

# Metaphorical Language in the Representation of Political Issues in Swahili Novels: A Focus on *Kiza Katika Nuru* and *Chizi la Heri*

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**Abstract:** This research entailed an analysis of metaphorical language in the representation of political issues in Swahili novels, a focus on *Kiza Katika Nuru* and *Chizi la Heri*. Stylistic devices play a very key role in any literary work. Therefore, this research aimed at analyzing metaphorical language in the representation of politics in the selected novels. The study adopted a qualitative research design since it intended to explain a naturally occurring phenomenon. The study adopted purposive sampling where two novels namely: *Chizi la Heri* and *Kiza katika Nuru* were used as sources of data. In collecting data, the researcher read the selected novels and extracted the literary devices that depicted political issues. Data analysis and presentation was done descriptively based on the objectives of the research. The study was guided by the relevance theory and the stylistics theory. The relevance theory was proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in 1986. It holds the principle that communication process involves not only encoding, transfer and decoding of messages, but also numerous other elements including inference and context. Stylistics theory of Viktor Shklovsky 1904, deals with the study of textual meaning. The study found out that the authors of the selected novels used metaphorical language to depict political issues. The literary devices used to represent political issues include: similes, symbolism, proverbs, metaphors, and catch phrases/idioms. Political issues depicted by the literary devices include: post- election violence, voting and votes' theft, women and politics, corruption, political assassinations, youth and post-election violence and citizen oppression.

**Keywords:** Metaphorical Language, Political Issues, Swahili Novels

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## 1. Introduction

Language plays a very key role in any literary work. This study examines the employment of metaphorical language in the representation of political issues in Swahili novels namely: *Kiza katika Nuru* and *Chizi la Heri*. Literary devices refer to any specific aspect of literature, or a particular work, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and analyze [13]. Literary stylistics focuses on analysis of language, the workings of language in literature, and systematically towards interpretation of literary texts [12]. Politics in any society dictates the economy, policies, traditions and national development at large. One of the roles of literature is to depict the political atmosphere in a given society [6]. The purpose of this study was therefore to establish how the

authors of the selected novels used metaphorical language to depict political issues.

### 1.1. Literature Review

Literary devices refer to any specific aspect of literature, or a particular work, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and analyze [13]. A majority of Swahili prose writers use metaphorical language to communicate the experiences, ideas and emotions of their time. In East African contexts for example, the employment of various devices in the analysis of literary works in Kiswahili exists in literature.

In the analysis of themes and styles in Swahili novel, *Kidagaa Kimemwozea* [8] investigates the themes of poverty, corruption and nepotism and sees these as a result of poor governance. The researcher also looked at how the author

used different styles of writing to portray his characters. However, Rono's research did not entail the use of metaphorical language in the depiction of political issues.

Sidora [10] analyzed the use of metaphorical language in the Swahili novels, *Vipuli vya figo* and *Siri ya Maisha*. The study established that the authors used stylistic devices such as similes, personification, metaphors, catch phrases and sarcasm to depict their themes. This study has an implication to our study since our study seeks to establish the use of metaphorical language in the representation of political issues in the selected novels.

Wamitila [14] investigated the use of narration and metaphor in Swahili novel, *Mzingile*. His study established that the author of the novel successfully employed metaphors and narration to depict different themes and push forward his plot as well as achieving the objectives of writing the novel. This study is significant to ours since it deals with the use of literary devices in the depiction of themes in Swahili novels.

In analyzing language use in the modern Swahili novel, Khamis [2] established that authors of the modern Swahili novel use language that does not conform to the traditional principles of language. He argues that the modern Swahili novel has a new trend in language use. This study is different from ours since it does not focus on language use in the depiction of political issues.

Following the discussion, it is clear that there is little work done on analyzing metaphorical language in the depiction of political issues in the selected Swahili novels. This is the gap the study is seeking to fill.

### 1.2. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the relevance theory and the stylistics theory. The relevance theory was proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in 1986. It holds the principle that communication process involves not only encoding, transfer and decoding of messages, but also numerous other elements including inference and context.

Stylistics theory of Viktor Shklovsky 1904 deals with the study of textual meaning. Simpson [11] asserts that stylistics as an inquiry has an important capacity because it can shed light on the very language system it derives from. He says that stylistics tells us about the rules of language because it often explores texts where these rules are bent. In the analysis of the selected novels, the researcher sees how language is employed in order to create literary devices as tools to deliver important themes.

## 2. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design since it intended to explain a naturally occurring phenomenon. This is described by Creswell, J. W. [1] as a way of collecting data in a natural setting. The qualitative research design was adopted because it was appropriate for descriptive purpose. The study adopted purposive sampling where two novels namely: *Chizi la Heri* and *Kiza katika Nuru* were used as sources of data. Kothari [5] states that purposive sampling

suits better in a study whereby the researcher finds it convenient to select significant respondents.

### 2.1. Procedures

In collecting data, the researcher read the selected novels and extracted the literary devices that depicted political issues. This procedure is referred to as document analysis. Kolbe and Burnett [3] state that content analysis is an observational research method which is mainly used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communications.

### 2.2. Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. It involves examining what has been collected and making deductions and inferences [4]. The analysis of data from the selected novels was meant to show how metaphorical language is used to portray political issues. Data analysis and presentation was done descriptively based on the objectives of the research.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Metaphorical language in the representation of political issues in *Chizi la Heri* and *Kiza katika Nuru*.

### 3.1. Symbolism

Symbolism is a literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. It uses symbols, be they words, people, marks, location or abstract ideas to represent something beyond the literal meaning.

#### 3.1.1. Symbolism in *Chizi la Heri*

The author of *Chizi la Heri* uses symbolism to depict political issues as follows:

The symbol of darkness where the writer uses darkness to symbolize the desperate situation in lives of citizens that is brought about by post-election violence. Post-election violence caused a lot of destruction of property and deaths of many people. The survivors of the violence, the writer says entered in great darkness. Character Ridhaa for example lost his property and his family and entered in the darkness of grief and sorrow.

The symbol of floods where the writer uses floods to depict the outcome of the post-election violence. Bodies of people and animal scattered all over the place. Burned vehicles and houses could be seen all over.

Children of different tribes playing together are used to symbolize a new society that is not bound by tribalism. The writer uses this symbol to bring hope that may be tribalism will end at some point in many nations of the African continent.

The symbol of the dead who sell their commodities from the next world fifty years after their death. To symbolize that most

developing countries of the African continent are still dependent on the developed countries even after fifty years of independence. They still import most of their goods from these countries at high costs instead of manufacturing their own.

Character Mwekevu is used symbolically to symbolize women's position in politics. Although Mwekevu wins in the general election, her victory is opposed because of her gender. The society believes that a woman cannot be given power to lead and this leads to post-election violence.

### 3.1.2. Symbolism in *Kiza katika Nuru*

The symbol of darkness which the author uses to depict poor governance. The author describes this darkness as darkness of the day and night. Citizens do not know their rights because they depend on their leaders who oppress them. They are said to be in great darkness.

The symbol of light which the author uses to symbolize freedom fighters. There are characters whose eyes have been opened and have decided to create awareness to the society to resist oppression and fight for their rights. Characters such as Mvita and Salma decide to risk their lives and fight for the rights of their fellow citizens. These characters the author says have received light and are no longer in darkness.

The life of character Kudura is symbolic in that it depicts the oppression of citizens. Although the husband of Kudura, Mzee Juba is a prominent politician and leader, her family lives in absolute poverty. She lives in slums and her children wear torn clothes. The family cannot afford basic needs such as food and clothing.

The symbol of children of different tribes playing together. To symbolize a new society that is not bound by tribalism. The writer uses this symbol to bring hope that may be tribalism will end at some point in many nations of the African continent.

The symbol of a long hand which oppresses a short hand by taking everything it possesses without minding its welfare. The long hand symbolizes the government which receives taxes from the citizens yet it does not mind about their welfare. The author uses this symbol to depict citizen oppression by the government.

Politicians such as Mzee Juba believe that when they win elections they possess the whole word. This means that they misuse their power by forcing citizens to follow them blindly, being corrupt and by assassinating their opponents.

## 3.2. Metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or an analogy between them. It directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. Myers and Simms [7] argues that the word metaphor comes from a Greek word that means to transfer from one end to the other.

### 3.2.1. Metaphors in *Chizi la Heri*

There is a comparison between fifty years of independence and a fifty year old child who can neither crawl nor stand. This shows a nation that depends on other nations even after

fifty years of independence. The writer uses this metaphor to depict the economic dependence of many African developing countries.

There is an analogy of women as hens and men as cocks. The metaphor shows the leadership roles of men especially in politics. The society of the novel believes that leadership positions are for the male gender. Women are seen as weak vessels who cannot lead the society. This is why Mwekevu's victory in the general elections is opposed by her opponents simply because she is a woman.

There is a metaphor of the exodus of the Israelites when they wished they would have died in Egypt rather than dying in the wilderness. Post-election violence made the citizens wish they would have remained in the previous governance rather than dying in the new one.

The writer uses the metaphor of wounds to refer to historical injustices. She says these wounds would still bleed if not taken care of. In the same way, if historical injustices are revived, they would cause political instability and social conflicts.

### 3.2.2. Metaphors in *Kiza katika Nuru*

There is an analogy of political leaders as gods since they have the power to dictate the economic status and living standards of the nation. They use their power to oppress the citizens hence creating fear in them.

There is a metaphor of political leaders as drunkards. They are thirst for power and money and are ready to go to any length in order to succeed. Mzee Juba for example, kills his son in order to stop him from opposing his leadership.

Human rights activists are seen as being mentally ill by the politicians. This is because they believe that their efforts of liberating citizens would bear no fruits. The leadership style of the political leaders such as Mzee Juba is that of dictatorship and he is ready to wipe anyone out of his way.

There is a metaphor of political opponents having a contagious disease. This is because they are influencing many citizens to oppose poor governance and citizen oppression.

## 3.3. Similes

Senkoro [9] defines simile as a stylistic device used to compare two or more items by use of words such as 'like' and 'as'.

In *Chizi la Heri* for example, the youth are likened to a bomb which can explode any time. This is because they have strength to cause a lot of damage to the society if not handled well. Politicians use the youth to accomplish their selfish interests. In this novel for example, the opponent of Mwekevu incites the youth to attack people and destroy their property after being defeated in the general elections.

In *Kiza katika Nuru*, the writer uses a simile whereby he likens the prices of commodities in the market to those of gold. He uses this simile to show that the standard of living is very high such that citizens cannot afford basic needs such as food and fuel. This is as a result of poor governance and corruption.

### 3.4. Proverbs

A proverb is a simple and insightful, traditional saying that expresses a perceived truth based on common sense or experience. Proverbs are often metaphorical and use formulaic language.

In *Chizi la Heri* the writer uses proverbs to depict political issues. For example she says, 'Mafahali wawili wakipigana nyasi huumia.' translated as, 'when two bulls fight, the grass gets destroyed.' This proverb means that when political leaders fight, the citizens suffer. The author of the novel used this proverb to depict post-election violence.

In *Kiza katika Nuru* the writer uses proverbs to depict political issues when he says for example, 'Mpiga ngumi ukuta huumiza mkonowe' which is translated as 'If you beat the wall using your hand, you get injured'. The people in power are compared to walls and their opponents are the fighters who get injured when they fight them. This means it is very difficult to remove them from office. It is like fighting against a wall.

## 4. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was analyze the use metaphorical language in the representation of political issues in Swahili novels. The study found out that the authors of the selected novels used metaphorical language to depict political issues. The literary devices used to represent political issues include: similes, symbolism, proverbs, metaphors, and catch phrases/idioms. Political issues depicted by the literary devices include: post- election violence, voting and votes' theft, women and politics, corruption, political assassinations, youth and post-election violence and citizen oppression.

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