

Synonymy in the Songs of Ummaru Bagobiri: A Contextual Linguistics Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains how Ummaru Bagobiri uses words with differing meanings as synonyms in composing his song verses. Such words often differ in meaning, but Ummaru Bagobiri skillfully employs them within sentences as synonymous words. The methods used to gather data for this study included listening to Ummaru Bagobiri's songs, interviewing experts in linguistics, and reviewing scholarly works on linguistic studies particularly semantics. Interviews were also conducted with fans of Ummaru Bagobiri to understand how they interpret certain words in his songs. To ensure a theoretical foundation, the research is based on Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory, which emphasizes the role of context in communication. The study found that the speech context plays a major role in determining the meanings of such expressions. It also found that Ummaru Bagobiri uses his linguistic wisdom to employ words of different meanings as synonyms in building his poetic lines.

Keywords: Songs, Meaning, Words, Synonyms, Poetry.

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses how words acquire synonymous meanings in some of the poetic lines of Ummaru Bagobiri, the renowned Hausa traditional boxing singer. As will be seen later, words combine to form meaningful sentences in language. However, meanings are not fixed; they can change depending on the speaker's intent and the listener's interpretation, as well as the context of the utterance. Examples are drawn from Ummaru Bagobiri's boxing songs. In summary, synonyms refer to two or more different words that share the same or nearly the same meaning in a single language. In Hausa, such words may differ in spelling and pronunciation but still convey the same meaning. Yet, syntactically, not all synonyms can substitute for each other in every sentence; some can coexist in the same sentence, but with slight differences in nuances. Contextual meaning is the study of how the situation of speech influences meaning. It shows that meaning depends not only on the words used by the speaker and listener but also on the setting, time, and situation in which the speech occurs. In a note shell Speech context studies the intent and conditions under which sentences are formed to communicate a message. According Stalnaker (1972:380) "Pragmatics is the study of the purpose for which sentences are used, and of the real-world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterances. In

the word of Yule (1996:4) defines context as: “The study of the relationship between linguistic forms and the users of these forms.”

Thus, context involves the meanings of words within specific utterances and how the speaker selects and assigns meanings based on the situation. For example, the words “mage” and “kyanwa” in Hausa both mean “cat.” in English. However, a word like “dakuwa” can mean “a type of food” or “an insult,” depending on the context of word.

Hausa Oral Song

Muhammad (1978:6) defines oral poetry as “A speech of wisdom recited melodiously, not mere talk, which conveys a message through selected words measured by their rhythm and fluency.” While Gusau (2014:3) explains that oral poetry has existed since ancient times, even before hunting societies. Among the Hausa, hunting was among the earliest professions, and many songs were composed about it. As Hausa communities settled together for farming and self-defense, praise songs for leaders also emerged. Oral poetry, therefore, is performed in an appealing language that provokes thought and reflection. It serves as a tool for transmitting ideas, moral advice, and entertainment. It is performed with eloquence, rhyme, and traditional Hausa instruments after being memorized.

2.0 Research Methodology

Different methods were used to collect data for this study:

1. Interviews with scholars and researchers of oral Hausa poetry.
2. Consultations with Hausa linguists, especially in semantics.
3. Listening to Ummaru Bagobiri’s songs on cassette and digital recordings, then transcribing and analyzing them.
4. Reviewing existing books, journals, and theses related to the study.
5. visitation of cinema where the Hausa boxing is taking place especially in Kano, Katsina, Abuja just to lists but few,

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) Relevance Theory to analyze how meaning relates to speech context. The theory explains that meaning cannot be separated from the circumstances of the utterance. Context includes not only the physical environment but also social, cultural, and psychological elements that influence interpretation.

Brief Biography of Ummaru Bagobiri

Ummaru Amadu Tanko Bagobiri was born around 1948 in Gidan Danhillo near Sabon Birnin Gobir Local government in Sokoto State. His parents were Gobirawa from a village called Gabo under Illela Local Government. His father was not a musician but a herdsman; he inherited music from his maternal family, who were traditional singers. He studied the Qur’an in various villages, moving from Gidan Danhillo to Kauran Namoda in Zamfara State. After his father’s death, he farmed and herded cattle.

Ummaru began singing at youth gatherings and markets, later developing interest in farming songs, and eventually boxing songs after moving to Katsina State with his relatives. He became popular while performing his song at Danmusa, Kankara, Funtua, Dutsinma, and Daura. He was appointed chief singer (Sarkin Kida) for Sa'in Katsina, Alhaji Amadu Nafuntua, and represented Katsina State in national cultural festivals. He died in 2008 in Benin the capital city of Edo State, leaving behind one wife and three children.

Synonymy In Ummaru Bagobiri's Songs

Synonyms are words that have the same or nearly same meaning as another word in a giving language, this group Hausa of word came with different writing, phonology, but semantically the same. But in the case of Ummaru Bagobiri's Song these words essentially have different meaning in Hausa Language many a times they are far away in becoming synonyms because they do not share any semantic relation but such words often differ in meaning, but Ummaru Bagobiri skillfully employs them within sentences as synonymous words. Word meaning in a language refers to the literal meaning of word and its dictionary meaning, but when it comes to the contextual meaning anything can happen related to the actual meaning of the word. Here, we are going to demonstrate how Ummaru Bagobiri uses his linguistic competence of using different words with different spelling which are initially not synonymous to represent one thing depending on their context.

Firstly, there are several places where Ummaru Bagobiri uses words like (yaki) war, (fada) fight, (rigima) quarrel, and (wasa) play, in his song to refer to traditional boxing. Let us interpret the dictionary meaning of the words

before we move further.

Word	Dictionary Meaning
Yaki:	War or battle using weapons
Fada:	Fight or quarrel
Rigima:	Conflict or dispute
Wasa:	Play or entertainment

Normally in Hausa Language these words have different meaning and different interpretation but Ummaru Bagobiri skillfully uses all these words as synonyms that stand for traditional wrestling or boxing, just to explore the attention of his listeners. Here are some examples from some poetic verses of Ummaru Bagobiri's songs.

1a. The Song of Tica.

Jagora. : Ya Allahu la'ilaha'ilallah.

'Yan anshi. Allah la'ilaha'ilallah, Sani kaddara ta daukai, bai san ana sallah ba, bai san kiran sallah ba, Tica bai san gudun **yaki** ba.

b. The Song of Jafaru Kura jagora: A bar maka **yaki** Jahwaru. Kura maganin kare. ‘Yan anshi: A sakar maka **yaki** Jahwaru, na Umbaru **yaki** yaz zaka. Jagora: Kowar jaka **yaki**. Y/amshi: Eh kowaj jaka **yaki** ya sani, kai aka shakka Jahwaru, na Umbaru **yaki** yas sani

c. The Song of Shagon na Mai’ango Jagora: Wai me kaka shawarar **yaki**, horu maza da hannunka. ‘Yan anshi: Eh horu maza da hannunka, ga shagon Na-mai-ango.

2. Wakar Ali kZuma. Jagora : Mai halin Ali, mai halin Ali. ‘Yan anshi: kowaj jaka **hwada** ya so a raba, ci da maza hannunka guba, Ali zuma tsoronka a kai.

3a. Jagora: Ga wani ya **rigima** ja ya so a raba. Yan Anshi. Ci da maza hannunka dahi Ali Zuma tsoronka a kai.

4a. Jagora : Kamar Ali mai maciji, In dai za shi **wasu** ‘Yan anshi. rokon Allah muke yi in ka tahi lahiya lau, ka dawo lahiya lau.

Related to the above poetic verses our main concern goes into the word which we highlight. Semantically the meaning of those word when they are not putting in context could be controversial that is why we analyze them based on their contextual meaning to explore the synonymous version of the words, so that we can understand the exact message of the poetic verses. Consider what happen in example 1a-d Umbaru Bagobiri used **yaki** to represent Hausa traditional boxing, though **yaki** literally mean war in Hausa. the difference between war and boxing is open while in war there is privilege of using weapons such as guns and missiles but in boxing it is prohibited to use any kind of weapons and Hausa traditional boxing have its rules and regulation which are being use in the case of war.

In 2-3 Umbaru Bagobiri uses both **hwada** and **rigima** to stand for Hausa traditional boxing based on the contextual meaning of the words. But we have understand that in the case of fighting there is no any rules and regulation, but in the case of Hausa traditional boxing their rules and regulation and the winner will be decorate with some gift from the organizer and spectators. While in example 5 Umbaru use **wasu** to represent Hausa tradition boxing, and we know that **wasu** (play) is something which everyone can do but in the rules and regulation of Hausa taraditonal boxin children and women are not allow.

Based on what we have explain all those word **yaki**, **rigima**, **hwada** and **wasu** mean the same in the word of Umbaru Bagobiri as their contextual meaning in the givin poetic verses and that is why we refer them as synonyms in term of their meaning.

Another set of example is where Umbaru Bagobiri also uses words related to death, lie down, fall down, which have different meaning but synonyms in the word or songs of umbaru Bagobiri to mean defeat in a match, such as:

<u>Word</u>	Contextual Meaning
Kwanta	To lie down (defeated)
Fadĩ	To fall down

Mutuwa

Death or loss

Kashe

To kill (defeat opponent)

Kwana Lahira To die (figurative for losing)

In these songs, “death” or “lying down” symbolizes being defeated in a boxing contest.

5a. Waƙar Hamza ƙanan Alhaji Ada Jagora. Ashe ranar **mutuwa**. ‘Yan anshi. Eh ranar **mutuwa** ba a da kwana. Jagora: Eh sai ga dangi nai ma shi kuka, Lawalli bai sami hita ba, **tuwa** tai ma shi sauri, Allah kai mana gyara, aikin ba shi da dadi, Hamza ƙanan Alhaji Ada.

b. Waƙar Bature Gora Jagora: Ina Kandami yay yi, Ina mamman Burus yak kwana Duka **mutuwa** ta gama da su sai watarana Sun ja Bature xanmutanen Gora

6a. Waƙar Jafaru Kura Jagora: Allahu Akbar ina shagon Ahmadi. Wannan ya **hwadi** kwance, ya **kwanta-dama**. Sai ga 'yan'uwa nai sunai ma shi jaje.

b. Waƙar Hamza ƙanan Alhaji Ada jagora: Ashe ka tuna bugun da kai ma Dogo. Dogo ya **hwadi** kwance ya gaza tashi. Ya **hwadi** ƙanan Alhaji Ada.

c. Waƙar Bature Gora Jagora: Yaƙi ya baci, Ina Akushi xanmutan Musawa Akushi ya **hwadi** ya tsatsage sai dai musa tuwonmu a kwarya.

7a. Waƙar Shagon NamaiAngo Jagora: Yaƙin nan da kai da Kasimu mai kasa. Kasimu ya **kwanta**

b. Waƙar Bature Gora Jagora: Bawa ban san ka gaza ba Bawa ban san ka gaza ba sai ka **kwanta**

8a. Waƙar Shagon Batajemu ba Jagora: Na hi son maza a gama. Yan anshi: Wani sai ya **kashe** wani, Tsoronka akai hwage, shagon Bata-jemu-ba.

b. Waƙar Alin Mura Jagora: yaƙi ya **kashe** jan buzu Yam anshi: sai yay yi yamma da walkinai Sa maza su ji tsoro nai Ali xanmutan Mara ci fansa

c. Waƙar Bature Gora

Jagora: Duna waɗanda kak**kashe** Duna waɗanda kak**kashe** naka zaɓe Amman waɗansu na manta su.

Connected to the above poetic verses our main concern goes into the word which we highlight. Semantically the meaning of those word when they are not put in context they could be misunderstood that is why we analyze them based on their contextual meaning to explore the synonymous version of the words, so that we can understand the exact message of the poetic verses. Consider what happen in example 5a,b, 6a-c, and 8a respectively Umbaru Bagobiri used words like mutuwa, kwanta-dama, kasha and kakkashe to represent defeating in Hausa traditional boxing. Their literal meanings simply mean death or to kill. But if we consider their literal meaning all these poetic verses will not make sense that is why we look into their contextual meaning which give us the opportunity to understand the exact meaning of the poetic verses. While in examples 6 b,c, 7a,b Umbaru Bagobiri uses word like hwaxi and kwanta which literally means to lie down, after a defeat in Hausa traditional boxing. Based on our

understanding all those words mutuwa, kwanta-dama, kash, kakkashe, hwadi and kwanta stand for defeat in Hausa traditional boxing in the word of Ummaru Bagobiri as their contextual meaning in the given poetic verses and that is why we refer them as synonyms.

4.1 Research Findings

1. Ummaru Bagobiri uses various synonymous words to praise and excite his warriors, even when referring to the same activity.
2. He creates synonymous word through creativity and mastery of Hausa language.
3. The meanings of his poetic verses depend heavily on the contextual meaning of words used in the poetic verses.
4. He sometimes forms synonyms through several word formation processes such as compounding, like in, ya'kinhannu (hand battle), kwanta-dama (defeat).
5. He employs dialectal variations to enrich his songs and avoid repetition and makes his songs rich and expressive without repetition of word.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown how Ummaru Bagobiri masterfully uses synonyms in his songs. Although the words differ in literal (dictionary) meaning, he uses poetic creativity to make them convey one idea in context. His ability to manipulate language makes his songs rich and expressive without repetition. This stylistic feature contributes to his fame and the enduring appeal of his boxing poetry. This paper also explains the meaning of synonyms and his linguistic competence which gives him opportunity of creating synonymous word through creativity and mastery of Hausa language. So Ummaru Bagobiri uses various synonymous words to praise and excite his warrior, to capture the attention of the spectators.

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