Linguistic Borrowing and Cultural Significance
Analysing the Impact of Dholuo Figures of Speech on Olusuba Folksongs and Abasuba Cultural Identity

Billian K. Otundo & Walter Sande, 2024

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Abstract

This article discusses the dynamic interplay between language contact, cultural exchange, and expressive forms of communication within the multicultural societies of Abasuba and Luo living in Kenya. From a socio-pragmatic perspective of signification of figures of speech in Olusuba traditional folksongs, we elaborate on a social context that manifests and inducts the socio-pragmatics of linguistic borrowing, particularly figures of speech (FOS), from Dholuo into Olusuba traditional folksongs. Unique to this study is that in the Olusuba speech communities, speakers are found to communicate non-literally to convey ideas and/or knowledge borrowed from the Luo community. The analysis was grounded in the Semiotic Theory (Barthes 1983) and constructed around de Saussure's Theory of Meaning (1916) which proposes that language is a union of signs whose relation between their physical and symbolic distinction is arbitrary and thus attains its meaningfulness through the rules of convention. An ethnographic research design was adopted and a qualitative analysis of linguistic features and thematic content in Olusuba folksongs was employed to examine how borrowed FOS contribute to the expressive power and cultural significance of these songs, particularly in conveying themes related to nature and socio-economic activities shared by the Abasuba and Luo communities. Additionally, the study investigates the broader implications of integrating borrowed FOS into Olusuba folksongs on the preservation and evolution of cultural identity among the Abasuba people. In this endeavour, intact cultural groups of Abasuba people in natural settings were interviewed on Dholuo-oriented Olusuba folksongs alongside non-participatory observation during the performance of the folksongs. The results, for example, revealed the use of linguistic symbols whose semantics have been induced by Olusuba-Dholuo contact. This research sheds light on the intricate relationship between language contact, cultural exchange, and identity formation in multicultural societies, offering insights into the complexities of linguistic and cultural dynamics in diverse communities.

Keywords: figures of speech, folksongs, language contact, Olusuba-Dholuo, cultural exchange, cultural identity

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Linguistic Borrowing and Cultural Significance

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1 Introduction

Language contact among distinct linguistic communities frequently results in complex cultural exchange, semantic evolution, and sociolinguistic adaptation interplays. Linguistic borrowing due to language contact is the systematic integration of linguistic elements from one language into another, which Cowgill (1963) refers to as contact-induced alterations. These modifications, particularly the nativisation of borrowed traits, indicate the complex interaction of linguistic communities in the same geographical area. This phenomenon has attracted scholars' attention, focusing on contact-induced changes in the recipient language in various facets of language use, including songs (e.g., Sanchez; Cagayan and Allan 2019; Moyna and Loureiro-Rodríguez 2022; Perangin-Angin 2020; Sonkamble 2020; Verschik 2021). Songs are fascinating because they also feature figures of speech (e.g., Ashtiani and Derakshesh 2015; Fata et al. 2023; Malik 2023) which are of particular concern for this study.

In Kenya, for instance, the convergence of the Olusuba and Dholuo languages provides an intriguing setting for studying the dynamics of linguistic contact and its socio-pragmatic repercussions because Olusuba has been classified as a moribund language (Sande 2019) whose

speakers have shifted to speaking Dholuo. The cultural exchange between the Abasuba and Luo communities has resulted in incorporating linguistic characteristics from Dholuo, such as figures of speech (FOS), into Olusuba traditional folk songs. As posited by Sande (2019) in his study of the revitalisation of Olusuba, Abasuba community has always treated Dholuo as a prestigious language. This has endangered their language given the reason that they tend to use Dholuo at the expense of their language Olusuba within and outside their homesteads. The inclination of the Abasuba to Dholuo has resulted in much borrowing from Dholuo as evident in figures of speech used in Olusuba songs. Figures of speech, as products of human conceptual and linguistic creativity, contribute significantly to communication by providing depth, subtlety, and aesthetic appeal to speech (Ashtiani and Derakhshes 2015; Mariani 2018). These linguistic strategies that stray from literal speech serve a variety of communicative tasks, including comparison, emphasis, and humour, adding to the richness of language and culture.

By investigating how figures of speech are used in Olusuba songs, focusing on those influenced by Dholuo features, we hope to uncover the intricate ways in which linguistic symbols gain meaning and reflect the social reality of the speech groups involved. We draw our discussions on the semiotic theory, particularly Barthes' (1983) conceptualisation of signs and de Saussure's Theory of Meaning (1916), which emphasises the arbitrariness of linguistic signs and their meaning within specific conventions. Our inquiry is founded on the awareness that language is more than just a means of communication; it is also a repository of cultural knowledge, social identity, and historical histories. We argue that the use of Dholuo-influenced linguistic symbols in Olusuba traditional folksongs demonstrates not only linguistic interaction between the two communities but also broader socio-cultural exchanges and interconnection across Kenya's heterogeneous linguistic environment. Linguistic borrowings, through techniques such as alternation and insertion, facilitate the expression of cultural identities and values in a dynamic linguistic landscape (Verschik 2021). This interaction of language, culture, and ecology highlights the complex dynamics of identity development and cultural continuity among communities.

This paper, thus, addresses two research questions to elucidate the impact of linguistic borrowing on Olusuba folksongs and the preservation of cultural identity among the Abasuba people. The first question examines how FOS borrowed from Dholuo contributes to the expressive power and cultural significance of Olusuba folksongs, particularly in conveying themes related to nature and socio-economic activities shared by the Abasuba and Luo communities. The second question investigates the broader implications of integrating borrowed FOS into Olusuba folksongs on the preservation and evolution of cultural identity among the Abasuba people, considering the transmission of traditional knowledge, social values, and beliefs through linguistic borrowing. Through a detailed analysis of linguistic features and thematic content in Olusuba folksongs, this study aims to provide insights into the intricate relationship between language contact, cultural exchange, and expressive forms of communication within multicultural societies.

2 Language Contact: Olusuba-Dholuo

Whether structural or sociolinguistic, language contact has long been recognised as a phenomenon that enriches recipient languages while also meeting rising societal demands (Winford 2007). This enrichment is frequently achieved by the exchange of linguistic traits across languages in touch, demonstrating the dynamic nature of linguistic evolution and cultural interaction. As Sarah (2001) points out, no language evolves in perfect isolation, and destination languages might benefit from the incorporation or borrowing of elements from source languages. Some of the gains made are the borrowing of linguistic features used to describe a phenomenon that might not have been within the community where the recipient language is used. Therefore, the direction of linguistic features is always from the source language to the recipient language. The borrowed features undergo the process of nativisation – imposing a linguistic feature of a dominant language onto the recipient language. As viewed by Cowgill (1963), contact-induced changes are systematic and in his defense of the systematisation he hypothesises:

> *If x in one morpheme of language A turns into y in environment z in language A', a changed later form of language A, then x will turn into y in environment z in every morpheme in language A' unless the process is disturbed.* (Cited in Sarah 2007: 43)

Based on Cogwill's (1963) formulation, it can be deduced that language change involves a systematic integration of a linguistic feature from a source language into a recipient language, and the two languages must be within the same locality. In the case of Olusuba, the language has not changed but borrowed several linguistic features from Dholuo, some of which have made the Abasuba (speakers of Olusuba) enjoy their stay together with the Luo (speakers of Dholuo). To retain its structure, all the loanwords from Dholuo in Olusuba have undergone structural changes to fit within Olusuba's language system. Some of these loanwords, as discovered in this study, have retained their social and semantic meaning despite undergoing structural changes. The Olusuba-Dholuo contract is not recent; it was initiated the moment the Suba people migrated from Uganda to the islands of Mfangano and Rusinga which border Homabay, the Luos' native land (refer to Figure 1). The name Suba was given to these migrants by Luo (Mhando 2008). The name, according to Mhando (2008) was a reference to any immigrants who fled from Uganda. Therefore, any non-Luo groups who came and settled in the areas of Rusinga, Mfangano, Kaksingri, Gembe and Gwasi all in Kenya, came to be known as Suba or Abasuba and were later Luo-Abasuba after they had acquired some Luo customs and practices. It is this acquisition of customs and practices that prompted the current study to investigate the impact of Luo customs and practices on the Abasuba. Some of these customs and practices have become helpful to the Abasuba, particularly in the transmission of folks to Abasuba people from the Luo – a practice that has made Abasuba adapt to the changes initiated by their contact with the Luo. Much of the available literature on language contact is preoccupied with the vulnerability of the recipient languages to changes - these languages stand to change either structurally, sociolinguistically, or psycholinguistically under the influence of the dominant language (Winford 2007). The instability of these recipient languages has made them lose their originality which is to their disadvantage. The loss of originality includes but is not limited to the loss of lexical entries through their replacement with lexemes from the donor language. It is not unusual to argue that these contact-induced changes in

the recipient languages are to some extent beneficial to the speakers of the recipient languages. It is based on this premise that the present study seeks to linguistically analyse figures of speech borrowed from Dholuo to Olusuba traditional folksongs.

3 Figures of Speech, their Position in Songs

The figure of speech has been viewed as a resultant product of human beings' linguistic creativity. As posited by Chomsky (1964), human being's conceptual and linguistic creativity involves several mental faculties and entails the existence of some kind of mental organisation responsible for language invention. A figure of speech (henceforth FOS, also abbreviated the same for the plural form) is, therefore, a byproduct of human beings' conceptual and linguistic creativity. For conceptualisation and creativity to occur, human beings must be exposed to language resources (Chomsky 1964). From human beings' exposure to language resources, arts of communication have been brought into play for satisfactory communication. A FOS is, therefore, a creative use of language to generate an effect in a piece of discourse. This is sometimes achieved through an intentional deviation from literal statements or common usage (Ashtiani and Derakhshes 2015; Marliani 2018). These deviations, according to Ashtiani and Derakhshes (2015), are done to decorate language used in communication. Following Ashtiani and Derakhshes' (2015) view on FOS, it can be concluded that when one word is literal, it means precisely what it says but sometimes a speaker may decide to use stylistic ornaments that are non-literal in their communication, and for them to be understood, they need to be interpreted. Common among the majority of FOS are myriad types of clarity, comparison, freshness, emphasis, and many other intentions (Ashtiani and Derakhshes 2015; Marliani 2018).

In terms of their structures, Marliani (2018) views a FOS as a form of language that uses concrete, literal message as a base and these concrete images are combined with startling and seemingly unrelated images to create something new. Forms of these FOS have helped writers or speakers to transfer their thoughts and feelings to persuade the readers or the listeners. Based on their forms, FOS have been classified into various types. In linguistics, for instance, Marliani (2018) has divided into ten types consisting of metaphors, similes, synecdoche, personification, metonymy, allegory, hyperbole, irony, symbol, and paradox. Rozaki (1995) as cited in Marliani (2018) came up with additional types not included in Mariani's classification. He divides FOS into allegory, ambiguity apostrophe, conceit, connotation and denotation, contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, personification, sarcasm, simile, symbolism, synecdoche and synthesis Despite a slight difference noticed in the classification of FOS by Mariani (2018) and Rozaki (1995), there is a common feature that the two researchers agree to cut across all the classes of FOS they came up with. The feature is the non-literal interpretation of FOS – the meaning of a FOS goes beyond the surface meaning. Therefore, the interpretation of a FOS may require someone to be well-versed in world knowledge and the language through which the FOS is expressed. Constituting world knowledge is the knowledge of the environment (Chala and Hunduma 2018). This is confirmed by Danela (2018) in her analysis of Albanian and Anglo-Saxon epic songs. According to Danela (2018), Figures of speech in the epic songs of Albania and Anglo-

Saxon are found to be connected to particular themes that correspond to the environment within which the songs were created. From Danela's (2018) school of thought, we can deduce that one of the contributory factors to the meaningfulness of FOS in speech communities is their attachment to the environment. This informs the current study on the effect of the environment of the Abasuba in their interpretation and use of environment-oriented FOS with elements of Dholuo. The current study focuses on contact-induced FOS occurring in the pragmatics of Olusuba. Within the framework of Semiotic theory, FOS with elements of Dholuo were analysed focusing on the relationship between images and the environment where the images are used.

It is important to note that FOS are not just used haphazardly in the song genre. They are viewed as the soul and spirit of literature as they add a variety of beauty, flavour and various colours and shades to the writing (Ashtiani and Derakhshesh 2015). As argued by Ashtiani and Derakhshesh (2015), writers have always used FOS to add spice to their writing, criticise, and comment on others. In fact, behind the use of each FOS, there is a communicative goal such as comparing, humouring, provoking, bolding, objecting, emphasising and deemphasising. Given the reason that all these spices take care of the culture of the community in the use of FOS in its genres, Ashtiani and Derakhshesh (2015) conclude that FOS are beneficiaries of a community's culture in that without culture a FOS may not exist. This study shows how the cultural exchange between Abasuba and Luo has contributed to the meaningfulness of FOS in Olusuba songs some of which are borrowed from Dholuo.

In their attainment of meanings, these FOS exist in two forms: comparative and contrastive FOS (Azyza, Mustafa and Mumir 2022). Through comparative and contrastive existence, FOS are dictated by the background theme of songs. The messages conveyed in both song lyrics are expressed indirectly through strings of words that are full of meaning. These speeches attain their meanings through contradictory participation in lyrics – one expression contradicts the meaning of the previous expression. The validity of these FOS as used in lyrics is that the choice of words does not state the original or actual meaning but is stated indirectly through interesting phrases and describes the singer's conditions and feelings (Azyza, Mustafa and Mumir 2022). From Azyza, Mustafa and Mumir's (2022) view on the ways FOS attain their meaning, a question is generated by this research: could the contrast between the culture of the Abasuba and that of the Luo be an anchor of the meaningfulness of Olusuba's borrowed FOS from Dholuo? The next section expounds on the impact of language contact on culture.

4 Language Contact: Impact on Culture and Interplay with Ecology

Culture is understood to be conveyed through language; therefore, any contact among languages opens an avenue for cultural exchanges among the speech communities in question. Human beings engage language in communication using a variety of forms including songs, puns, and riddles, among others. It is through language that communities exchange ideas, knowledge, and lifestyles. According to Sonkamble (2020), societies undergo various transformations due to the migration of people from one place to another. In his study of traditional folksongs, Sonkamble (2020) argues that as part of society, people happen to accept the changes for bettering their

lifestyles and these changes are found to be preserved within folksongs. These changes, according to him, are conveyed using incredibly new images and identities, some of which are in the form of FOS. Worth borrowing from Sonkamble's (2020) study is that through contact-induced transformations, cultural gaps between or among speech communities have been narrowed, thus enhancing mutual co-existence among the communities. Established in several studies including Verschik's (2021) findings on multilingual songs in the Yiddish and Slavic communities in India is that these borrowings can take two mechanisms: first, the mechanism of alternation which involves a singer's repeated use of two or more words from different languages in turn. Second, is the mechanism of insertion which involves the inclusion of a morpheme or a word into a chunk of discourse. This chunk can be a word, a phrase, or a sentence. Whenever an insertion happens, the inserted item must be semantically specific to the linguistic item that holds it, and the semantic specificity is governed by the religion and tradition of the speech communities in contact (Backus and Verschik 2012). Based on the previous comparative studies by Mhando (2008) of Abasuba and Luo culture, a lot has been found among the Abasuba to have been borrowed from Luo. Some of these borrowings are in the form of words whose interpretations are beyond the literal meaning. This study is, therefore, set to answer the question of how the borrowed words or images in Olusuba folksongs are signified in these songs under the influence of the culture and ecology of the two communities.

The relationship between language and ecology can be analysed through ecolinguistics. It is through ecolinguistics that language(s) play life-sustaining interactions of human diverse species and the environment (Ayushi and Amitash 2023). According to Ayushi and Amitash (2023), songs construe the environment and ascertain how they encourage beneficial behaviour. In their study of ecological consciousness in Punchi folksongs, Ayushi, and Amitash (2023) establish that the way plants, animals and nature are represented in folksongs helps in creating a discourse of ecology that encourages people to respect nature by vividly representing them in folksongs. Respect for nature is enacted by applying indigenous knowledge represented in folksongs as images (Sonkamble 2020). Songs have also been phenological records of past climate change (Liu et al. 2021). In the same breath, Chala and Hunduma (2018) look at folksongs as a means of environmental conservation. The position of Chala and Hunduma (2018) is that indigenous knowledge is an effective vehicle in supplementing the existing efforts of conserving the environment through FOS such as imagery, metaphors, and symbolic description. This is confirmed by Perangin, Novita and Sanata (2020) in their ecolinguistic analysis of folksongs in the endangered Pagu language. From their analysis, Perangin, Novita and Sanata find out that songs have local cultural and traditional values that show the identity of an ethnic group, and these songs show closeness in the group's natural surroundings, an element of knowledge that future generation is expected to have to maintain environment whose composition is full of vegetation and physical features that constitute part of the contents of these songs. In the same ecolinguistic analysis of Pagu songs by Perangin, Novita and Sanata (2020), it is discovered that the songs are heavily influenced by other regional languages in North Halmahera such as Tobelo and Modole whose linguistic features are displayed in the songs. Some of these features are in the form of FOS. In their study on language mixing and metalinguistic awareness in selected songs among the speakers of English and Spanish, Moyna and Loureiro-Rodríguez (2022), establish pride in the adaptability afforded by hybrid culture underscored by linguistically mixed lyrics, some of which are ecologically oriented. According to Moyna and Loureiro-Rodríguez (2022), communities in

contact almost always consider borrowed culture as intelligible ways of reserving and sharing knowledge. Unique in the folksongs from within the communities in contact is their richness in vocabulary that corresponds to the environment under which the contact communities live. Some of these vocabularies are composed of signifiers whose meanings go beyond the surface meaning. In such instances, the signifiers rely on the composition of the environment for its signification.

It is important to note that the cradle land of Abasuba people in Kenya are Mfangano and Rusinga islands while that of the Luo is on the mainland. It is true that these lands – main and islands have different ecosystems that may be attributed to the differences in climate. The two lands would, therefore, be different in their composition. This study examines how borrowed items that are ecologically dependent in their interpretation in Dholuo fit into Olusuba folksongs and remain effective in these songs.

5 Research Methodology

An ethnographic qualitative research design that employed intact cultural groups of the Abasuba and Luo in natural settings was adopted. The approach was justified because the interest of this research was in the perception of the Abasuba speech community in the interpretation and use of borrowed FOS in Olusuba traditional folksongs. The corpus for the study was constructed from songs collected from Abasuba cultural events including but not limited to funeral events, circumcision events, and festive events. The data was collected on Mfangano and Rusinga Islands (see the appendix). For neutrality and impartiality, non-participatory observation was preferred. This entailed participating not in the performances of the songs but sitting in unobtrusive places within the study site as we audio-recorded the songs. The audio recording was done using a Sony IC Recorder. Out of the 17 accessible audio-recorded songs, 8 songs were purposively utilised in line with the topic of study. Particular attention was paid to FOS comprising loanwords as the images. In the sampling of the songs, 3 native speakers of Olusuba and 3 native speakers of Dholuofrom identified cultural groups were involved. The 6 research participants namely Mr. Opata, Mr. Odhiambo, Miss. Achieng from Luo community and Mr. Obonyo, Mrs. Mukonwe and Mr. Odiembo from Abasuba community were sampled from the population using snowball sampling. Through snowballing the researchers were assisted by members of the two communities in identifying resourceful informants from the speech communities in question. The number of informants for this study was dictated by data saturation experienced after the interviewing of the 6 informants. The 6 informants assisted in identifying songs that had the FOS. The identification was done after a systematic playback of all the audio-recorded songs. The 8 selected songs were then transcribed, cross-checked, and verified by the respective native speakers and our intuitive knowledge of Dholuo. A corpus was then constructed from the selected songs. The corpus construct consisted of lexemes that had Dholuo features and were figurative in terms of their signification. In the data analysis, we began by interviewing 3 Suba informants on the possible meanings of the identified FOS. Using our intuitive knowledge, the signification of these FOS was analysed within the framework of Barthes' (1967) Semiotic approach. In this approach, we considered the meanings of the FOS beyond their surface meanings – informants' perception of the FOS was included in the interpretation, and their shared cultural activities were also studied to establish the link between the cultural activities and the signification of the identified FOS.

6 Findings and Discussion

The content analysis revealed that Olusuba folk songs convey a variety of themes. These themes, when put together in the composition of songs, form powerful combinations that help underpin the benefactive works of the songs. The linguistic analysis of the sampled folksongs established that Olusuba songs are composed of FOS. The signification of some of these FOS showed the influence of Olusuba-Dholuo contact.

Research Question 1: How do figures of speech borrowed from the Dholuo language contribute to the expressive power and cultural significance of Olusuba folksongs, particularly in conveying themes related to nature and socio-economic activities shared by the Abasuba and Luo communities? And how are these linguistic devices adapted and integrated within the cultural framework of the Abasuba community?

6.1 Contribution to Expressive Power and Cultural Significance

Nature-oriented folksongs were classified as grounded on the phenomena and composition of the physical world as well as scenarios beyond human control. The phenomena include diseases associated with abomination, medicinal plants, life, and loss, among other inevitable occurrences in life. This has been achieved in Olusuba songs using several figurative speeches which in this study are classified based on the functions of these speeches in the songs.

6.1.1 Figure of speech: Hyperbole

This study found that the two cultural groups have arbitrarily agreed on the relationship between the reference to death and its repercussions. This combines a sensory impression of 'death' with the mental content of 'death'. Consider Song 1.

Example Song 1: A Dirge performed during the burial of a beloved

> *Oetha wang'kio muetha namang'anake*
>
> Whoever invited death had what motive
>
> *Omutu oetha **emasira** kikorri niki x2*
>
> Whoever invited death had what motive x2
>
> *Ekitu kikorri omutu akuri?*
>
> Whoever invited death had what motive?

Evident in the song is a figurative use of the term *emasira* to refer to death. The term is borrowed from Dholuo lexeme *masira*. The term has been morphologically nativised by its prefixation of the augment '*e*' which according to Sande (2019) is a characteristic of noun class 9a – a class of Olusuba borrowed nouns. The term *emasira* has been hyperbolically used in this song to portray

death as a disaster whose aim is to not only destroy the immediate family but to destroy the whole community as well. The perception given to death is found to be common within the two speech communities hence the borrowed reference *emasira*. Based on this perception, Abasuba has been keen on occurrences and things that are likely to cause *emasira* to the extent of placing some mandatory practices that every member of the society must undertake, failure to which a spell is cast on the defaulting member. This shared perception enhances the emotive power of Olusuba folksongs and underscores the cultural significance of mourning rituals.

6.1.2 Symbolism

Olusuba-Dholuo contact has also led to the Abasuba's adoption of a Dholuo term *dibuoro*. The term is used to communicate to people how valuable the deceased is in terms of physique and societal role and is thus irreplaceable. See Song 2.

Example Song 2: A Dirge performed after the burial of a beloved

> *Awifu ndathema orukweri omura wa Gem*
>
> Ooh, I scream son of Gem
>
> *Ndimuthu omura wa Gem*
>
> Ooh, I am terrified son of Gem
>
> *Saithu akuri wiogong'o*
>
> Dad has slept wiogong'o
>
> *Abok omura waolang'o*
>
> Abok son to olang'o
>
> *Ndasamara **dibuoro** okuri*
>
> I scream 'dibuoro' has slept

The term *dibuoro* is a Dholuo nominal whose referent is an attractive well-built young bull. In the song above the diseased is praised as *dibuoro*, a symbol of a handsome well-built young son that death has snatched from the family. The term, if not carefully used, creates room for two possible interpretations: as a colour or a bull, hence its ambiguity. The context of the use of the word *dibuoro* in this song fixes the ambiguous meaning of the word so that it means the bull. The term in this context, therefore, symbolises a beloved son who may not be replaced upon his death. It is worth noting that the term is strictly used on sons. This explains the worthiness of a male child in the Abasuba community. The ambiguity adds depth to the cultural significance of the song and highlights the nuanced understanding of loss and grief shared by the Abasuba and Luo communities. This finding aligns with Mhando's (2008) assertion that cultural practices,

including mourning rituals, are transmitted through oral traditions such as folksongs, thereby reinforcing shared cultural values and beliefs.

6.1.3 Synecdoche and metaphors

In some Olusuba traditional folksongs, some Dholuo nativised terms are used to communicate important traditional knowledge believed to safeguard members of society from suffering ancestral curses. These curses manifest in the form of illnesses that require certain rituals for healing. Part of the ritual practices is borrowed from the Luo and includes medicinal herbs which form the core part of the rituals. Refer to Song 3.

Example Song 3: Folksong instruction on how a medicinal plant should be used for its effectiveness

Kuama eene oakie omugenga

Make sure you light *omugenga*

Ngavura no omugeni yoyo naagieiku mugenga

Let no stranger attend to 'omugenga'

Kukikuraano kino, kuekigera ne ekeve

During this period it is a taboo

*Agiisaechira/**enkiira** kiracha okumunyora*

Let *chira* befall you

*No onyo reokuragara omuthi **amanyasi***

And you get to need *amanyasi*

The song above is both a praise and warning song directed towards a son. Featuring in the song are loanwords borrowed from Dholuo with some nativisation on their morphological structures. The words are *omugenga*; *echira/enkiira* and *amanyasi* modified from Dholuo words *magenga chira* and *manyasi* in that order. These words mean much more beyond the surface meaning with each retaining its social meaning from Dholuo. *Omugenga* as used in the above song is a synecdoche used to represent the comprehensive activities on the night of mourning. For instance, the activity is meant to bar members of the family from having intimacy during the mourning period and to send out any strangers during the night of mourning. This is done to ensure the confidentiality of the discussions in the meeting of the sick person's family and the herbalist. *Echira/enkiira* symbolises any kind of ailments resulting from disloyalty to traditional norms and

amanyasi metaphorically refers to a mixture of herbs meant to treat the *echira*. These metaphors integrate seamlessly into Olusuba folksongs, enriching their expressive power and preserving cultural practices shared by the Abasuba and Luo communities. As noted by Pavlik, Stefanski, and Perea (2018), linguistic adaptations within cultural frameworks serve to preserve and perpetuate socio-cultural practices, ensuring their continuity across generations.

6.2 Adaptation and Integration within the Cultural Framework

Concerning folksongs oriented to socio-economic activities, the Abasuba's extensive stay with the Luo, according to Mhando (2008), has made them borrow several social practices including initiation – removal of six lower teeth; tattooing of daughters' stomach *kado*; chasing away of death *teroburu*; they believe that the dead send spirits to select few *juogi*. These practices were believed to be important and, therefore, needed to be passed down to the next generations through genres such as songs, proverbs, riddles, and narratives (Mhando 2008).

6.2.1 Metonyms

A number of these songs have been used to communicate power heredity in the society of the Abasuba, and the communication has been done using figurative terms which correspond to their referents. Consider the Olusuba song in Song 4.

Example Song 4: Song of instruction performed by parents during their preparation of their son for parenthood

Omwana wane

My son

Iwue ni enguru eya uvumura wane

You are strength of my youth

Owa okuthanga okuso kamukichenge ogwane

The first and the eldest from my loins

*Renthe **ekirindi***

Bring the stool

No oikare embari kayane

And sit by my side

Ove ne enyon thaeyo okuingwa

Be keen to listen

Ku okuva engiga kiriaang'i

For the time is near

No omureri gara nyari kaove

And custodian you must be

Nakava igaondavai

Just like I have been

This song talks about the passage of mantle from a man to his son. This is wholly communicated using the word *ekirindi* modified from a Dholuo lexeme *orindi*. The term is a metonym given the fact that *ekirindi* serves the purpose of passage of mantle reflects the cultural significance of power heredity in the Abasuba community. Subsumed in this image are all other activities including sacrifices that pertain to passage of power. This activity is given honour in the Abasuba community; therefore, it must be attended by elders of the community to witness the passage. In the case that a weakness is noticed in the successor, the elders advise accordingly. This adaptation of linguistic devices within the cultural framework reinforces social norms and rituals associated with parenthood. This resonates with Mhando's (2008) observation that oral traditions, including songs and proverbs, play a crucial role in transmitting cultural values and practices.

6.2.2 Proverbs

The economic activity of the Abasuba has also been found to be communicated through borrowed FOS. One of the economic activities found to have been shared by Abasuba and Luo, even before the Abasuba and the Luo came into contact, was fishing (Mhando 2008). Therefore, no new things related to fishing were learnt by the Abasuba from the Luo other than species of fish. See the song in Song 5.

Example Song 5: A song for harvesting sung during fishing and farm preparation

Oraso kaaae?

Where are you going to?

Ndaso kaevuangano

I am going to *Mfangano*

Evuanga noniyiika

Mfangano is home

Yiikathura kora amarimo no okuruva

At home we do farming and fishing

Thuraru vao kuruusya omugonzo okuruva efulu ne engege

We fish using **omugonzo** to catch **efulu** and tilapia

The terms *efulu* and *engege* are products of the nativisation of Dholuo lexemes *fulu* and *ngege* in that order. The two lexemes denote species of fish in Dholuo. Pavlik, Stefanski and Perea (2018), in their study of fishing as an economic activity of the Luo at Dunga beach in Kisumu, establish that the species *ngege* is a valuable species of fish in the Luo society with *fulu* ranked low in terms of its demand. This is further confirmed by a Dholuo proverb *Fulubendeoro ngege* which loosely translates to 'Even halochronis (name of a small fish) employs tilapia (big fish)'. The two terms have figuratively been used in this proverb to communicate equality in society, thus condemning classism. The signification of the two terms in the song above is induced by Olusuba-Dholuocontact. The persona in this song instructs others to use a special trap *omugonzo* to harvest both *engege* and *efulu*. This communicates the importance of the two species to the Abasuba community. These linguistic adaptations reinforce the importance of fishing in both communities and convey traditional knowledge about fishing practices, and support Pavlik et al. (2018) argument that linguistic adaptations reflect shared experiences and knowledge systems, facilitating cultural continuity and cohesion.

6.2.3 Synecdoche and understatement

The Abasuba have also been found to communicate their sensory impression using lexemes associated with crop farming. Some of these lexemes and their significations are borrowed from Dholuo. This is demonstrated by the song in Song 6.

Example Song 6: Working song sung during planting season

Amarimo? Ochao kukomera emimea?

What will you be planting?

*Amariwa, **eviduuma** na amagodo*

Cassava, maize and beans

Kane? Sawavo vao amariri okukomera?

Has your father planted yet?

*Igao, sawane asokie **ekodhi***

Yes, my father has removed seeds

Identified in the song above are two FOS: *eviduuma* and *asokieekodhi*. *Eviduuma* is a loanword from Dholuo lexeme *oduma* which means maize. The term has been used to partly represent the whole staple foods in the Abasuba community hence a synecdoche. The Verb Phrase (VP) *asokieekodhi* exhibits Dholuo features, particularly in its use of the lexeme *ekodhi* a derivative of Dholuo lexeme *kodhi* meaning seed. The expression is an understatement. The term underplays what usually happens before the planting day, including a man and his wife's intimate activities that night. This signification is reconstructed from Luo cultural activities that take place before planting. Failure to observe this practice is a curse to the farm, resulting in a poor harvest. The image is meant to pass to the husband and wife the need for togetherness in a household. These linguistic devices are integrated into the cultural framework to emphasise the significance of agricultural practices and the importance of familial togetherness, also echoing the importance of agricultural practices in Suba culture (Mhando 2008).

6.2.4 Symbolism

A social value that has been noted in Olusuba traditional folksongs is the interpretation of a non-blood-related child in a family. Such a child has been treated as an illegitimate child in the Abasuba community, and given a reference *kimirwa*, a lexeme directly borrowed from Dholuo without any structural changes. See Song 7.

Example Song 7: Song of threat to a son of the soil not keen on the Abasuba community's traditions

Nakava owana omweene owaekiaro, ng'aokugia dekiuuthe ethe emasira ndamwambiri

As a true son of land, I cannot forego our tradition lest taboo befall me

*Omumu rao gambi gambirina kava omwana omweene ngoo wa omugaka arachini **ekimirwa***

Son, you spoke as a true son of the soil not as an adopted/illegitimate son.

The term *Kimirwa* is borrowed from Dholuo meaning an illegitimate son with no blood relation to the family. The lexeme has been used in the above song to symbolise an outcast who should not be involved in the family's affairs for he may grab blessings away from the legitimate sons. The song condemns any child out of wedlock in a family hence the need for faithfulness in a family. Symbolism is used in this folksong to portray cultural attitudes towards legitimacy and familial belonging in the Abasuba community. This linguistic adaptation reinforces social norms and underscores the importance of cultural fidelity within the community.

6.2.5 Imagery

Worth noting among the Abasubais the perpetuation of a patriarchal ideology. Several songs in Olusuba have worked towards empowering men at the expense of women, for instance, the treatment of a married woman as a stranger in her natal home. The empowerment has been enacted using Olusuba lexemes; some of which are borrowed from Dholuo. The meaningfulness of the borrowed lexemes is enhanced by socio-cultural practices which the Abasuba have adapted from Dholuo. Song 8 demonstrates this argument.

Example Song 8: A dirge sung during the loss of a beloved parent

> *Ndagiangieyi wasamira nyakwithua kuri*
>
> I wail all over because mum has gone
>
> *Eeeeeeee omigogo oanea kuri*
>
> Eeeeeeee daughter of the soil has gone

The dirge above is composed of a borrowed lexeme *omigogo*. The loanword is a derivative of the Dholuo term *migogo* referring to a married girl. In this song, there is a mourning of the late *omigogo* interchangeably used with the term *nyakwithu* meaning mum. The term *omigogo* has figuratively been used in this song to refer to a married girl who has culturally no rights in her father's home – an image of a powerless woman in the paternal home. The term underlyingly means that a married woman does not belong to her father's home anymore. Therefore, she needs to concentrate on her husband for the good keeping of the family. The use of the figurative term underscores patriarchal ideologies within the Abasuba community. This linguistic adaptation reflects cultural attitudes towards gender roles and familial relationships, contributing to the expressive power of Olusuba folksongs.

Research Question 2: What impact does the integration of figures of speech borrowed from the Dholuo language into Olusuba folksongs have on the preservation and evolution of cultural identity among the Abasuba people, particularly in terms of communicating traditional knowledge, social values, and beliefs through linguistic borrowing? And how does this reflect broader patterns of language contact and cultural exchange in multicultural societies?

6.3 Preservation and development of cultural identity

Overall, incorporating Dholuo-derived FOS into Olusuba folksongs is critical for preserving and evolving the Abasuba people's cultural identity. Abasuba folk performers broaden their cultural repertoire while reaffirming their particular cultural legacy by incorporating language resources from neighbouring groups. Abasuba communities negotiate their cultural identity within larger linguistic and cultural contacts by adapting and integrating borrowed linguistic features. This process exemplifies the complex dynamics of language contact and cultural exchange in multicultural societies, where linguistic communities' boundaries are constantly negotiated and

redefined. This negotiation of cultural identity through linguistic borrowing resonates with Fishman's (1991) concept of "domain loss" and "language shift," wherein communities adapt to external influences while seeking to preserve core aspects of their cultural identity.

6.4 Communicating traditional knowledge, social values, and beliefs

The inclusion of Dholuo-derived FOS acts as a conduit for the transmission of traditional knowledge, social values, and beliefs among Abasuba groups. For example, Song 3's use of synecdoche and metaphors effectively conveys valuable traditional information about healing procedures and ancestral beliefs. Olusuba folksongs preserve and propagate cultural traditions related to medicinal rites and ancestral worship through borrowing terms from Dholuo such as *omugenga* and *amanyasi*. Similarly, the symbolic use of terms such as *Kimirwa* in Song 7 represents Abasuba society's ideas of legitimacy and familial belonging. This reflects the function of folk traditions in orally transmitting cultural knowledge and heritage, as highlighted by Hymes (1981), contributing to the maintenance of cultural continuity and identity among the Abasuba people.

6.5 Reflection on broader patterns of language contact and cultural exchange

The incorporation of Dholuo-derived FOS into Olusuba folksongs mirrors broader patterns of language interaction and cultural interchange in heterogeneous cultures. Cultural borrowing, as demonstrated by the linguistic adaptations and nativisation in the instances offered, is a dynamic process influenced by historical, social, and economic factors. Furthermore, the common themes and motifs found in Olusuba folksongs, such as nature-themed songs and socioeconomic activities, highlight the interconnectedness between different linguistic and cultural communities. Through the borrowing and adaptation of FOS from Dholuo, Abasuba folk artists enrich their cultural repertoire while reaffirming their distinct cultural heritage, as discussed by Pavlik, Stefanski, and Perea (2018). This emphasises the fluidity of cultural boundaries and the permeable nature of linguistic interchange in multicultural situations.

Notably, as evidenced in the findings, the Olusuba-Dholuo contact has led to lexical changes in Olusuba characterised by borrowing words from Dholuo. The loanwords are morphologically and phonologically nativised to fit within the morphophonological structure of Olusuba. Some of the loanwords, as shown in the Olusuba folksongs have hidden ideological meanings reinforced by Abasuba beliefs and cultural practices borrowed from the Luo. These loanwords are literary used in Olusuba songs to convey traditional knowledge that is helpful for mutual coexistence between the Abasuba and the Luo. This works against the argument that language contact is a threat to the survival of the language of the minority. This is explained by a hypothesis that in the situation of language contact, it is the language of the minority that always borrows linguistic items such as words from the donor language. The borrowing leads to either extreme language mixture or a language death (Sankoff 2001; Sarah 2001).

The conceptualisation of the images marked by loanwords in the Olusuba folksongs is derived from cultural practices borrowed from the Luo. This works within the Semiotic principle of

connotation (Barthes 1967). According to the principle of connotation, meaning created by the signifier plus the signified is more than just a system of random naming or nomenclature; it is subject to the layering of meaning according to people's culture. Based on Barthes' principle, we can argue that the meaningfulness of borrowed images in Olusuba folksongs has been reinforced through the mutual cultural ideologies of the Abasuba and the Luo. These ideologies culminate from the perception of the Abasuba on the images and their referents. Therefore, the ability of the Olusuba speakers to use and decode the images is based on the Abasuba' competence with the lexemes marking the images and the culture of the Luo from which the lexemes are borrowed. It is this competence with the culture of the Luo that enhances the performativeness of the lexemes in Olusuba songs. Signification is also associated with social features that link the Abasuba to the Luo and the interest of the Abasuba in the Luo economic activities. From this link and interest, a consensus is reached on a framework within which the borrowed lexemes, which are figurative, work. Beyond the set conventional framework, the borrowed lexemes are unlikely to work, consequently rendering them nonsensical words.

The study aligns with earlier studies by Sanchez et al. (2019), Moyna and Loureiro-Rodríguez (2022), Perangin-Angin (2020), Sonkamble (2020), and Verschik (2021) in emphasising the socio-pragmatic consequences of linguistic contact. These researchers have looked at how language interaction results in sociolinguistic adaptation and semantic evolution, especially in the context of songs, which frequently contain FOS. Linguistic borrowing facilitates cultural interchange in Olusuba-Dholuo interaction, enhancing both languages and aiding in the dissemination of customs and social values (Mhando 2008; Sonkamble 2020). The ecological context of language borrowing emphasises how the meanings of FOS in Olusuba folksongs are influenced by the Abasuba community's natural surroundings. This is consistent with the tenets of ecolinguistics, which highlight the interaction of language and surroundings (Ayushi and Amitash 2023). In addition to enhancing the cultural repertory, the incorporation of FOS from Dholuo into Olusuba songs acts as a phenological record of historical ecological shifts (Liu et al. 2021).

7 Conclusion

As established in this study, language is a union of signs whose significations are based on the speakers' competence with these signs and the culture of the community in which the signs are used. According to the concept of language contact, some of these signs happen to be exchanged and when the exchange happens, their meanings are retained in the recipient language. Meaning realisation by signs is sometimes controlled by the perception of the speakers of the recipient language on the link between the signs and their referents. It is based on this process of signification that FOS, with Dholuo-related images in Olusuba songs, form their meanings. To sum up, this study highlights the significant influence of incorporating figures of speech (FOS) from the Dholuo language into Olusuba folksongs, illuminating their expressive potential, cultural relevance, and contribution to both the preservation and growth of Abasuba cultural identity. It is evident from content and linguistic research that the integration of Dholuo-derived FOS into Olusuba folksongs enables them to function as repositories for shared experiences, beliefs, and traditions. The first research question delved into how Dholuo-derived FOS contributes to the expressive power and cultural significance of Olusuba folksongs, particularly in conveying themes related to nature and socio-economic activities. The results showed that Olusuba folksongs effectively include FOS, such as figurative terms, hyperbole, ambiguity, synecdoche, metaphors, and symbolism, enhancing their expressive power and maintaining cultural practices. These linguistic adaptations represent larger patterns of language contact and cross-cultural exchange in multicultural communities in addition to facilitating the transfer of traditional information, social values, and beliefs. Furthermore, the study investigated the influence of incorporating Dholuo-derived FOS on the preservation and development of cultural identity among the Abasuba people. It was discovered that the incorporation of these FOS serves as a channel for the transmission of traditional information, social values, and beliefs while also sustaining Abasuba's cultural identity. Abasuba folk artists broaden their cultural repertoire and reaffirm their cultural heritage by adapting through linguistic and cultural contact. Overall, this study advances our comprehension of the complex dynamics of linguistic contact and cultural exchange by showing Abasuba culture's adaptability and resilience in the face of external influences. By investigating the socio-pragmatic consequences of linguistic contact as well as the ecological context of language borrowing, this study emphasises the interconnectedness of language, culture, and environment, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural evolution and continuity in multicultural societies.

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