



REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EKEGUSII PROVERBIAL METAPHORS: AN IMAGE SCHEMATIC ACCOUNT

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Abstract:

Proverbial metaphors are useful resources for communicating known truths about life in a given community. Most African proverbial metaphors, however, make reference to customs and situations that might be unfamiliar to some language users especially young people. On the basis of this background, this study employed image schemas to interpret Ekegusii proverbial metaphors that allude to young people. The research was anchored within descriptive research design. Primary data was collected from four Ekegusii respondents of an advanced age of at least seventy years old through an interview schedule. The collected data were then subjected to the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) in which four annotators were used to identify Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. Seven Ekegusii proverbial metaphors that refer to young people were identified through MIPVU. The identified proverbial metaphors were then subjected to the FORCE and CONTAINER schemas and their subsidiary schemas for analysis. The paper reveals that there are norms and customs regarding young people that are conveyed through Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. In addition, image schemas are fundamental in explaining the role, place, and cultural expectations of young men and women in Gusii. The study concludes that proverbial metaphors are useful tools of communication, and should be interpreted using Cognitive Linguistics paradigm.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, Ekegusii, image schemas, proverbial metaphors, MIPVU

1. Introduction

Proverbs epitomize grand wisdom which transcends people's history and cultures. In scholarship, the term proverb has attracted different definitions basically due to the broad nature of Paremiology (the academic field dedicated to research in proverbs). For

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instance, Kobia (2016) defines a proverb as a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt, and one that is distinguished by popular truth tersely expressed in it. Coyle et al. (1991) also argue that a proverb is a short and pithy sentence that forms a popular saying and it expresses some result of experience in life in a keen and lively fashion. According to Alghamdi (2019), a proverb is a self-sustained and pithy expression with didactic content. These definitions, which are the tip of the iceberg of the various worldviews concerning proverbs, serve to manifest that proverbs are useful resources of communicating known truths about life in a given community. The definitions also indicate that proverbs are embedded in a people's culture, history and environmental heritage. For instance, among Abagusii (the native speakers of Ekegusii), culture-specific proverbs are often employed to subtly communicate Abagusii's thoughts, habits, beliefs, experiences, traditions and patterns of life, especially regarding different members of society. The present study seeks to unearth the schematic representation of young people in Ekegusii proverbs.

Every culture and language has its own proverbs. Ekegusii culture-specific proverbs are, for example, crucial in depicting Abagusii's worldviews, reflections, values, traditions and patterns of life. Mohammed and Ho-Abdullah (2021), however, note that most African proverbs are difficult to understand for the majority of language speakers. This is because most African proverbs allude to local customs and situations that might be unfamiliar to most Africans, especially young people. It is on this basis that this paper investigates seven Ekegusii proverbs that allude to young people to establish their underlying schematic representation.

Otiso (2019) posits that proverbs are pervasive in Ekegusii discourse. It is mostly the elderly members who employ proverbs to advise, convey moral values, warn against vices, and reproach the wrongdoers in Gusii. Noteworthy is that most proverbs are synonymous with the ways of life of Abagusii because these proverbs belong to the culture and traditions of Ekegusii. According to Otiso (2019), Ekegusii proverbs are used to communicate cultural expectations and viewpoints about members of different gender. Consequently, studies have been carried out on the Ekegusii proverbs that allude to the grown-up males and females in Ekegusii. There is, however, hardly any known research that evaluates the proverbial representation of the young people in Ekegusii. This study, therefore, fills the lacuna by undertaking an inquiry into the proverbial representation of young people in Ekegusii.

The present study focuses on the youths because young people greatly determine the future of a people. They are often regarded as the backbone of a community. Kenya Youth Development Policy (2019) classifies the youths as people whose ages range from 18 to 34 years. People in this age bracket play a significant role in the development of society. Among Abagusii, for example, it is the young people who are expected to protect the Gusii culture. They are also expected to embrace education and influence the growth of Abagusii in all spheres: social, economic, and political development among others. It is also the youths who are expected to care for their aged and dependent parents, especially in old age. However, cases of involvement in vices such as petty crime, and

drug and substance abuse by the youths have been reported in Gusii. In addition, some youths especially young women are victims of ill-cultural practices such as early marriages among Abagusii. This paper, therefore, evaluates the representation of the youths in Ekegusii proverbs to help establish the societal constructions of the young people in Ekegusii.

This study is anchored within Cognitive Linguistics framework. Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is one of the disciplines in Linguistics that seeks to highlight the assumptions that linguistic abilities are deeply rooted within human cognition. CL posits that meaning is a product of a nexus that exists among language, the mind and socio-physical experiences. CL started in the early 1970s out of dissatisfaction with formal approaches to language which were dominant at the time (Berggren, 2018). Linguists such as William Croft and Allan Cruse established a framework for explaining linguistic phenomena such as analogy, metaphor, metonymy and counterfactual reasoning. The formal approaches to language cannot be used to adequately account for metaphor, metonymy, analogy and counterfactual reasoning. Metaphor is, for instance, considered as a tool that facilitates the interpretation of abstract notions through concrete ones in CL.

Alduais et al. (2022) also note that in CL, there is a strong affiliation between language and cognition. Through cognition, human beings are able to organize and interact with different objects and events in the world. According to Croft and Cruse (2004), CL provides conceptual models which are instrumental in the construction of language as a tool for utilizing and processing linguistic units such as proverbial metaphors. It is important to note that most proverbs are metaphorical in nature. This assertion is authenticated by Kobia (2016) who notes that most proverbs employ metaphors as resourceful means of preserving the traditional wisdom of a people. This study, therefore, evaluates Ekegusii proverbs which are metaphorical in nature to unveil the societal and cultural connotations about young people in Gusii.

Ekegusii, on which the present study is based, is an agglutinative and tonal language predominantly spoken in Kisii and Nyamira Counties of Kenya. The native speakers of Ekegusii are referred to as Abagusii. Kituku, Ng'ang'a and Muchemi (2021) posit that Ekegusii is used for inter-ethnic communication and it is closely related to Zanaki, Nata and Ngurimi in Tanzania, and Igikuria in Kenya. Ekegusii has two main dialects namely: *Rogoro* (Northern) and *Maate* (Southern) dialects. *Maate* is spoken in the southern part of Kisii County while *Rogoro* is spoken in both Nyamira and Kisii Counties (Ntabo, 2022). *Rogoro* is considered the standard variety because it is used as a medium of instruction to teach Ekegusii to pre-primary and lower primary pupils in the rural parts of Kisii and Nyamira Counties. In addition, *Rogoro* is used as a language of broadcasting in the local Ekegusii FM stations. It is also the *Rogoro* variety that is employed in the Ekegusii hymns and Bible. Most official communication is also done using *Rogoro* dialect because the *Maate* variety has fewer speakers. This study employed *Rogoro* dialect because it is considered as the standard variety in Gusii.

2. Theoretical Framework

Image Schema Theory (IST) was used to guide the present study. The main theorist of IST is Johnson (1987). Image schemas are abstract structures that are preconceptual in origin (Johnson, 1987). According to Hedblom, Kutz and Neuhaus (2015), an image schema is a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interaction and motor programs that gives coherence and structures our comprehension of abstract concepts. Hedblom, Kutz and Neuhaus further note that image schemas are mental representations that are extracted from our bodily experiences. This means that image schemas form part of our mental abstractions of learned spatial relationships.

The main tenet of IST is that image schemas allow for spatial mappings from our embodied experiences onto a conceptual structure that enables us to make sense of abstract entities. According to Gathigia (2014), image schemas allow human beings to map spatial information onto a conceptual structure such that they are a kind of “*distillers of spatial and temporal experiences*” (p. 50). This means that we can account for abstract phenomena such as proverbial metaphors by employing image schemas as the source domains to comprehend the target domain which, in this study, is the abstract entities in the Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. For instance, in Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE which is the TD can be understood in terms of the PATH image schema which functions as the SD. Our spatial and temporal experiences in terms of movement along a path can be employed to comprehend what life is in this case. This study presented image schemas in capital letters because Hurtienne and Blessing (2007) posit that image schemas are normally highlighted in the upper case.

Hampe (2003) posits that there exist many image schemas which have prompted various scholars in the field of Cognitive Linguistics to categorize them in different ways to ease their applicability in metaphor conceptualization. Some of the scholars who have classified image schemas in different ways include: Clausner and Croft (1999); Hurtienne and Blessing (2007); Johnson (1987); Peña (2003), and; Santibanez (2002) among others. This study adopts Gathigia’s (2014) taxonomy of image schemas which categorizes image schemas into basic and subsidiary ones. Table 1.1 below highlights the taxonomy of image schemas by Gathigia (2014).

Table 1.1: Classification of Image Schemas by Santibanez (2002)

Major Category	Subsidiary
The PATH Image Schema	VERTICALITY, PROCESS, FRONT-BACK, RIGHT-LEFT and CIRCLE
The CONTAINER Image Schema	IN-OUT, EXCESS, FULL-EMPTY and CONTENT
The FORCE Image Schema	COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, DIVERSION and REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT

As shown in Table 1.1 above, Gathigia (2014) identifies the PATH, the CONTAINER, and the FORCE schemas as the major categories from which subsidiary schemas are orderly

activated. In addition, Gathigia (2014) provides for an interplay of image schemas which suggests that one metaphorical expression can be accounted for by more than one image schema. Using more than one image schema to interpret a single metaphor yields a comprehensive thought about the metaphor in question on the basis of embodiment. Worth noting is that this study only employed the CONTAINER and the FORCE schemas and their subsidiary image schemas. The identified Ekegusii proverbial metaphors could mainly be interpreted on the bases of the two image schemas.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. According to Anudo (2012), the purpose of a descriptivist is to give a description of the state of affairs as it exists at a particular point in time. A researcher, therefore, focuses on identifying, classifying and evaluating the research phenomena as it is. Nassaji (2015) also notes that descriptivists often aim at revealing what is available by accurately describing a phenomenon and its characteristics. In the present study, the primary data which is the proverbs that allude to young people in Ekegusii was first collected through an interview schedule from four purposively sampled elderly people who are native Ekegusii speakers. The selected sample was made up of two females and two males in the advanced age of at least 70 years. The factor of elders in advanced age was considered an inclusion criterion for the research sample because, among Abagusii, elders in advanced age are regarded as repositories of Ekegusii cultural heritage. In consequence, it is the elderly people who are often consulted on important cultural matters regarding Abagusii. For verification of the originality of the collected proverbs, the study benefitted from the comprehensive secondary source of *Emebayeno ya Gusii* (Gusii proverbs) from internet sources such as: www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/gusii/proverbs.htm

The study obtained seven Ekegusii proverbs that allude to the youths in Ekegusii. The proverbs were categorized into three. The first class was made up of three instances that make reference to *abaiseke* (young women), the second one comprised of three proverbs that allude to *abamura* (young men), and; the third included one proverb that makes reference to both the young men and women in Ekegusii. The Ekegusii proverbs were then translated into English to enable non-Ekegusii speakers to make sense of the proverbs. The study employed Normal Sentential Translation (NST) from Ekegusii to English. This was informed by Kobia (2016) who argues that a number of the most captivating features of proverbs are barely translatable. Such features include: assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm and wordplay among others. NST is also ideal for this study because the focus of the present enquiry is to evaluate the proverbs that allude to young people in Ekegusii to unveil the societal and cultural perceptions about the youths among Abagusii.

The study employed Metaphor Identification Procedure *Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU) to establish the metaphoricity of the seven Ekegusii proverbs which allude to the youths. The MIPVU is a systematic and transparent method that provides a step-by-step

procedure for identifying precise metaphors in both spoken and written discourse (Ntabo, 2022). Four coders (including the researchers) subjected the word classes appearing in each of the seven proverbs to establish the metaphoricity level of the proverbs. In marking the metaphoricity of proverbs, Ozbal, Strapparava and Tekiroglu (2016) posit that it is the content words (nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives) that should be taken into consideration in an annotation procedure. In the present study, each noun, verb, adjective or adverb appearing in each of the identified seven proverbs was marked as metaphorical if its contextual sense contrasted with its dictionary meaning as provided by MIPVU. The coders were also asked to mark the whole proverb metaphorical if there was a high frequency of the metaphorical words in each of the proverbs.

For example, in the Ekegusii proverb *chinguru chia omomura nchogu egwatia mbaara* (a young man's strength is an elephant that splits wood), the content words are: young man (noun), strength (noun), elephant (noun), splits (verb), and wood (noun). The denotative meaning for each of the word classes are: young man (a male youth), strength (physical strength), elephant (wild beast), splits (cutting into pieces), and wood (timber). The contextual sense for each of the terms are: young man (one who engages in strenuous tasks), strength (capacity for physical tasks), elephant (muscular power), splits (undertaking heavy work), and wood (heavy tasks). As indicated in this example, the contextual sense of each of the five words contrasts with their denotative meaning. The Ekegusii proverb, *chinguru chia omomura nchogu egwatia mbaara* (a young man's strength is an elephant that splits wood) was, therefore, marked metaphorical in the present study. It is important to note that the following linguistic metaphors can be derived from this proverb:

- 1) *Omomura n' chinguru* – 'a young man is strength'.
- 2) *Omomura n' nchogu* – 'a young man is an elephant'.
- 3) *Omomura n' omwatia mbaara* – 'a young man is one who splits wood'.

The study then subjected the seven proverbial metaphors to Image Schema Theory (IST) to reveal the cultural and societal worldviews assigned to the youths by Abagusii. According to Santibanez (2002), image schemas emerge from the realization that our mind is embodied. Meaning, thought and symbolic expressions are, therefore, based on patterns of perception and bodily movement. As a result, image schemas are resourceful in proverbial metaphor interpretation since they arise from human recurrent bodily and perceptual experiences.

4. Research Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

The study notes that the CONTAINER and FORCE schemas and their subsidiary image schemas are ubiquitous in everyday conceptualization and reasoning. In consequence, these schemas were appropriately employed to give an explanation of the Ekegusii proverbial metaphors that allude to the youth. Table 1.2 below displays the seven Ekegusii proverbial metaphors which refer to young people.

Table 1.2: Ekegusii Proverbial Metaphors that Allude to Young People

No	Ekegusii	Gloss
1	<i>Chinguru chia momura nchogu egwatia mbara</i>	A young man's strength is an elephant that splits wood
2	<i>Momura karo sobo n' rirubi nyameng'ento</i>	A young man in his home is a huge cobra
3	<i>Abamura b' omonto nsara chire esaro</i>	Somebody's sons are arrows in a quiver
4	<i>Totogia moiseke kieni, motogia mwana</i>	Do not praise a young woman for her beauty, praise her for her child
5	<i>Mwana baiseke bange tanya koborwa nsega</i>	One who has many daughters has never failed to be provoked
6	<i>Omoiseke esang'onde omonyene emori namoroche</i>	A young woman with big thighs has been noticed by the owner of the calf
7	<i>Abamura n' baisiko n' abaiseke n' banyomba</i>	Young men are for outside while young women belong to the house

The CONTAINER schema and its subsidiary image schemas were used to give an account of four proverbial metaphors in this study. According to Gathigia (2014), the CONTAINER image schema results from human being's recurrent and ubiquitous experience with containers. Otieno (2019) also notes that containment is considered as a relation between the container as a boundary and its content which is also referred to as the interior. The CONTAINER image schema is one of the most pervasive schemas in everyday conceptualization and reasoning (Ntabo, 2021). This is due to the fact that human beings constantly interact with all shapes and sizes of containers in everyday life which motivates them to acquire the logic of containment. The CONTAINER image schema, according to Santibanez (2002), activates the emergence of subsidiary image schemas such as: IN-OUT, FULL-EMPTY and EXCESS. This study, however, employed the IN-OUT and EXCESS subsidiary image schemas. This is because of the presence of the CONTAINER proverbial metaphors within Ekegusii which can be accounted for by the IN-OUT and EXCESS gestalts. The term gestalt is synonymously used with subsidiary image schema in this study.

The EXCESS gestalt, which stems from the CONTAINER image schema, was used to give an account of three proverbial metaphors. According to Otieno (2019), the EXCESS gestalt is invoked by the expressions which suggest that something is in a large amount than what is desired. If the content of a container exceeds its capacity, the container normally becomes uncontrollable which makes it lose its balance. This can lead to adverse effects. The proverbial metaphors that were explained through the EXCESS gestalt are:

(1) *Chinguru chia omomura nchogu egwatia mbaara* – 'a young man's strength is an elephant that splits wood',

(2) *Momura kare sobo n' rirubi nyamong'ento* – 'A young man in his home is a huge cobra',

(3) *Omoiseke esang'onde omonyene emori namoroche* – 'A young woman with big thighs has been noticed by the owner of the calf'.

Instantiation (1) above makes reference to *omomura* (a young man) who is endowed with a lot of strength which is comparable with that of an elephant. Possession of a lot of strength suggests the presence of something in a large amount than what is expected. This invokes the EXCESS gestalt which can be understood in terms of control where the content of a container exceeds its capacity. Rundell and Fox (2007) provide that strength is the ability to withstand an applied stress or load without fail. An energetic young man is, therefore, one who has the capacity to undertake physical tasks. However, a young man who possesses a lot of strength that is comparable with that of an elephant is one that is overwhelmed with strength and is assumed to have the capacity to undertake extraordinary tasks. Elephants are, for instance, known to break tree trunks because of their immense bodily power. In this study, the EXCESS gestalt is resourceful in revealing that the young men who are assigned (1) above are those that are characterized with strenuous chores.

The conceptualization for (1) above also reveals that members of different gender are assigned different roles among Abagusii. Most young men are, for example, assigned physical chores that require use of a lot of bodily energy. According to Otiso (2019), most young men in Gusii are traditionally associated with immense bodily strength and are thus assigned duties such as herding. Denial of food was traditionally the punishment meted on the young men who absconded the task of herding. The young men who received the punishment were not culturally permitted to complain as they had abdicated the assigned responsibilities. Through the EXCESS gestalt, it is clear that the young men who are alluded to in (1) above are assigned a negative metaphor axiology. This is because such young men are revealed to be engaged in strenuous and odd chores such as splitting of wood instead of competing for limited opportunities in further education, formal employment and entrepreneurship among others.

The proverbial metaphor (2) above also suggests the presence of contents that are in excess. In (2) above, a young man is instantiated as a cobra whose body size is in excess (huge). In this case, *omomura* is implied as a container whose content is a body size that seems to exceed its capacity. It is also important to note that the features of a cobra are attributed to *omomura* in (2) above. For example, a cobra is known to be a ferocious reptile due to its venomous bite that can cause an array of adverse effects in human beings such as paralysis or death. Although cobras are rare in Gusii, they are often dreaded. This means that a huge cobra would send more shivers down one's spine because it is perceived to be deadlier than an ordinary snake. Similarly, a young man who is equated with a huge cobra is one that is extremely feared by other members of society especially those who harbour criminal tendencies. Such a young man is, thus, expected to protect his loved ones by scaring away the adversaries.

The interpretation for (2) above is buttressed by Kegoro (2009) who posits that it is mostly the young men who take part in combat activities such as repulsing intruders

during cross-border battles between Abagusii and the neighbouring communities. The young men who participate in cross-border warfare are perceived to be stronger and more persevering to the rigours of war than other members in Gusii. In addition, it is rare for homes in Gusii that have strong young men to be attacked by foes. This suggests that most young men traditionally play the essential role of scaring away malicious people from their homes.

In the Ekegusii proverbial metaphor (6) above, reference is made to thighs which form part of a human body part. Here, a young woman with big thighs that has been noticed by one who owns a calf is pointed out. The term *owner of a calf* is metaphorically used to instantiate a wealthy man. This is because it is the possession of cattle and land that were traditionally used to mark wealthy men in Gusii. Since the EXCESS gestalt is invoked by expressions that suggest that something is in a larger amount than what is desirable, it is appropriately used to address the question of big thighs that are alluded to in (6) above. The EXCESS gestalt is also resourceful in revealing that human body parts such as thighs are used to construct femininity by some men in Gusii. Some men are, for instance, attracted to females who are endowed with big thighs as these body parts augment female sexuality and attractiveness. In consequence, possession of big thighs by some young women is revealed as a strikingly sexually attractive androgen which is also considered as a secondary sexual trait by some men in Gusii.

In addition, big thighs are used to suggest feminine beauty. Among Abagusii, young women are traditionally expected to enter into matrimony and bear children. According to Silberschmidt (1999), a young woman gains favour and admiration when she gets married, bears children and participates in responsibly raising her children. Modern concepts such as the liberty for young women to remain unmarried were not common in the Gusii traditional society. It is also important to note that there is always competition among men to court and marry young women who are perceived to be beautiful. It is often the wealthy men who managed to get attention and eventually married the young beautiful women. Young women who are married by wealthy men are considered lucky ones because access to material resources is traditionally through their wealthy husbands in Gusii. This justifies the use of the symbol of *a calf* in (6) above. The IN-OUT gestalt which is orderly activated by the CONTAINER image schema was used to make sense of the Ekegusii proverbial metaphor (7) below. In this case, young men and women are conceptualized as entities that can either be dispensed or admitted into a container. Thus:

(7) *Abamura n' baisiko n' abaiseke n' banyomba* – 'Young men are for outside while young women belong to the house'.

The basic logic of the IN-OUT gestalt is that contents within a bounded space can either be emitted or admitted. Those that are discharged suggest the OUT while those that move into a container evoke the IN notion in the IN-OUT gestalt. For example, the argument that young men are *for the outside of a house* indicates that *abamura* are expected

to move and work from outside of a home. This illustrates the OUT concept in the IN-OUT gestalt. Similarly, young women are indicated to belong to a house. *Abaiseke* are, therefore, expected to move into a home that is culturally their operational space. This manifests the IN notion in the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema. The implication of this interpretation is that young men are traditionally expected to labour in the outdoors to gather wealth while young women are culturally assigned the duty of caring and putting into good use the resources which are gathered by the menfolk.

The aforementioned conceptualization for (7) above is corroborated by Otiso (2017) who notes that gender roles are culturally assigned to different members in regards to their sex in Gusii. Otiso further reveals that the males are traditionally expected to gather wealth while the females are assigned the duty of caring for the gathered wealth. Consequently, a man who does not strive to acquire resources for his loved ones is not considered as having attained the definition of maleness in Gusii. Comparably, a woman who fails to take good care of the gathered resources is not perceived as having met the requirements for femaleness in Gusii. Worthwhile to note is that wealth-gathering activities are often undertaken away from one's home hence the concept of OUT in the IN-OUT gestalt. The task of caring for wealth is normally carried out in people's homes which explains why most women among Abagusii traditionally work within their homesteads. In the modern days, however, gender roles for the majority of Abagusii have tremendously changed. Most females and males are empowered through formal education, employment, and entrepreneurship among others, and can both participate in wealth-gathering activities and also in making decisions concerning the gathered resources.

The present study also employed the FORCE schema to interpret three Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. The FORCE schema is one of the basic image schemas which underlies conceptual metaphors. Force dynamics involve: one, the exertion of force; two, resistance to a force; three, overcoming resistance; four, blockage of a force, and; five, removal of blockage (Ntabo, 2022). Otieno (2019) also notes that force is metaphorically referred to as a moving object with a velocity or trajectory. Otieno further provides that some force is normally exerted to facilitate the movement of an object as no object moves along a path on its own without some force being exerted either internally or externally. In this study, the COUNTERFORCE and the COMPULSION gestalts which stem from the FORCE image schema were used to explain Ekegusii proverbial metaphors as discussed below.

For example, the COUNTERFORCE gestalt was used to explain two Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. The two proverbial metaphors are marked as (3) and (5) below:

(3) *Abamura b' omonto nsara chire esaro* – 'Somebody's sons are arrows in a quiver',

(5) *Mwana baiseke bange tanya koborwa nsega* – 'One who has many daughters has never failed to be provoked'.

The COUNTERFORCE subsidiary image schema highlights a head-on encounter between two forces (Otieno, 2019). In this case, two strong, determined and nasty forces collide head-on. For example, in the proverbial metaphor (3) above, two opposing forces are implied. The first force is young men who are instantiated as arrows, and the second one is the foes who are faced off by the young men. It is important to note that young men are metaphorically marked as arrows because it is traditionally their duty to repulse enemies. Fighting is often characterized by aggression and eagerness to subdue adversaries in a combative manner. As a result, two force vectors that move along a path and collide face-to-face are suggested. The COUNTERFORCE subsidiary image schema, therefore, emerges as a struggle between the young men and the adversaries resulting in a nasty collision.

The use of the COUNTERFORCE gestalt in (3) above is also helpful in revealing that most young men take part in combat activities in Gusii. The use of the term arrows signifies that most young men employ weapons such as arrows to participate in warfare especially when their families and community is under siege. This claim is authenticated by Kegoro (2009) who argues that cross-border conflict especially between Abagusii and the Kipsigis is a common phenomenon, especially during the electioneering seasons. Fighting between the two communities normally involves young men from either side who face off in an aggressive manner. This resulted in the emergence of the COUNTERFORCE gestalt. Although scuffles often lead to loss of lives and injuries among other adverse results, a young man who is described as *ensara* (an arrow) in Ekegusii is in this context acclaimed. This is because such a young man risks his life to repulse the foes of Abagusii. War should, however, be avoided due to the risks involved.

The COUNTERFORCE gestalt was also used to interpret instantiation (5) above which states that *one who has many daughters has never failed to be provoked*. The proverbial metaphor indicates that young women's fathers always find themselves in constant conflict with their daughters' admirers. Marriage between a man and a woman is a cherished institution among Abagusii. Marriage can only be established through the payment of bride-wealth often in the form of livestock or money to the woman's family. Payment of bride-wealth establishes a culturally sanctioned marriage through which a woman and a man become socially defined as husband and wife. The proverbial metaphor (5) above also suggests instances where some suitors fail to adhere to the traditional betrothal procedures but instead choose to unprocedurally coerce young women with the intention to elope with them. Such suitors often get into brawls with the young women's fathers. Consequently, the disagreement between these suitors and the young women's fathers is regarded as a conflict that involves opponents. The opponents often encounter each other in an unpleasant manner resulting in adverse effects. This leads to the emergence of the COUNTERFORCE gestalt which is helpful in explaining the proverbial metaphor (5) above.

The proverbial metaphor (5) above also foregrounds the value of matrimony in Gusii. Females and males of marriageable age are culturally expected to enter into matrimony and procreate. Most parents often marry their daughters off after receiving

bride-wealth from the young women's suitors. Traditionally, one of the ways of attaining femaleness in Gusii is by getting married and bearing children. The young women who fail to get married are often ridiculed and marginalized in society. In most cases, unmarried women are considered as bad omen and are often interred outside the family homesteads upon their demise.

The COMPULSION gestalt which stems from the FORCE image schema was used to make sense of the proverbial metaphor (4) below. According to Gathigia (2014), the COMPULSION gestalt suggests a very strong feeling of wanting to do something, especially a feeling that one cannot control. This means that the COMPULSION gestalt emerges from human beings' experience of being overwhelmed. Example (4) below indicates that young women in Gusii are culturally compelled to bear children hence the emergence of the COMPULSION gestalt. Thus:

(4) *Totogia moiseke kieni, motogia mwana* – 'Do not praise a young woman for her beauty, praise her for her child'.

Example (4) above is given as a piece of advice that one should not compliment a young woman on the basis of her physical appearance but on the young woman's capacity to bear children. This elicits the linguistic metaphors of: *a young woman is not beauty*, and *a young woman is children*. The linguistic metaphors suggest that young married women are obligated to bear children to earn commendation in Gusii. The young women are, therefore, under cultural compulsion to bear children to gain accolades in Gusii. This invokes the COMPULSION gestalt as the young women's act of bearing children is dictated by the Gusii cultural provisions.

The interpretation for (4) above is validated by Silberschmidt (1999) who argues that Abagusii celebrates young women who are able to bear children, especially male children. A son is regarded highly in Gusii since it is believed that he is the one to continue his father's lineage. The birth of a male child is often a celebrated event in Gusii. A woman who is either sterile or one that is unable to bear a son is normally treated as a bad omen among Abagusii. According to Otiso (2017), a young woman who enters her husband's home through marriage is often considered as a stranger until she bears children. She is always at the bottom of the hierarchy and is certain to remain there if she fails to bear children. It is, however, important to note that the place, role and position of most modern women has greatly changed in Gusii. The transformation has been occasioned by most women's access to formal education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities among others.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that image schemas are central cognitive models which enhance the explanatory value of Ekegusii proverbial metaphors. The proverbial metaphors in this study are appropriately accounted for by the CONTAINER and the FORCE schemas and

their subsidiary image schemas. The image schemas are helpful in making sense of the proverbial metaphors on the basis of the human experiential domain of embodiment. The paper also notes that Ekegusii proverbial metaphors are resourceful in explaining how masculinity and femininity are constructed in Gusii. It is, for example, revealed that young men attain maleness by undertaking the masculine roles of providing needs and offering protection for their loved ones in Gusii. For young married women, femaleness is earned after bearing children and caring for the gathered wealth. In addition, the study concludes that Metaphor Identification Procedure *Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU) is ideal for establishing proverbial metaphors. MIPVU is helpful in identifying word-level metaphors from the studied proverbs. MIPVU was also resourceful in marking the whole proverb as metaphorical if there was a high frequency of the metaphoric words in each of the proverbs.

In consequence of the above conclusions, the paper recommends that image schemas, which are pervasive in everyday conceptualization and reasoning, should be employed in proverbial metaphors research. Furthermore, since proverbial metaphors are integral ingredients of communication, they should be explained using the Cognitive Linguistics framework which avails appropriate cognitive models for proverbial metaphor interpretation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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