



Analysis of Figurative Speeches in Wolaita Oral Discourses: With Particular Emphasis to Simile

Author:

By: Ayelech T/Mariam (Lecturer, Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia)

Email: ayelechteklemariam21@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study assessed some selected figurative speech that has progressive or pragmatic effect for the development of the Wolaita society and its overall socio-cultural implication. To this end around ten selected proverbs were collected from various sources such as an in-depth interview, focus group discussion and observation. The figurative speeches were drawn from simile. The analysis was made in context based way in collaboration with elders of the society, key informants that have deep knowledge and experience of the language and language experts. In addition, observations were made by touring into various real social dealings so as to have real understandings about the use of the figurative speech in contextual way. It was concluded that figurative speech is helpful to convey various kinds of educative, encouraging messages in the conversation, and the existence of limited awareness regarding the meaning and use of figurative speech in communication by the young generation. Thus, it was recommended that government and nongovernment organizations should carryout various awareness creation activities in order to expand the wide use of figurative speeches in the society. Besides, deep studies should also be conducted on other type of figurative speech to widen the scope of knowledge in this relatively un researched language.

Keywords: *figurative speech, oral discourse, simile indigenous wisdom*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Wolaita language is one of the languages from over eighty languages found in Ethiopia. As most heritage languages of Ethiopia, this language has been neglected and marginalized from being studied. For the long time it has been in a downward trajectory of growth, and the threat of language shift of its speakers had been its prominent feature. This is due to explicit and implicit pressures bestowed on the language by the successive regimes.

Ever since the incorporation of Wolaita into the central government of Ethiopia, up to the downfall of the Dergue, it has got little attention from then administrations. Even in some cases it has got mistreatment, and hence resulted in the public abandoning their language and adopting other major languages. As Batibo R. (2005) stated that one among other things that can contribute to the development of the language is the policy support that the government gives for the development of the languages. Hence among many other things that a language can benefit from the policy support is to make it learned and studied. Therefore, just after some time this language has become an academic language in various levels of education. Particularly, nowadays it is being given as a medium of instruction from grade one up to four. And it is given as one subject from grade five up to grade twelve. Right after last year, it is being offered at the university level. Hence it opened the opportunity to be researched in higher education institutions.

Hence, Wolaita is as the people known for its advanced oral discourse which they use in their daily, societal and ethno-cultural dealings to the greater effect of their communication. So they use proverbs, figures of speech and other literary techniques in their discourse. Thus, this long-standing tradition of oral arts of rich literary resource of the society has to be researched, recorded, and taught as part of transmitting the knowledge and conventions from generation to generation. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze the role of figurative speeches with particular emphasis to allegory, simile, metaphor and personification in the daily communication of Wolaita people.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The main initiating factors that caused the researchers to focus on this research theme of analyzing figurative speeches are the fact that the research of vast oral literature of Wolaita language is entirely intact. To the best of researchers' understanding, there has not been much research done in the language. Therefore this fact forced them to seize the opportunity given by the university to conduct a research on rich literary resource of Wolaita language. The other reason is that this literary resource has widely been used in the society for various social dealings be it in the negotiation, conversation, ceremonies, or in folksongs. However the current generation seems does not use of it and even do not know the value of it either because of negligence, lack of awareness or effect of language shift. So this research would be instrumental in reinstalling the values and ways of using the figurative speeches in Wolaita oral discourses.

1.3 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions.

- ✓ In what particular situations Wolaita people use their figurative speech particularly simile in their discourse?

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Design of the Study

The descriptive research design was used for this study. This is because; it is suitable to describe the existing social and ethno-cultural situation embodied in Wolaita figurative speeches. For the analysis, ten figurative speeches were selected as sample based on their thematic relevance to the current study. For the collection of ten relevant figurative speeches, three tools of data collection were used. Interview, focus group discussion and participant based observation. Then the figurative speeches collected were analyzed through qualitative method of data analysis.

3.2 Description of the research setting

Wolaita is among thirteen zones in southern nations and nationalities of Ethiopia commonly known by its oral tradition. The zone has twelve Woredas and three city administrations. The major economic activities of Wolaita are agriculture and trade with the population of around

three million people. The zonal city of Wolaita Sodo is located 380 km from Addis Ababa through Shashemene.

3.3. Subject of the study

The major population is Wolaita figurative Speech. However, because of manageability and other resource related constraints, around ten figures of speech especially from Simile have been selected for analysis.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

For this study the researchers used purposive sampling procedure to come up with ten figures of speech with particular emphasis to simile which constitute ten samples. 12 elders were selected as key informants for the purpose of interview and 12 participants were selected from various walks of life such as elders with good knowledge of the language, scholars who have experience in teaching the language, publishing in the language and researchers, students etc for focus group discussion. The researchers moved to the remote villages of Wolaita to conduct participant –based observation being part of their social occasions taking place in those villages.

3.5. Tools of Data Collection

In order to achieve the intended research objectives by gathering valid, relevant and reliable figurative speeches from the pertinent sample of the target population, the researchers used tools of data collection: focus group discussion, interview and participant based observation.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study used the qualitative method of data analysis. The entire data collected through interview, FGD, and observation were analyzed by using narration; in a qualitative approach. Then, it was presented in a systematic approach of describing, analyzing and interpreting the figurative speech.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section ten figurative speech were gathered and analyzed from Geeddaro (simile) figurative speeches. The analysis is made mainly in collaboration with experts of the language, elders and participants of focus group discussion.

1. Geeddaro Bilaa (Smile)

Geedaro bilaa compares two things to one another that are usually made by using the word *like* or *as...as*. It helps to better describe how something looks, feels, smells, tastes or sounds by comparing the object to something else with which they are familiar. The following were analyzed based on the discussion from stakeholders..

Kanchafoy mattaddan ootees.

Kanchafo is as busy as bee

As it is already known that bee is steadfast, hard worker from any of the creatures and it is loyal to its queen. In Wolaita "*Kanchafoy mattaddan ootees* " means *Kanchafo* is a hard worker, busy and he is loyal to himself and for his profession.

Hemetaa lawuhu ga biikkii? Ay geegedan gooshshettay!

Why don't you move fast? You are walking like a tortoise!

A human never walk like a tortoise, in Wolaita "*Hemetaa lawuhu ga biikkii? Ay geegedan gooshshettay!*" means to explain that instead of walking quickly, one should not kill the time. It is also to say that someone is not in the situation to walk slowly. This way of expression is used to insist on somebody to walk fast and save time and complete the given duty as fast as possible.

Iirra palamiyoogee olla kiyiyooga.

Arguing with her is like dueling with hand grenades

Arguing could never be a battle or gun fight rather it is simply the vocal exchange of expressions, in Wolaita culture and tradition "*Iirra palamiyoogee olla kiyiyooga*" it is used to express that the girl you debate is too challenging and cannot be persuaded easily. More over; she is not willing to listen the others and don't respect the different idea, maybe she may speak bad and change negatively. Therefore, it is to say that this way of speaking is equal to having war.

Ne kushshee mittaddan melliis.

Your hands are as dry as wood.

In Some cases the hands of some people are dehydrated and hard, here the hands of these people are compared with wood. In Wolaita, "*Ne kushshee mittaddan melliis*" is used to tell the hand owner that his hands are stiff and strong.

Miizaaddan warretsoona!

They fought like animals.

Whatever it is; no body, nothing, can fight like animals. In Wolaita culture and *tradition*, ‘*Miizaaddan warretosoon*’ It is to characterize the fight between individuals as an inappropriate and uncharacteristic act that has no acceptance from the society. Human beings should not solve their problem in primitive way or in uncivilized manner. That is in a manner through use of force or physical quarrel rather problems or disagreements should and could be solved through discussion and under the rule of law. So this way of speech is meant to discourage such unlawful act among the people.

Ta Na’e ufayssay tana maladdo xalqiyaddan mal’ees.

The smile of my baby girl is as sweet as the morning ray of sunshine

Most of the times the families or relatives like the happiness of babies makes them pleasant. Due to the strong love that resides on the family or relative especially mother or father or any of the elder say “*Ta Na’e ufayssay tana maladdo xalqiyaddan mal’ees*” to express the feelings of them as morning ray of sunshine which is refreshing as delicious food. In Wolaita culture and *tradition*, “*Ta Na’e ufayssay tana maladdo xalqiyaddan mal’ees*” greatly expresses the love of parents towards their children.

Poem

Wodiyaa	Time
Alleqo miishshadan neeni bonchchttenee	You are respected like jewelry
Eessa ililuwadan neeni mal’ottennee	You are as sweet as Honey
Doseta buquradan neeni saaphottenee	You are valued as best commodity
Daannadan pirdanawu neeni geeshshattenee	You are as genuine as an unbiased judge.

Time in Smile Figurative Speech

The fourth stanza generally shows the use of Time by using the simile figurative speech by using like and as...as. The first line says 'You are respected like jewelry'. It compares time with the precious metal. And the meaning is people should take care of time as the most expensive resource that has the power of rewarding if used appropriately. It has power of punishing if not used appropriately.

With regard to the second line that says 'You are as sweet as honey' refers to the comparison of time as honey. After all time and honey are two different things. However, they are compared to portray the fact that time is very essential for the change that an individual, the society or the country is aspiring for. If used in a well planned manner for the execution of our objectives it will be as sweet and as pleasant as honey.

In addition, the third line also comparing time with the most valuable or expensive goods by saying 'You are valued as best commodity'. In a literal sense time and commodity are two different things. However, the people of Wolaita used to express the significance of the time to an individual or to the society at large.

The fourth line also compares time with the smart and unbiased judge. It refers to a judge who is free from corruption and favoritism in all his evaluations. In the same way the verdict comes from time is flawless in that it punishes those who did not use it. It humiliates those who do not value it. It rewards those who value its use. It strengthens those who respect and go with it. And, above all, it is given for all human being equally.

So this kind of figurative speech has the paramount importance for the society in general and for young generation in particular. Hence this kind of linguistic resource should be preserved and used for teaching of the young generation in a bid to transform the social, cultural and economic situation of our society.

1. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study has tried to assess some selected figurative speech that has progressive or pragmatic effect for the development of the Wolaita society. To this end, more than forty selected proverbs were collected from various such as an in-depth interview, focus group discussion and observation. The figurative speech was drawn from simile, hyperbole, irony and metaphor. The analysis was made in context sensitive way in collaboration with elders of the society, key informants that have deep knowledge and experience of the language and language experts. In addition, observations were made by touring into various real social dealings so as to have real understandings about the use of the figurative speech in contextual way.

1.2 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussions of Wolaita figurative speech, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Figurative speech is helpful to convey various kinds of educative, encouraging messages in the conversation.
2. Limited awareness of regarding meaning and use of figurative speech in communication by the young generation.
3. There has been limited effort to educate the public regarding the figurative speech though incorporating them in curriculum and use of media.
4. The figurative speeches are used through various types of literary expressions such as conversation, poem songs and folksongs.

5.3. Recommendations

As the result of the conclusions above, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Deep studies should be conducted on other parts of figurative speech to widen the scope of knowledge in this relatively un researched language.

2. Various media should give emphasis to educate the general public about the meaning and use of figurative speech
3. Parents should give emphasis in educating and shaping the attitude of their children in using these resources in a bid to transfer them to the next generation.
4. Government and nongovernment organization should carryout various awareness creation activities have to take place in order to expand the wide use of the figurative speech in the society.
5. The ministry of education should include these resources in the curriculum so as to make scientifically learnt by students.



4. REFERENCES

- Abcarian, R.ed. (1986) Literature: The Human Experience. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Abrahams, M.H. (1981). A Glossary of Literary Terms. New York: Halt Rinehart
- Barnet, S. etal. (1973). An Introduction to Literature. Boston: Brown and Company.
- Berhanu Mathews .(2009). Fundamentals of Literature. Addis Ababa: Alpha Printers plc.
- Carter, R. & W. Nash. (1990). Seeing Through Language. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Clark, D.F.(1989). Talk About Literature. London: Edward Arnold.
- Finnegan, R. (1970). Oral Literature in Africa. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hall, R. (1963). Cultural Symbolism in Literature. Italy: Romanian.
- Knickerbacer, K.L and Reninger H.W.(1974). Interpreting Literature.NewYork:Holt Rinehart
- Porter, G. (1989). The Claims of Oral Literature. In ELT Documents
- Melakneh Mengistu. (2005). Map of African Literature: Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press.
- Mieder, W. (1999). Proverbs are Never out of season. popular wisdom in the Modern ago. New York.
- Miruka.O..(1994) Encounter with oral Literature Nairobi: East Africa Educational publisher.
- Nandwa, J and Bo Kenya, A. (1983). African Literature for schools. Nairobi: Longman.
- Okpewho, I. (1992). African Oral Literature. Blooming stone Indian: Indian Univesity press.
- Simyo.V. (1994). Understanding Oral Literature, Nairobi: Nairobi University press.

!