke moved to the present day *Amaeke Item*, Okwe moved to the place presently called Amaokwe Item and Akpa moved to the present day Okoko Item. Item as a clan presently comprises nine (9) villages. The four mentioned above constitute the Obu Ano Item, the traditional authority of the people. The other five by names, Akanu, Amaekpu, Okagwe, Okai and Umuakpa are offshoots of these four. Consequently, the entire Item people are blood relations.

The Genesis of *Amaeke* Item War Songs

The two sister villages of Apuanu and Amaeke had a little misunderstanding that resulted to the case being decided in the court in Arochukwu. The court's rule imposed a fine on the people of Amaeke Item to be paid within a given time frame. The representative of Amaeke Item in this case, Mazi Obai Kalu did not inform the entire community about what transpired in the court. Thus, Amaeke people were ignorant of the fine imposition in them by the court. When the time elapsed for the payment of the fine, the court wrote to Amaeke people through the Postal Agency in Okoko Item to remind Item of the fine. Unfortunately, the letter was not delivered to Amaeke people, rather it was replied by the Postal Agency informing the colonial masters that Amaeke people are not going to pay any fine to anybody but were ready to confront and fight anyone who dared to demand such fine from them.

A second letter was written and was replied as well that Amaeke was ready to meet any force with force. This was done by someone who wanted evil to befall Amaeke. The British detested any form of opposition to their command from local communities and they saw the two letters as an affront on their integrity and to His

Royal Majesty, the King of England. The District Officer that was sent to demand the fine was wounded the officer. The soldiers lived and interacted with the people under the umbrella of peace. But later their deadly mission was unveiled. The colonial forces stationed in Amaeke Item launched an attack on the community on the 16th of July, 1916. The supposed friendly army launched a very ferocious military operation against the community, killing and maiming men, women and children and burning down houses. Despite the massive destruction in the land, Amaeke warriors fought with their strength and defended their people and community to a great extent. In the neighbouring villages, the people of Amaeke have been known as great warriors. The wars that have been fought by the Amaeke Item have occasioned the composition of some war songs.

Presently, jazz, reggae, and other forms of pop songs are in vogue. The younger generation seems to be the traditional war songs as archaic and not in line with their present interest. We have failed to embrace the aesthetic values in the songs that remind us of our rich cultural heritage in order to rescue our cultural heritage from going into extinction.

This study sets out to explore the stylistic features in Amaeke Item war songs, bringing to the limelight the semantic features/deviations that are embedded in the songs.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is ethnopoetics. It was coined as a term by erome Rothenberg in collaboration with George Quasha in 1968. First, it involved non-western poetry which includes songs. It dwells more on the songs derived in our indigenous communities from our people.

Secondly, it is a poetry that is written or sung to exhibit the high influence quality of the people's indigenous communities from our people.

Ethnopoetics refers to the study within the field of linguistics particular to specific culture. The development of ethnopoetics as a separate subfield was greatly pioneered from the middle of the twentieth century by anthropologists and linguists such as Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock. Ethnopoetics was popularized in the early 1980s with high profile works like Dell Hymes, *'In vain I tried to tell you (1982)'*.

The major focus of ethnopoetics is to harness the aesthetic and literacy structure of oral arts such as songs. Ethnopoetics is a unique method of analyzing the linguistic choices used in poems, songs, myths and narratives. According to Hymes, ethnopoetics is based on the organization of lines and verses in works of verbal art.

This theory is relevant to this study because it dwells on the aesthetic values that are embedded in our cultural songs. It talks about the songs being a reflection

of the people's experience. This is greatly in line with the Amaeke Item war songs that unravel the experiences of the community through the war songs. The aesthetic values are portrayed through the semantic deviations that are employed in the song.

Empirical Studies

Isaac (2016) carried a research on '*A literary analysis of Ogba Satirical and Panegyric Songs in Rivers State*. According to him, satirical songs are rendered to condemn anti-social acts such as murder, theft, adultery among others. The purpose of his study was to do a literary analysis of the songs which include context and style of performance. He found out that Ogba songs are composed on general pattern of lines, stanzas and other poetic devices which make up the poetic features include apostrophe, personification, rhetorical questions. More so, he discovered that the Ogba satirical songs are rendered as response to certain anti-social behavior of individuals like adultery, theft and others. He recommends that both cultural organization and governmental agencies should endeavor to collect and conserve these satirical and praise songs and other oral literature genres for posterity in order to have a documented history for the younger generation.

Maxwell (2015) carried a research on "*A literary stylistic criticism of Niyi Osundare's poetry in Rivers state*. The purpose of this study was to show that the linguistic properties of a text particularizes that text and determines its meaning. He also established that the language of literature is unique and requires a literary stylistic interpretation for a fruitful discovery of meaning. The researcher focused on the aesthetic meaning in the poem through the use of metaphor, imagery, parallelism, alliteration. She found out that the poetry of Osundare is marked by unique language properties which means, is beyond the ordinary. These languages properties shape and beautify the poem. She recommended that further research on Osundare's poetry especially, on the language properties of his poems. This will enable our younger generation to embrace our cultural heritage.

Uwandu (2015) also carried a research on '*A Stylistic Criticism of Chimamanda Adiche's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun in Rivers State*'. The purpose of this study was to illustrate these features of style, to show how their stylistics bend through graphological levels and syntactic levels and how they are realized at semantic levels. The researcher focused on language as one of man's remarkable attributes. She found out that the ideological slants in linguistic items show how conclusions are validated by analysis of linguistic set.

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Data Presentation

Deviations consist of deliberate violation of the norms at all linguistic levels. Semantic deviations constitute another instance of linguistic deviation in literacy language. They are figures of speech that are found in the language of literature. They are deviant because the meaning in them is not communicated through literal meaningfulness. Semantic deviation is another type of linguistic deviation found in the literacy language where song features.

Artistes employ semantic deviations in order to create aesthetic value in the songs. Artistes deviate from the literal meaning of the words to the deeper expressions of meaning attached to the lyrics of the song. Semantic features are under the foregrounding features of irregularities. Foregrounding irregularities constitute real deviations in literary writing and the song writer derives joy in using semantic donations because of their artistic purposes that is; the creation of intellectual beauty. This work centers on semantic deviation and that will be mirrored through the following; personification, synecdoche, metaphor, euphemism and simile.

Personification

This is a stylistic feature in which the attribute or quality of a living thing or human being is given to inanimate thing. This means that inanimate things are being seen like humans. The song below is an example of personification. In the song of lamentation, the first two lines *Ada Ebeji Inokwa n'ulo, Osimiri agara Ije tojuo n'ulo* are examples of personification.

War Song of Lamentation

Ada Ebeji inokwa n'ulo

Osimiri agara ije tojuo n'ulo

First daughter of Ebeji are you there in the house

Lit trans Ocean walked covered house

Non lit trans Ada Ebeji war has set in.

Eng y trans Water has submerged the house.

Osimiri is being personified in the song. Ocean is being personified as

First daughter of Ebeji

Lit trans Ocean walked covered house

Non lit trans:

Ada Ebeji war has set in.

Eng v trans

Water has submerged the house.

Osimiri is being personified here. Ocean is being personified as a human being that can walk to the house. To a layman it will sound so unreasonable to refer Ocean as a human that can walk. The song writer has placed *Osimiri* meaning Ocean as a sign of deviating from the natural meaning of using a clear language with a direct meaning. He did this to prove his power of artistic intelligence and power of creativity. *Ada Ebeji* meaning first daughter is being addressed in the song as the goddess of the community.

The song writer decided to use *Osimiri* meaning ocean instead of *Iyi* meaning river. He used the ocean to make his listeners to understand the seriousness of the war. His diction has reawakened the consciousness of the listeners of the song on the intensity of the war. If he had used river, this will portray the war as a lighter one. His diction has created a deep thought to the listeners. It has made the entire community to be seriously at alert that danger is loomed. This is a war of song of lamentations. The entire community is afraid because of the *Osimiri*-ocean that has covered their land. *Osimiri*-meaning ocean is representing the war that has set in.

Rhetorical Question

The use of the topical question in the song was for aesthetic purpose. The songwriter kept on asking the *Ada Ebeji* if she is in the house and their community is about to be submerged. He was lamenting for help from their goddess so that the communities will win the war. The constant repetition of the line one of the song four times was to remind their goddess that the victory must be assured by her. The people believed so much in their goddess.

Song A(ii) Line (1) (Àkànkwù nà àfifia ègbùrù, ùnù sị èlèè biàsàajè n'ùlọ) is also an example of the use personification in Amaeke.

Item War Songs

Lit trans

Palm fronds and cassava leaves them come into house

Non lit trans

Our war opponents have invaded our community

Eng v trans
house

How did the palm fronds and cassava leaves come to the

Palm frond and cassava leaves are meant to be seen in the farm. It does not stay in houses built for human beings. It has been personified by giving it the attribute and quality of a human being. Traditionally, when people carry palm frond and cassava leaves from one community to another, it is a sign of war. The use of personification is clearly seen in the songs. He used it to create the awareness to the

listeners on the symbolism of the leaves. Moving from its real place to another place symbolizes war. Furthermore, the use of relative pronoun “the ‘*ele*’ meaning who is pointing back to their enemies that are waging war.

Egbe anyi na anuri onu

Literal	gun we and rejoice oy
Non-literal	warriors are rejoicing for their victory
Eng version	the guns are rejoicing

In the war song of commendation, the gun is being personified. The writer has given the attribute of a human to inhuman gun can't rejoice but he has used gun to represent warriors. To a layman, this makes little or no sense in the song, but for stylisticians, the gun has been used for critical thinking. It also deviates from the usual norm of placing the gun with inanimate object. The writer foregrounded the world in the song. He wants the listeners to question the choice of diction. He uses it for his artistic intelligence.

In appendix war song of consolation, there is the use of personification in the song.

Ogu miria ma ani emekasigbuola

Literal trans	hoe and the machet we had destroyed all
Non-literal	our warriors have been inured greatly
English literal	hoe and the machete have been spoiled

In the war song of anger, the writer used personification in the line two of the song.

Osi kporonkwu kwayi kwara onwo ugwu

Literary trans	Tree dry respect yourself respect
Non-literal	our enemies respect yourselves to avoid destruction
English version	dry tree should respect itself.

The beauty of the war song is cherished by the use of semantic deviations in the song. The writer refers to the war opponents as trees. It is only humans that can respect themselves because of their common sense. Trees cannot talk or hear but the writer has given the attribute of the human which is ‘respect’ to inhuman. He addressed their enemies as dry trees because of their frailty. He has seen that they don't need much force in conquering them in the war. The tree that is personified raises the mindset of the hearers on the use of trees instead of human beings. The writer used trees in place of human beings for critical thinking. The use of adjectives

War Song of Praise/Admiration

Déem kálù ibù ọdúm ná agha

Lit trans Brother Kalu you are lion in war

Non lit trans Brother Kalu is a great and strong warrior

Eng v trans Brother Kalu is a lion

Ókókó kwóyi kùwára onwè ùgwù

Lit trans Parrot respect self-respect

Non lit trans Our war opponent talk a lot

Eng v trans Parrot respect yourself

In the two different lines of the song above, the visual sense of ‘*Odum*’—meaning lion metaphorically symbolizes power and bravery, and *Okoko* meaning parrot. In the first song the great warrior deem *Kalu’s* power and strength in the battle front has been attributed to a lion. Lion is the king of all animals. It has power that no other animal can overpower it. The images of *Deem Kalu* has been portrayed as that of a lion in the war. The songwriter has used this stylistic feature which is equally a semantic deviation to prove his literary artistic beauty. His diction has food for thought in the mind of these listeners. His calling deem *Kalu* a lion – *Odum* proves his prowess in the battle. He has no rival at all. He is being feared by his war opponents. The stylistic feature *Odum* meaning lion has been foregrounded for aesthetic purposes. Human beings cannot on a normal setting be addressed as a lion but in the world of stylistic, foregrounding of words is very necessary for artistic knowledge. In the next song, in the first line the *Amaeke* item warriors refer to their war opponents as *Okoko* meaning parrot. They metaphorically use the parrot for their war opponent because they have talked too much against them. The *Amaeke* warriors want them to understand that they believe in action and not mere talking. They referred to them as parrot because of their empty boastful talk. The warriors have seen that their strengths are only in talking. The use of these stylistic features in the analysis of a song creates an opportunity for deep thought. It equally makes the song enjoyable.

Also, in the song of lamentation, *Ada Ebeji* is a metaphor and *Osimiri* meaning ocean is also a metaphor. The song writer uses the name *Ada Ebeji* to represent the goddess that the people worship. They rely on the power that she has been defending them in the past why does she wants to abandon them in this present war, why? Why? This is reaffirmed in the song.

Ada Ebeji ino kwa n’ulo osimiri etojuo

Lit trans We go see king evil happened

Non lit trans Death has occurred in our land

We should see king, because evil has happened

The issue of death is a very serious matter and should not be reported as a mere occurrence. But in the above songs, the song writer has used these stylistic features to make the issue of death mild and soft in the heart of people. He used these features to achieve his aesthetic value in the song. Instead of using 'Onwu' meaning death, he prefers to use a softer word. This is more appealing to the ears of the hearers 'agajela uzo Ogololo' meaning embarking on a long journey of no return.

The use of the plural *anyi* meaning 'we' and 'our' form signifies that the song writer is making a collective statement on collective experience of his people. He is just the mouth piece of the group that is relating the experience that they had in common. The sense of 'weness' with regard to the community people forms central ingredients of their self-awareness, self-consciousness and self-image. The use of the first person pronoun in the song above shows communality, solidarity and collectivity. The use of lexical repetition 'we' and 'our' also proves the togetherness that are found in the people. It is also a form of cohesion in the structure of the songs that brings harmony and increases the connectivity within and between the sentences. This cohesion increases the communicative power of oneness among the warriors. It is also a stylistic distinctive features used for uniting the lines of the song.

He employed the personal pronoun "they, us, them" in the song in order to show their joint efforts and commitment in fighting their enemies so as to achieve their victory. The third person pronoun "they and its morphological variants 'their and them' are referring to their opponents in the battle front while the 'us and we' in the song is referring to the *Amaeke* community that is being attacked. The use of the polarity 'them and us, 'we' and 'them' in the song show that there are different groups of people that are involved in the fight. The songwriter sometimes uses personal pronoun ("he") in the song to show the relationship that exist between him and his people. This means that he is part of the experience his community were going through.

Simile in *Amaeke* Item War Songs

This stylistic deviation compares two or more unlike things by using such words as "like" or "as." The songs of praise below illustrates its usage, the use of simile gives a nice tone to the song. *Amaeke* Item war song of praise in lines one and four are examples of simile.

War Song of Praise

Ndé anyi dika ur uruábuba

Lit trans Our people fly like butterfly

Non lit trans Our people cannot be defeated in war

Eng trans Our people fly like butterfly

Ndé anyi ná-agba dika ányù

Lit trans Our people stings like bee

Non lit trans Our warriors are poisonous

Eng trans Our people stings like bee

By comparing their people (warriors) with butterfly and bee”, the song writer wants to point out how vibrant and powerful their warriors are. The comparison of the people with the “bee” was done in order to add to the beauty of the song. He foregrounded ‘*ururuabuba*’ meaning butterfly because of analogy he wants to make. He creates the picture that his people were strong in battle.

Ndé gbrá anyi dika ugbo

Lit trans Our war we like eagle

Non lit trans Our warriors are highly esteemed

Eng trans Our warriors are highly esteemed

This stylistic deviation creates a picture of high esteem on the Amaeke warriors. Comparing the warriors with the eagle is to create a sense of responsibility in the listeners on the level they operate. Eagles are known for higher grounds. They don't soar lower like other birds. They soar very far in the air and move to different places. He has decided to compare the warriors with eagle that cannot be among the mediocares. The song writer's choice of comparison proves the high honour he accord his warriors. Their strength in war was so high that they cannot settle for defeat. Their reasoning was above their opponents. The essence of the semantic deviation was to achieve aesthetic value in the song.

Findings

From the analysis of the study, we have been able to find out that the *Amaeke* Item song writers have used some linguistic elements to create an implied meaning or sense from the literal meaning attached to the songs.

Also, It was found out that some semantic deviations employed such as personification, synecdoche, metaphor, euphemism, simile, apostrophe etc. was to create a deeper sense of reasoning of the songs more than the literary meaning of the lyrics.

CONCLUSION

This research work has brought to limelight that there are list of semantic deviations employed in our traditional songs. These semantic deviations are employed in order to bring out the aesthetic values that are in the songs in the course of this study,

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher therefore recommends that:

1. More research work should be carried out on other traditional songs of other communities in order to retain our cultural heritage.
2. Government should encourage students to take up research work on cultural songs by giving them grant so as to prevent it from going into extinction.

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