

The Use of Animal Metaphors in the Representation of Women in Bukusu and Gusii Proverbs in Kenya

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Abstract

Animals have been widely used metaphorically to convey certain meanings related to human beings in Bukusu and Gusii societies. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the use of animal metaphors in the construction of women and men. This paper reports on the findings of a study that focused on the use of animal metaphors in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs that sought to ascertain whether the common proposition proposed by Lakoff and Turner is applicable to the data of this study. The study also aimed at examining the similarities and differences in the meanings and representations associated with the animal metaphors in both Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. Thus, this paper set out to investigate the main attributions that are attached to women and men in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. Data of the study comprised forty eight Bukusu and Gusii proverbs related to animals; ethnography was used to select the proverbs; the data analysis focused on the representation of women through the examination of the meanings and metaphorical schemas of the respective proverbs using conceptual metaphor theory, the great chain of being framework and feminist critical discourse analysis.

The analysis revealed that the meanings associated with animal proverbs do not conform to the common proposition of Lakoff and Turner. The paper concludes that various differences in meanings are associated with the metaphorical schemas of Bukusu and Gusii proverbs, which are attributed to cultural aspects of the language in question; and gender inequality is evident in the stereotypical depiction of women who are described as dependent on and submissive to men, and who are valued for their physical charm, chastity domestic roles and ability to bear sons to continue the family line. Implications are drawn on the basis of the analysis, and thus, the study suggests that in asymmetrically structured societies, linguistic resources are systematically used to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

Key Words: metaphors, proverbs, Bukusu, Gusii, women, representation

Introduction

Since proverbs are part of a given society or culture, they reflect all features of a society (traditions, habits, democracy, equality, gender...) and vice versa. So, the proverbs of a certain country may determine certain features about the society they originate from. Women were perceived like evil and were compared to animals such as dogs, horses, cats etc. Thus, this fact shows that women are not only locally undervalued or discriminated, but they are universally underestimated. This fact is also illustrated in this quotation proposed by Wolfrang (1993:66) “Almost every proverb that touches on women contains a severe negation of the value of women in society”.

Concerning the impact of proverb on society, Wolfrang (1993) claims that though proverbs try to convey wisdom, what they actually do are “brainwash” people, using false generalizations and stereotypical conceptions. That is to say, the more new and false generalizations are conveyed in proverbs, the more changes occur in people’s perceptions and conceptions about certain issues. This study examined the aspects of women’s and men’s lives that are highlighted and the messages embedded in the metaphoric language of the proverbs. This was done with a view to raise awareness of individuals towards the false and biased generalizations in proverbs, and thus help create a generation sensitive to what violates and upholds equity in society. Nothing defines the position of women as clearly as its language. This language, in turn, encapsulates a society’s thoughts, beliefs and values. The fact that proverbs are part of people’s popular culture which includes language, it is important to know how these proverbs function and how they are structured to both convey and maintain certain man made ideologies and policies.

The use of animal metaphors in the expressions of many languages of the world is pervasive Muhammad and Rashid (2014). Such use of metaphors is not merely as a poetic device, but also as language elements which convey specific messages in everyday communication. As proposed by Lakoff and Turner (1989), metaphors have been regarded as a matter of thought rather than just linguistic ornaments per se. This is to say that metaphors mirror our perception, experience and understanding of the world (Muhammad & Rashid, 2014). Furthermore, metaphorical language allows people to comprehend one kind of entity in terms of another. Through the mapping of the source and target domains, the attributes loaded in the source domain are transferred onto the target, thus “allowing the target categories to be apprehended in novel and often revealing ways” (Haslam, Loughnan and Sun, 2011:1).

One source domain that could provide rich metaphorical expressions is the animal kingdom, perhaps due to the close relationship between people and animals since ancient times. In this light, it is common to see that, to a certain extent, people are sometimes likened to animals. Research has shown that animal metaphors are often used to connote negative meanings in many cultures. This is because of the higher order form relegated to human beings compared to that of animals, as reflected in the Great Chain of Being (GCB) (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Nevertheless, positive meanings are also associated with animals, such as lion and bull, which conceptualize courage and strength (Rodriguez, 2009).

Yoruba and English proverbs compare women to animals, food, plants, property, and trouble Kehinde (2005). The findings of the study revealed that women were compared to meat, in their marital life, because making love to a woman was compared to eating meat. The implication of this attribution was that women have no value other than being mere sexual objects, predisposed to satisfy males’ desires. Kehinde (2005) also established that women were compared to property. They were compared to a “filled” house and “tilled” field. According to the proverbs, a man treats his wife very gently as long as she remains passive and inanimate. When she happens to act otherwise, the man treats her differently, and he addresses her like an enemy. Furthermore, women correlated also with “ship” with regard to their ability to bring trouble to their owners who are men of course. In fact, women were also considered as men’s property.

Animal metaphors have been studied from various perspectives, with focus on the source domain, particularly on the manifestation of the concept ANIMAL in the metaphorical expressions and those on various animals in spoken and written discourse. In fact, resulting from the interest in the relation between language and culture, many researchers have studied animal metaphors cross-culturally i.e., by comparing data from two or more languages in question: English and Spanish (Fontecha and Jimenez Catalan, 2003; Rodriguez, 2009), English and Mandarin (Wang & Dowker, 2008; Wei & Wong, 2012), English and Persian (Esmail Faghieh, 2001; Talebinejad & Dastjerdi, 2005), Malay and Arabic (Sabariah, Pabiyah ,Nurul & Nadia, 2012).

The literature on animal metaphors has informed us that culture does play a vital role in determining the meanings attached to the animal metaphors as different language will have different meanings ascribed to the same animal. This is to say that one same animal may not be equally conceptualised in different languages and cultures.

One example of this can be seen in the work of Talebinejad and Dastjerdi (2005) who examined animal metaphors in English and Persian. In their study, the meanings for 44 animal metaphors in these two different languages were provided by the native speakers of each language. The findings revealed that animal metaphors in Persian and English are similar to a certain extent; however, most of them are culture-specific. To illustrate a few, turkey in English is used to conceptualise a stupid person. In contrast, turkey refers to a hypocrite and an opportunist in Persian. What is illustrated here is although turkey is negatively perceived in both languages, the meanings attached to this animal is different.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Imran-Ho Abdullah (2011) focused on ascertaining whether the common proposition of animals is universal or specific to a particular culture. Malay proverbs related to dogs were examined and the findings of his study were compared to the common proposition of dogs proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), i.e., loyal, dependable and dependent. The analysis of the study revealed that dogs in Malay were weak, despised, bad or ignorant and not as what is suggested by Lakoff and Turner's proposition. The study suggests that there is a difference in the proposition and metaphorical schemas in the semantics of animal proverbs and it is related to the social and cultural beliefs upheld by the community of that particular culture.

Proverbs on women are known to be harsh and critical. They are often cited to highlight a negative quality and to criticise women. Certain proverbs express a deep misogyny. Proverb repertoire of any language possesses a few that speak ill of women. Using a sample of 100 proverbs, Jayawardena (2014) examined the representation of women in Sinhala and French proverbs. Specifically, the study addressed the questions of how women are represented in proverbs in these two cultures, which aspects of their lives are highlighted, and the differences and similarities seen in the French and Sinhala proverbs. The sample proverbs were translated into English in order to facilitate the study. The study findings indicated that women and family is a theme found in both Sinhala and French proverbs. Moreover, women's role as mother and her love and affection towards the children are discussed and much appreciated, especially in Sinhalese. Certain proverbs look at the relationship between men and women. Often, in these proverbs, the superiority of men over women is noted. Further similarities were seen in reference to and comparisons with various animals primarily to stress on character flaws. Additionally, the choice of animals was not the same in these two languages. In Sinhalese, certain proverbs associate superstition with women. Comments on qualities such as fidelity, intelligence, and chastity, create a portrait of a woman that was inferior, weak and mediocre. It is even possible to state that some are quite sexist in their criticism of women.

Several examples also show that women are capable of creating an evil impact on others. The comparative study brings to light the differences and also the similarities seen in the representation of proverbs of the two cultures. Further, the study concluded that despite the cultural differences and the geographical distance, proverbs in these two languages create an overwhelmingly negative impression of women.

In this regard, animal images offer a window on the role given to women and men in our society. Whether in the form of pets, livestock or wild animals, women tend to be seen as inferior and subordinated to men (Rodriguez, 2009). Additionally, metaphors offer a window on the construction of social identities. They convey biases in favour of particular social groups that are considered as the normative in detriment to those individuals who do not conform to this group. Thus metaphors tend to reinforce the dichotomy between “the self and the other” (Rodriguez, 2009). Bearing in mind the social force of metaphor in making social grouping, this study tries to explore how women are constructed through animal metaphors in Bukusu proverbs. Metaphorical expressions that use animal names as their source domain applicable to people abound in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. In Spanish, man and woman are often conceptualized as animals of some sort. Men are frequently referred to as studs, bucks, wolves, foxes, bulls and lynxes whereas women are referred to with such metaphors as chick, bird, kitten, chicken (Nilsen, 1994). Consequently, the choice of such names is not arbitrary but may inform about the expectations and beliefs society holds about males and females.

Metaphors are not divorced from the world of our perceptions and conceptions, but very firmly rooted in it (Rodriguez, 2009). As such, most animal metaphors predominantly with men are usually based on size, strength and habitat of the animal (wilderness). Women by contrast are seen as small domestic animals such as hen. These implications of such metaphors may transcend the solely and hint at stereotypical views of manhood and womanhood (Hines, 1999). That is being wild animals, men need freedom and no restraint, however, the fact that women are presented as domestic or livestock animals might suggest that a woman’s place should be confined to the domestic arena. These images correspond with three main categories with which women are identified namely, pets, farmyard, wild animals (Muhammad & Rashid, 2014).

The awkward correspondence between the most beloved pets and women can be understood in terms of Leach’s (1964) link between animal terms and taboo. Leach’s categorization of animals rests on two parameters: social distance and edibility. According to him, there exist structural correspondences between the way women are classified as potential sexual partners and the way animals are classified as edible.

The classification finds a set of equivalents with the relation humans have with animals as regards closeness and edibility.

1. Pets: very close and inedible (e.g. dog, cat)
2. Farm animals: although tame, not as close as pets, and sometimes inedible (e.g. hen, cow)
3. Game/field: not tame, but edible (e.g. quail)
4. Wild animals: remote, not subject to human control and, therefore, inedible (e.g. wolf)

The merging of the two classifications can explain the pejorative import attached to dogs and cats. In fact, pets are not classed as potential food in the English- and Spanish-speaking world, and because they are close to man no sexual relationship can be approved of.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), The Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Theory. These theories are briefly explained in the sections that follow.

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Animal metaphors have been one of the subject matters examined by many scholars with interest in the field of cognitive semantics. The common analysis framework of researchers who work within this field is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The theory, which describes the mapping of two domains known as source and target domain, has been adopted widely in the analysis of metaphorical expressions related to various concepts, among others, concept of emotions (Kövecses, 2000), virtue, such as perseverance (Sabariah Md Rashid, 2011), and inflation (Silaški and Đurović, 2010). Such studies have looked at how these concepts are conceptualized in the identified metaphorical expressions.

In the theory of metaphor presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “a metaphor is the expression of an understanding of one concept in terms of another concept, where there is some similarity or correlation between the two”. From the cognitive linguistic point of view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Lakoff and Johnson argue that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5). A conceptual metaphor consists of a source domain and a target domain. The former is a more concrete or physical concept, while the latter is a more abstract concept. The Great Chain metaphor system describes how objects or things in the world are conceptualized metaphorically, which captures the metaphorical conceptualization of “things”, which appear in language as nouns (Kövecses 2002:123). It explains why and how a number of seemingly unrelated conceptual metaphors fit together in a coherent fashion.

The Great Chain of Being metaphor system maps attributes and behaviour between different categories of the chain in order to better understand one domain in terms of another (Fu, 2008). This system leads to the Basic Great Chain metaphor which is concerned with the relation of human beings to “lower” forms of existence, where human beings occupied the highest position within the system, followed by animals and inanimate things, such as plants, complex objects and natural physical thing (Fu, 2008). So humans are comprehended as animals and objects, such as *people are animals*. The chain is defined by typical attributes and behaviour. For example, humans are defined by rational thought, animals by instinct, plant by certain biological properties, and so on (Fu, 2008). Some common propositions that occur in schemas for animals are as follows: Pigs are dirty, messy, and rude. Lions are courageous and noble. Dogs are loyal, dependable and dependent. Cats are fickle and independent. Wolves are cruel and murderous. Gorillas are aggressive and violent.”

In view of this, the study aimed to investigate how animal metaphors construct women and men in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. The study explored metaphoric language in proverbs in order to understand what they connote and denote discursively in terms of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Specifically, the study sought to answer two research questions: 1) Do Bukusu and Gusii proverbs related to animals conform to the common proposition of animal schemas? 2) What are the salient meanings conveyed by Bukusu and Gusii proverbs related to animals?

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)

Society is saddled with many social problems including dominance and power abuse. These are enacted and reproduced in discourse in ways that may not always be obvious (see Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2001). Lazar (2007: 141), for instance, argues from a Feminist Critical Discourse Analytical (FCDA) perspective that ‘issues of gender, power, and ideology have become increasingly more complex and subtle’ in present times. It can be argued that proverbs, by their nature, present more complex and subtle understandings. That is, by their opaque and sometimes ambiguous meanings, proverbs often hide their intended meanings, thereby making their ideological underpinnings subtle, but quite pervasive. Proverbs can therefore serve to sustain (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements, in which the woman is disadvantaged, and these may be presented in very subtle ways. The work of FCDA is to critique such unequal gender relations. It is in this light that we find it a useful analytical approach for this study. FCDA may be considered as a subset of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because, in simple terms, FCDA is doing CDA from a feminist perspective. We shall therefore briefly outline some major tenets of CDA which are also the building blocks for FCDA. According to Litosseliti (2006), CDA ‘has an explicit interest in making transparent the “hidden agenda” of discourse – which, for instance, may be responsible for creating and sustaining gender inequalities’ (2006: 55–56). Wodak, however, describes it as fundamentally ‘interested in not only analyzing opaque but also transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language’ (2002: 11).

Similarly, Van Dijk defines CDA as a ‘discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (2001: 352). CDA therefore critiques social inequalities as reflected in language.

In critiquing social inequalities, then CDA’s interest ties in with the emancipatory goal of feminism, and also of interest to FCDA. The central concern of FCDA, therefore, is ‘critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order: that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group’ (Lazar, 2005: 5). Accordingly, the overriding aim of FCDA (like CDA) is to develop an analytical resistance to these unequal gender practices. But, in the spirit of postmodern feminism – which argues for the diversity of gender practices and creates room for the reinterpretation and contestation of meaning and different subject positions in different contexts our focus in this study was on critiquing the representations that disadvantage women.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Femininity

In critiquing gender inequalities, which FCDA seeks to do, two concepts that are useful for consideration in patriarchal societies are hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Patriarchal societies are noted for promoting male rule and female subordination, i.e. the domination of men over women. Men are seen as authority figures who hold the power, and this is seen as legitimate or largely inherent (Connell, 1987, 1995). Deeply entrenched in patriarchal societies are notions of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. According to Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity is: the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Schippers (2007) also defines it as ‘the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (Schippers, 2007: 94). As shown in these definitions, hegemonic masculinity legitimates the domination of men over women.

Corresponding to the wider understanding of hegemony, both hegemonic masculinity and femininity operate and establish themselves through consensus (e.g. persuading or ‘luring’ women to accept that certain types of femininities are positively valued) and not through force. Thus, as a number of these proverbs suggest by being positively valued for certain (usually) domestic roles, women are subtly made to accept and even enjoy their subordinate roles in society. However, as Wetherell and Edley (1999) rightly observe, although hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected to the subordination of women, it is not automatic that all women will be subordinate to all men. Rather, hegemonic masculinity and femininity involve ‘contest and constant struggle’ (Wetherell & Edley, 1999: 336) because speakers sometimes challenge or resist traditional notions of masculinity and femininity in certain contexts.

Thus, women (or men) may challenge hegemonic masculinity in some contexts through various ‘strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance’ (Connell, 1987: 184) – what Schippers refers to as enacting ‘pariah femininities’ (2007: 95). It is for this possible ‘non-compliance’ that proverbs like may show traces of women seeking to contest the dominant positions of men. This forms part of what may be referred to as ‘a discourse of socio-culturally unacceptable gender practice’, in other words language use (proverbs, in this case) that indicates gender practices that are socio-culturally unacceptable (Diabah, 2011: 166).

Methodology

Data of this study were Bukusu and Gusii proverbs related to animals. In this study, proverbs are defined as short metaphorical statements that convey implied meaning or ideas related to human condition, attitude or behaviour and have been handed down from one generation to another (Finnegan, 1970). Based on the cultural model that talk about the hierarchical order of forms of beings any proverb related to animals, plants and inanimate objects together with their properties such as reason, instinctual behaviour, biological function and physical attributes were considered as data for this study. The proverbs were collected using ethnography method. Using five (5) respondents aged between 60-70 years from Bukusu and Gusii ethnic communities, forty eight (48) proverbs related to animals were selected for analysis out of a total of one hundred and fifty (150) proverbs collected.

This study is qualitative in nature. The data were analysed using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) framework, specifically, the Great Chain of Being (GCB) (Lakoff & Turner, 1989), Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis focused on the mapping across the two domains and the metaphorical schemas manifested in the source domain, which underlie the conveyed meaning of the animal-related proverbs. Using a text-based approach, the analysis of the data provides linguistic instantiations of animal metaphors in proverbs, as well as how the various metaphors are structured in the source domain, in terms of the salient features related to animals mapped onto the target domain, i.e., meanings conveyed by the manifestation in the source domain.

Results and Discussion

Traditionally, a metaphor is considered to be similar to a simile except that the comparison in this case is direct; one entity is described in terms of another. Later research on metaphors (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), which led to the evolution and development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), considers that metaphors are central to human thought. Lakoff (1993: 203) explains that metaphor in contemporary metaphor research suggests a cross-domain mapping; thus, a metaphor ‘is the surface realization of such a cross-domain mapping’.

In using a metaphor, a speaker conceptualizes one mental domain in terms of another. We identify the use of animal metaphors in some of the proverbs in our database. The metaphors, we observe, are used to reinforce the dominant roles expected of men and the accompanying subdued roles of women as well as their vulnerability and weakness.

Metaphorical Uses of Animal Names Applied to Women

Metaphorical expressions that use animal names as their source domain applicable to people abound in Bukusu and Gusii proverbs. The findings indicated that women are correlated with inanimate things such as sticks, animals, birds, plants, private body parts, faeces and considered to bring trouble to their owners. Women are inanimate object, rarely their names are mentioned. These are the common metaphors used to describe women.

Woman Correlated with Animals

I. Women as pets

Perhaps, the most obvious case of prototypical pet in Bukusu proverb is the dog. Dogs have a reputation for being noble and reliable and most often they are known as “man’s best friend”. However, this characteristic of faithfulness does not always hold up since the figurative sense of dog when applied to a female conveys negative connotations, implying ugliness and promiscuity (Rodriguez, 2006). In fact, the very word *dog* to refer to a woman means *ugly female* or *prostitute* (Eble, 1996). Similar considerations apply to its Bukusu equivalent *embwa* (dog) and Gusii *esese*.

Consider the following proverb:

1. *Embwa ebukulanga khuchochomala khwa mawe.* Bukusu Proverb. (A puppy/dog squats like its mother)
2. *Esese eaberi n’yarusetie entwoni Bogere.* (Gusii Proverb)

(A female dog made the male dog come all the way from Luo land

Metaphor

Source domain ----- **Target domain**

Female dog ----- woman

Puppy/ squatting ----- daughter

The primary subject of squatting is understood in terms of the secondary subject of the puppy. The Gusii proverb 2 connotes that the cause of evils done by men is women. Whatever a man does is as a result of provocation by a woman. Hence the source of evil is the woman.

Implication: A girl who is a prostitute takes after the mother. The use of the metaphor is full of sexual innuendoes. In the African society, particularly Bukusu ethnic groups, the mother has the responsibility of training and bringing up children in the right way according to the norms of the society. When daughters are tainted, it is the mother who takes responsibility; if a son is a thief, it is the mother who is the cause. Thus women are portrayed as creatures that harbour genes of all vices in the society. The linguistic relevance of the metaphor is that of sex discrimination. A dog presents figurative usage and is one of the most common terms of opprobrium for a woman, condensing the senses of a despicable woman and a prostitute. The metaphor hints at the idea of illicit sex, after all, having sex with a prostitute falls outside what is considered moral or correct behaviour.

Consider relevant proverbs to 2 and 3 as follows:

3. *Ese embe teri na ande agiya* (Gusii Proverb)

(A bad dog has no good place.)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- **Target domain**

A bad Dog ----- A bad woman

A woman is regarded as a dog and that she has no manners irrespective of where she is. She is likely to misbehave. Another Gusii proverb that refers women to dogs is:

4. *Ese entindi n'ya ngori ntambe* (Gusii Proverb) (A vicious dog is tethered with a long rope)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- **Target domain**

A vicious dog ----- A troublesome woman

Women who are ill mannered are avoided since they can cause harm. Mark that, the rope has to be long since there is a likelihood that the dog might even turn against its owner or handler. A man is supposed to be weary and put measures that would ensure he is safe from any harm that might be caused by his wife. Example 5 below also depicts how women are regarded as dogs among the Gusii.

5. *Tonkora buna esese ya mochie onde* - Gusii Proverb

(Do not treat me like a strange dog)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- **Target domain**

A strange dog ----- A disregarded woman

Strange dogs are normally ill-treated and chased away from one's compound. The same is true for disregarded women. A woman is likely to treat another with contempt hence the relevance of this proverb in cautioning against such treatment.

Apart from being regarded as dogs, women in the Gusii culture are also regarded as cats. Consider 6 below.

6. *Kemoni ki'e magona mabe gesogia mbeba koria* – Gusii Proverb

(A cat that snores badly denies itself a rat)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- **Target domain**

A cat that snores badly ----- An ill behaved woman

A woman is regarded as a cat especially if she is loose tongued and is ill behaved.

Implication: By regarding women as cats it is implied that they are undependable, have low intelligence and lazy waiting only to be provided for. The negative evaluation of women as prostitutes is further highlighted in the following proverbs (7, 8 & 9):

7. *Engokho sesala likulukulu tawe*- Bukusu

(A chicken does not give birth to a turkey).

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

A chicken/Turkey ----- woman/daughter

Naturally it is very unlikely that a chicken would give birth to a turkey.

Implication: Women are associated with desire, hunger and edibility. The state of being in love of a couple is metaphorically instantiated by resorting to bird names such as *lovebirds* or *tortolitos* (turtledoves) in both English and Spanish (Rodriguez, 2009). Yet, in spite of this, the Spanish equivalent of *bird*, that is, *pájara* does not hold any hint of affection, since the term is applied to *a cunning woman* and even to *a prostitute* (Carbonell, 1997). Such a reversal might respond to a long cultural tradition that associates sex with bird imagery. This is the case with the Bukusu proverb (3 above) which is a metaphor that implies hidden sexual appetite. This is because chicken is reared for consumption. Thus good values are associated with the father whereas bad ones are associated with the mother.

8. *Ekhafu yabene okhama nololelela musilibwa.* Bukusu Proverb

(You milk someone's cow while watching the gate)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

Milking a cow that is not yours ----- man (watch the gate)

The primary subject of milking a cow is understood in terms of a man stealing another person's wife to exercise caution that he is not spotted.

Implication: women are portrayed as farmyard animal which exist to be exploited and eaten. "Milking" a cow that does not belong to you is a metaphor in Bukusu which highlight illicit sex. Additionally, "watching the gate" is a metaphor that refers to the owner of the "cow" (a metaphor for woman). For this reason, the thief has to watch the gate to ensure that the owner of the cow is not around. This proverb reveals that women, whether married or not are meant to satisfy men's sexual urge.

Women are also correlated with doors which are representative of intimate relationships and sexual willingness. Proverb 19 illustrates this attribute.

9. *Kumwikale kwa bene, kumwikule kukwoo.* (The door that is closed is not yours but the one which is open).

Metaphor

Source Domain----- Target Domain

Open door----- unmarried woman (invitation for a relationship)

Closed door ----- married woman (no invitation for a relationship)

The subject of a closed door is understood in terms of denial whereas an open door is an invitation. The proverb show that just like doors, if the woman leaves hers open, everybody will enter but if it is closed, no one will. This imagery also point to the issue of marriage in the sense that a married woman is a closed door whereas the unmarried one is open for any man to try his luck.

Implication: In as much as Bukusu society appears to respect the institution of marriage, the issue of sexual invitation or denial is an individual's choice. The image of a closed door indicates a married woman whereas an open one shows the unmarried woman. Women are equated to doors, without doors, a house is unsafe, and therefore anybody would seize an opportunity to steal what might be precious in the house. By the same token, if a woman decides to leave her door open, it will have no value but allow everybody entry. This means that men are allowed to have sex with any woman as long as she is not married. However, if the woman is married, the man has to be careful- watch the gate. In this metaphor, women are attributed to inanimate objects devoid of feelings-the very reason why men perceive them as sex objects. Doors can be opened and closed at will by the owner of the house. Thus the figurative use of "door" is an opprobrium of women implying promiscuity. As revealed in the first proverb, the second, the third and fourth proverbs also insist on the previous point. In other words, a woman's place is restricted to the private sphere which is home.

II. Women regarded as birds: domestic and non-domestic

Common species of domestic birds in Bukusu and Gusii include the chicken (hens and cocks) and ducks. Another animal commonly kept as a pet is the bird. Common species of domestic birds in Bukusu and Gusii include the chicken (hens and cocks) and ducks. Bird metaphors also concentrate the senses of small size, youth, domesticity and entertainment (Rodriguez, 2009). In English, the very word *bird* is defined as *a girl or a young woman* (Webster). The metaphor is usually charged with affective connotations, being commonly used as a term of endearment.

This positive evaluation appears to have its roots in the amorous disposition of the animal as well as in the folk tradition that associates birds with symbols of love (*cf* Talebinejad & Dastejerdi, 2005). The bird proverbs in Bukusu present different images of women compared to the Spanish and English. This is illustrated in the following proverbs:

10. *Eyisakulila ebocha.* –Bukusu Proverb

(The hen that scratches the ground may find something to eat). – Bukusu

11. *Nyoni ena mage teri konora n'ena magena ekonora-* Gusii

(A bird that has young ones does not grow fat but the one that has eggs)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target Domain

Searching hen ----- woman (searching for food)

The primary subject of the hen scratching the ground is understood in the secondary subject of a woman searching for food.

Implication: Firstly, the chicken is the source of nourishment. The bird image indicates the small size which correlates with the edibility. Thus women are small beings who must serve the men in all capacities; including serving as meat (the term meat has sexual innuendoes). Secondly, the metaphor highlights the expected characteristics of a good wife- a working mother who should be economically productive. A lazy woman is not tolerated in the society. Women are thus represented as carers/nurturers. This is in agreement with Diabah and Amfo (2014) findings which established that through the use of a stereotypically feminine practice (providing food), the proverb indicates that one of the marks of a good wife and mother is her ability to provide for the nutritional needs of her family.

Woman referred to as a bird:

12. *Namususuni kaya kumunwa-* Bukusu.

(A gossiping woman burns her mouth in the end)

13. *Abakungu nabaya korende n'emenwa yabasareirie.-* Gusii

(Women are good, but mouths have spoiled for them)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

A gossiping ----- woman

Namususuni is a kind of bird that has a thin, sharp long beak and moves from one flower to another in search of honey. Subsequently the acts of moving from one place to another makes a woman a source of gossip. Gossiping has bad repercussions if discovered. Thus the primary subject of gossiping is understood in the secondary subject of *Namususuni*.

Implication: Women are represented as people who don't keep secrets because of their loose tongues and eavesdropping. They are talkative and gossipers. This image portrays women as untrustworthy. For this reason, women cannot be trusted with powerful positions in society because of their divisive nature.

III. Women as Farmyard Animals

Livestock animals exist to be exploited and eaten. They render service to man by helping in farm labour or by producing foods like meat, eggs, milk, and etcetera. The two characteristics yield the factors of servitude and edibility, factors which will be central to the metaphoric identifications of women with farm animals (Rodriguez, 2009). The following proverbs are illustrative of the sub-human themes of servitude and edibility in Bukusu society.

14. *Ekhafu yakhaywa kumukhono yeyakalila kumunwa.*

(For lack of a hand the cow uses its mouth to scratch itself)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

Cow ----- woman

The animal proverb in Bukusu means that a woman who is childless does everything for and by herself. Children and husbands are the hands women use for support without which, she is helpless. In other words, it means that the children and husbands are the pillars a woman needs for a complete family. The meaning is also captured in the Bukusu proverb 15. *Obwikholandie bwakila engokho yeyakalila kumunwa* (for lack of a hand the hen scratched itself with a beak) which means that the hen fends for her husband and children. These proverbs indicate that a married woman must bear children.

They also reveal that women live because of men. In the same view, the concept of childlessness is captured in the proverbs where women are conceptualized in forms of inanimate objects such as pots, body parts (particularly thighs) and excrement. For instance, 16. *Enyungu etekha erusia kumuya*. (A cooking pot must produce steam), 17. *Omukumba aruma lirango* (The one who is childless sends her thigh), 18. *Khukhwibula khukhila khunia* (Giving birth is better than excreting). The “pot” is a metaphor that represents two images: the cooking activity 19. *Omwibo satila muningilo*- (A woman who has just given birth should not touch the cooking pot); and the “productive woman” 20. *Chitwaya chibili sechitekhelwa munyungu ndala ta*- (Two cocks must not be cooked in one pot). Further, the image of a pot is used to present the image of a woman as a cooking vessel, which is also delicate if not taken good care of. If the pot breaks, no cooking will take place.

Note that proverb 16. *Enyungu etekha erusia kumuya*- (A cooking pot must produce steam) is an equivalent of *Riso rimo ndiateki* - Gusii (One eye is likely to get spoiled) A woman is referred to an eye. She is the one who takes care of the home and safeguards it. Marrying one woman is likened to having one eye. It is believed that such a woman is likely to pass on and in case this happens then the man will lose a lot of things.

Implication: A woman cannot do anything perfectly on her own. Whereas these proverbs portray men as perfect and immortal, women are represented as delicate just like an eye is. And for that matter it is advisable to have more than one wife so that in case one passes on there is another one to take charge. The import of these proverbs indicate that women are referred to using negative images of pots, thighs and excrete. These images correlate with the traditional view of women taking the secondary position in the society. In addition, the full and wholesome existence of women depends on marriage, producing children and caring. Thus as far as servitude is concerned, there is a strong link between the female role in reproduction, and factory farmed animals (Rodriguez, 2009). A married woman must produce children. In a similar view, a cooking pot produces steam. This implies that in Bukusu society, a childless woman is considered an economic liability because what she does best is eat and excrete. This attribute confines women to the traditional role of mothers and servants. Such a scenario is evidenced among the Gusii as illustrated in proverb 21 that follows:

21. *Totogia moiseke kieni, motogie mwana.*

(Do not praise a girl for her beauty, praise her for her ability to give birth to children)

This is an indication that among Bukusu and Gusii women were only valued for their production function just like animals are valued for providing humans with food. The role of womanhood involves both reproduction and economic production roles as further illustrated in the following proverbs (22-26).

22. *Ekhafu yekamabele niyo ekwichanga mumbuko*. Bukusu (The most productive cow is the one that falls in a ditch).
23. *Eyibula bukhwana yisika kamabele*.- Bukusu (The cow that calves twins must also produce enough milk to feed them)
24. *Owibula bukhwana esika kamabele*. Bukusu (If you give birth to twins be ready to produce milk).
25. *Esambi niyo bakhamanga*. Bukusu (A cow that is stubborn is the one that is milked).
26. *N'engina ekwanera emori, tari emori ekwanera eng'ina*. Gusii (It is the cow that takes care of the calf not the calf taking care of the cow)

Just like a cow takes care of its calf, a woman is also supposed to take care of her children; she should provide for them and protect them. Though she has been given this responsibility, she is lowly regarded just like cows are. Once a cow has been milked they have no other value other than to wait for the next milking. For instance in proverb 27 below:

27. *Ng'ombe yareng yane yaroka omonyenyi ng'a tata*. Gusii (A cow that was mine calls the butcher father)

One could be having a daughter but after the daughter has grown and is given in marriage she no longer becomes his but belongs to the family in which she got married. In this proverb, a woman has been referred to as a cow. There is lack of power and authority in the cow. She has no authority over what happens to her and is as a result of situations that happen to her.

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

Giving birth (cow) ----- enough milk (woman)

Due to biological functions, women are likely to be viewed as cows. A woman is depicted as a creature that performs the animal functions of producing and rearing offspring (Brennan, 2005). In both LuBukusu and Gusii, the cow metaphor is used to imply not only productivity but also the promiscuity of women. This is illustrated in proverb 28 that follows:

28. *Nyang'era ndotungi ko n'emori yaye ndotungi* – Gusii proverb

(The way a cow is, so shall its calf be)

29. *Eeri magwari n'yang'o? Otaroochi eng'ina Nyabisembe* - Gusii

(When you see a big bull don't ask for its mother, its mother is Nyabisembe ; the huge Cow)

The semantic import of these proverbs is that calves get their attributes from their mothers and especially the bad attributes. Therefore if you realise that there is a bad attribute in a calf look no further for the origin other than its mother; the cow. Such implications are also evident in:

Implication: The Bukusu and Gusii society structure their experiences of desire in terms of hunger and feeling. Hunger and eating are frequently used to express sexual desire and sexual satisfaction. The figurative use of the word “cow” and the act of “milking” and the “milk” hide sexual appetite or desirability. This vertebrates the metaphor of *Desire* and *Hunger*. Therefore in these cultures, the productivity of a woman is measured not only by her ability to give birth but also the ability to be sexually and economically productive. In a similar way, women are perceived in terms of goats which in African society are valueless and only reared by women. This is illustrated in proverb 30: *Bakesi babili sebakulana kumurwe kwe mbusi tawe* (two men cannot fight over the head of a goat).

However, despite women being represented as lower beings, the only situation when they are of value is if they are productive and also if they are beautiful. In the latter situation, a woman may earn the valued prize of a cow to be paid to her parents as bride price as evidenced in 31. *Bulayi bwobukhana bukosa ekhafu*. (A girl's beauty may steal a cow). The Bukusu society extols the beauty of women but cautions men against gambling one's cow on youthful beauty. The implication is that beauty is not the only parameter to measure a good wife but manners and productivity. The parameter of productivity is further underscored in proverb 32: *Okhalola mayi nasilimukhana aloma ali rarawe katibia chikhafu*. Bukusu (A person who never saw the mother at the height of her beauty may say the father wasted his dowry). The image of cow alludes to the important ritual of dowry payment for beautiful women. However, due to childbearing and continued heavy domestic chores, the once beautiful woman becomes wasted. When this happens, the man is at liberty to marry another young beautiful woman as long as dowry is paid. The following proverbs illustrate this point of view: 33. *Omulayi akhina mumuse lulala*. (The beautiful one dances in the arena once) 34. *Eyapa nabulobe elipa nabukelema*. (The stick which beat the wife send away will also beat the newly married wife). These proverbs represent women as slaves of their own beauty. They are like flowers which are beautiful but withers away within no time. The beauty of a woman is portrayed in the same sense. Bukusu society does not spare even the beautiful ones in cases of disciplining wives. This alludes to wife battering as a norm in this society.

Another proverb that portrays women as farm yard animals in Gusii is proverb 35. *Eeri magwari n'yang'o? Otaroochi eng'ina Nyabisembe* (The big bull, who is its mother? The mother is the big cow)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

A cow ----- A woman

This proverb indicates that whatever attributes the bull has, were passed to it by its mother.

The implication is that all negative attributes that a child has are deemed to have been passed to it by its mother. The woman is represented as the origin of all the evils.

IV. Women as Inanimate Objects/Vessels

Women are correlated with inanimate objects such as firewood stores, doors, water, hills, and shortness. Proverbs 17-20 are illustrative of this representation.

36. *Mwimbi sakeleka nungo* (A short one cannot measure a fire store)/*Omwimbi akhila omulisi*. (A short one is better the one who cries).

Metaphor

Source Domain----- Target Domain

Shortness/crying ----- women

The primary subject of shortness and crying are understood in terms of the secondary subject of a woman.

Implication: Shortness is mapped to being myopic in reasoning. It is in this sense that the metaphor is used in the Bukusu proverbs. Women are perceived as short and as such foolish. This import is an opprobrium implying that “beauty” signifies stupidity which is also illustrated in the Bukusu proverb; *Ekhabi ekhila lukondo*- Luck is better than beauty). In this context, brain and beauty are attributes that differentiate men from women. Men are associated with reason, thought, intelligence and wisdom, whereas women are associated generally, with emotion, tenderness and lack of logic. These findings are in agreement with Oboler (1985) who reported that among the Nandi, men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and to lack the ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans. For this reason, it is generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estate and wives for the most part concur with their husbands’ plans. It is commonly claimed that if a woman tried to manage property, she would very likely make a mess of it.

37. *Kiao nkia na kiabande nkiabande* – Gusii (What is yours is yours and what is not yours is not yours)

The context of this proverb is that a man can use what belongs to him in whatever manner you wish but you cannot use what does not belong to you in the same manner. A woman is regarded as an object that belongs to a man and so can be used in whichever way he feels. A woman seems not to have control over herself. She is there to be manipulated by the man as he may wish.

Women are also portrayed as pots:

38. *Kerutu takorera kiabande, emboga nere enyongo*. Gusii (Do not envy other peoples things. Yours is in the pot);

39. *Enyungu etekha erusia kumuya*. Bukusu (A cooking pot must produce steam);

40. *Omwibo satila muningilo*-Bukusu (A woman who has just given birth should not touch the cooking pot);

41. *Chitwaya chibili sechitekhelwa munyungu ndala ta*-Bukusu /

42. *Twoni ibere tichiana koiyekerwa nyongo emo*. - Gusii (Two cocks cannot be cooked in the same pot).

43. *Nyabiche agekoreka gokora enyongo ko moguba tabwati*-Gusii

(Do not make for yourself a pot if you have nothing to light fire)

Metaphor

Source Domain ----- Target Domain

Pot----- Woman

The primary image of a pot is understood in the secondary source of a woman.

Implication: The image of a pot is used to present the image of a woman as a cooking vessel. The “pot” is a metaphor that represents two images: the cooking activity and the “productive woman”. Men are advised not to lust for other people’s women. Pots are used for cooking what is put in them. They have no choice over what shall be cooked in them. A woman was only allowed to be married to not more than one man. It is observed men were not constrained by such limitations.

Regardless of the heat that she would go through, she had to persevere to ensure that her husband and children were well taken care of. Proverb 43 serves as a caution to those who wish to marry that they should first make proper arrangements and preparations before running into marriage.

44. *Kee keyia nkeerwa* - Gusii (A new vessel is highly regarded)

Metaphor

Source Domain----- Target Domain

A new vessel----- Woman
A woman is seen as a vessel for carrying food.

Implication: Any time one gets a new vessel they tend to cherish it more and use it more as they disregard the previous vessels. A woman is regarded to as a vessel among the Gusii because any time a man married a new woman he would disregard the older woman and favour the new woman, she at that time will be seen as a new vessel. A new woman is tasked with carrying the love for her husband and ensuring that he is happy. It is indicated therefore that as soon as such a vessel becomes old it would also be disregarded. Hence it is only useful for as long as it is new. Women are therefore represented as a means of providing joy for men who are at liberty to use and discard at will.

V. Women as Wild Animals

Wild animals enjoy complete freedom. They are independent, able to survive on their own and very often pose a threat to man (Rodriguez, 2009). It is also observed that animal images used for women usually present them as small, helpless animals in need of care and protection whose main function is to provide entertainment, service or food (Lakoff, & Turner, 1989). Men are conceptualized as wild animals which need no restraint and are therefore independent and inedible. However, the concept of wild animals does not adjust to women pattern and if it does, the women are perceived as going against the norms of the society. The following proverbs 45-46 are illustrative of such conceptualizations.

45. *Emboko ekhasi ekhaulila isakulila bukono.*-Bukusu (A female deer destroys her lair before departing).

46. *Enjofu eyebwayiayia siekhusianga musanga.* - Bukusu (A woman who prostitutes around never brings up a family).

Metaphor

Source Domain ----- Target Domain

Female deer ----- woman
A prostituting elephant----- woman

The primary subjects of tough headedness and inability to bring up a family as evidenced in the images of a deer and an elephant are understood in terms of the secondary subject of a woman.

Implication: The proverbs highlight the expected qualities of a good wife and mother. The traditional role of womanhood involves meekness, submissiveness, patience and faithfulness. Therefore, a woman who lacks such characteristics cannot bring up a family. In this case the image of women as caretakers is reinforced and their socially assigned roles justified.

47. *Ey'ekoroma ngete egosererwa.* Gusii (That which bites is thrown away using a stick)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain
A biting animal ----- A woman

Women are also portrayed as being dangerous. They can cause harm and so a lot of precaution needs to be taken in handling them.

48. *Engu'ko enyeanyi yaborwa maswa.* -Gusii (A lazy mole does not get food)

Metaphor

Source domain ----- Target domain

A mole ----- a woman

The mole metaphor is quite amusing because moles are both destructive and edible. Applied to women, it implies that women though they are of importance in the society, they are also destructive. Mark the small size of the mole and its stubbornness.

Implication: Women are seen among the Gusii as the ones to fend for their families. They should provide food for their households and more specifically to their children. However they are likened to moles because they can also bring trouble. The fact that moles are edible among the Gusii also signals the conceptualization of the 'edibility' of women by men.

Conclusion

The findings in this study suggest that there is no difference in the proposition and metaphorical schemas in the semantics of animal proverbs and it is related to the social and cultural beliefs upheld by the Bukusu and Gusii community. In this regard, the attribution, whether in the form of pets, livestock or wild animals, women are perceived as inferior and subordinated to men. Additionally, metaphors construct the social identities of women. Thus the metaphors reinforce the gender ideologies as a belief system in Bukusu and Gusii culture. Firstly the metaphors portray women as inferior, worthless and weak. The implication drawn from these attribution is that women are marginalized, discriminated in issues of decision making, participation, resource distribution, policy formulation and in politics because of the prejudices. Secondly, women are portrayed as objects which are to be used for beauty and can be used and thrown away. This implies that girls and women serve to fulfil the role of sexual objects. Thirdly, the proverbs refer to women as domestic workers, wives and caregivers. Women are represented as a subordinated group. Through the use of the proverbs, women are brainwashed and come to accept their role as domestic worker.

This brings division of public and private sphere and encourages dependence syndrome hence women not empowered. Such proverbs are outdated because there are women who are assertive that they hold high positions in labour market, politics and others are very successful in business.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the following for supplying us with an insight in to the proverbs used in this paper and also the proverbs in their native forms and the cultural meanings. i) Mr. Raymond Makhanu Barasa, Elder, Bukusu Ethnic group, Kimalewa Location, Bungoma County, Kenya; ii) Ms. Flora Gweyani Obagu, Woman Elder, Bukusu Ethnic Group, Namawanga village, Bungoma County; iii) Ms. Teresia Nyakerairo Nyabwobi Woman Elder, Gusii Ethnic group, Nyamusi Village, Nyamira County; iv) Mr. Christopher Okemwa Elder, Gusii Ethnic Group, Kisii County; v) Josephine Kerubo, Women Elder, Gusii Ethnic Group, Nyosia Village.

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