Gender Dimensions in Emerging African Music Genres: A Case of Kenyan Local Hip Hop

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Abstract: The question of gender bias is now seen as a major challenge in almost every discipline that deals with human behavior, cognition, institutions, society and culture. Therefore, this paper was an attempt to investigate gender dimensions in the emerging African genres; a case study of local hip hop songs in Kenya. It discussed the extent to which hip hop language is gender biased. It focused on the popular local hip hop songs and video images that occur with the songs. The study used the Social Semiotic Theory in the theoretical framework. Ten hip hop songs and ten video excerpts were purposively selected for analysis. The hip hop songs were coded according to the name of the artist and year of production. The data was analyzed under three sections: Linguistic analysis, Image analysis and Gender analysis. The study revealed that indeed there is gender bias in the language of the favourite youth culture. This was revealed in the lexis that distinguishes gender, in the syntactic analysis and also in the image analysis. It was found that in hip hop music, men tend to be regarded higher in terms of roles, occupation and general human traits like strength and control than women. The study therefore recommends that radio and television stations, and other advertising agencies should join the battle for women liberation by using gender sensitive language and focusing on positive and constructive societal changes in terms of gender roles.
Key words ; gender dimensions, Kenyan hip hop, youth culture, linguistic analysis, gender analysis

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I.   BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The paper sought to investigate gender markedness or identities in the language of Kenyan hip hop songs. Hip hop is a musical genre that has developed alongside hip hop culture. It is mostly based on musical and dance concepts of looping, rapping, free styling, deejaing, scratching, sampling and beat boxing.

Scott (2005) argues that the team rap is sometimes used synonymously with hip hop but ideally hip hop denotes practices of an entire subculture. Rapping also referred to as emceeing is a vocal style in which the artist speaks lyrically in rhyme and verse generally to instrumentals or synthesized beat. Modern beats incorporate synthesizers, drummachines, and live bands. Rappers may write, memorize or improve their lyrics and perform their work as acappela or to a beat.

On the Kenyan scene, the artists use language that has distinctive slang which is a combination of many dialects such as Swahili, English and other local languages such asKikuyu, Dholuo and Luhya. Hip Hop began in the Bronx in New York City in the 1970s primarily among African Americans with some Jamaican immigrant influence. Since then hip hop has quickly spread throughout the world and Kenya is not an exception. The United States Department (1990) describes hip hop as being the centre of mega music and fashion industry in the world that crosses social barriers and cuts across racial lines. Throughout its international levels, hip hop is now considered a global music epidemic and has diverged its Afro-American roots by way of globalization and localization.

The hip hop culture in Kenya is not only popular with the youth in urban centres but it is also catching up in the rural areas. The youth think they have found something to identify themselves with. In the music, the youth see themselves and their in-groups in terms of their own values, beliefs and ways of living. Hartwing (2001) argues that hip hop can also be viewed as a global learning experience which has impacted many different countries culturally and socially in positive ways. He adds that hip hop is used to address environmental justice, social policies media justice, poverty and education. Chang (2006) also observes that hip hop messages allow the underprivileged and mistreated to be heard. This explains why very many young talented Kenyans are coming up to venture into the genre, than any other type of music.

II.   THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The language of hip hop plays a crucial role in shaping thoughts and emotions because it forms a system of communication of what the youth go through every day. Gender activists take the view that western hip hop, which is a huge multi-million dollar industry is patriarchal in structure and ideology. It is further argued that there is gender bias in the language of this fast growing music industry where women are made to appear subordinate to men. Kenyan hip hop music is no exception because it is in fact dominated by male artistes, many of whose productions have tended to portray a woman negatively. This is most evident in the use of strong language and derogatory terminologies which show women being in disadvantaged positions.

Similarly, in the video recordings of the popular music in Kenya men in most cases are portrayed as competing and strong, succeeding in prestigious roles as decision making in control of finances and property; owning sleek cars, beautiful houses and expensive jewellery (bling bling). However, the ladies are portrayed as sex objects dressed skimpily, and do the dirty dancing. They are always show cased as unhappy, confined at home doing in door chores and begging for love. This scenario would suggest that men are domineering, providers and aggressive while women are weak, emotional and can't own any property. The effect would be to subordinate women to a lower status while at the same time uplifting men. This is the problem being dealt with in this paper.

Despite the availability of literature on gender marked language which portray bias against women, there is hardly any publication on the gender domains of the hip hop genre in the Kenyan context. Therefore this paper sought to determine the extent to which the language of hip hop is gender biased.

Justification And Significance Of The Study

Hip hop whose chief medium of communication is language has become an important source of awareness and entertainment for the youth even a fair percentage of the adults. Today, most of the hip hop artists and their songs are being used by corporates to promote their products. Notable examples include Jua Cali for the Company Orange Sikiza Tunes, Nameless (David Mathenge) as the face of Kenya Breweries in the campaign against irresponsible drinking, RoughTone as the ambassador of youth affairs for the Korean Embassy as well as Daddy Owen, Julliani, Jaguar, Nonini as well as Sauti sol and P Unit boy bands for Safaricom (leading communications company in kenya) live concerts.

Hip hop music has also been used in important national processes such as the Kenyan constitutional making process, to educate the masses during civic education fora. This genre was chosen because it appeals to a class in society that are energetic, creative and whose performances are exciting. This is likely to appeal to the audience hence passing the messages home with much ease and fun.

Information gained from this study will help to promote gender equality. Educational institutions, parents, teachers, NGO's other institutions charged with responsibility of sensitizing the society about gender, may also benefit through outreach programmes, seminars and workshops. The hip hop artists and the masses will be enlightened on the effect of such language.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by the Socio-Semiotic Theory which was first developed by Malinowski (1923) and later expanded by Hymes (1967). It is well exemplified and advanced as a theory of language by Halliday and Hassan (1989) with its concern being in the use of language and the way language interacts in and out with society.

The social semiotic framework has a social dimension that makes it particularly plausible to study language and gender. Its basis is in semantics, the meaning making system (Hurford and Hearsly, 1985). The theory seeks to consider and identify the role that certain linguistic items, for example words as a text or in context function in building meaning and in structuring and restructuring our social relations, also language as social semiotics is highly associated with experience, reality interaction in language use and socially in-built processes of language use. In this way, language is understood and related in its relationship to social structure. Text or words and the context in which they occur are therefore untimely related. Neither can be enunciated or understood without the other (Halliday& Hassan, 1989:52)

III.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design that was adopted to carry out the study in the paper was a cross sectional survey of gender dimensions in the language of hip hop songs in Kenya. A one month survey of people's perception about hip hop songs was done by collecting data from members of a population (the youth and the older generation) to determine why hip hop is their favourite music. Observational research was also included to study the visual text excerpts (videos) and live performances.

Apart from the songs and visual images collected from the radio and TV, a cross sectional survey was carried out in Nairobi and Kisumu cities as well as Eldoret town in Kenya. These areas were chosen because they have a lot of business in terms of music sales.

The target population was the consumers of the local hip hop music in Nairobi, Kisumu and Eldoret. A total of seventy five individuals were purposively sampled and interviewed. They included: artists, vendors and the buyers of local hip hop music. In the research, ten songs were sampled from each of the three sub-genres; Genge, Kapuka and African hip hop using purposive sampling. The same procedure was done to music videos where ten visual excerpts were purposively sampled for analysis. In the cities, twenty five respondents were randomly sampled in each place.

The study employed observation, questionnaires, structured interviews and video-taping to collect data concerning gender dimensions on the language of hip hop.

Content and image analysis of the music in relation to gender was used in data analysis. Selected songs were transcribed and translated from slang to English. Content analysis was appropriate because it was particularly effective in assessing the linguistic and semantic content and the imagery of messages in terms of gender.

This analysis also formed qualitative information into quantitative data by converting sentences, clause types, phrase structures and word classes into numbers for analysis. This way, the researcher was able to perform additional tests on the material. The quantitative data obtained from research instruments was subjected to statistical analysis that involved computation of frequencies and percentages. The information was then presented in summary tables. All data was generated and analyzed on the basis of the social Semiotics Theory.

IV. DATA DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In data analysis, the focus was on the hip hop lyrics and visual images drawn from the videos that occur with the songs. Ten hip hop songs that were purposively sampled were linguistically analyzed and the concern here was lexis and syntax. Therefore linguistic forms such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences or large chunks of texts and prosodic features were analysed.

In order to capture the gender dimensions of this popular youth genre, this section was divided into three thematic concerns, namely: the linguistic analysis, the image analysis and the gender analysis of the language in the selected songs. It is appreciated that whereas the hip hop lyrics are in a raw format of slang; a variety of language popularly known as sheng, the texts were translated into English.

The following is a list of titles of songs that were used to write this paper: the names of the singers, producers, the years of production and the songs codes, for each of the song analysed the code was derived from the name of the artist and the year of production.

S/no	Name of the Song	Singers	Producers	Year Produced	Songs Code
1.	Manyake	Circuit and Joel	OgopaDjs	2007	Circ2007
2.	Kadhaa	Nonini and Christine Apondi	Decimal Records	2011	Nna 2007
3.	Amejibeba	Flexx	OgopaDjs	2006	Flex 2006
4.	Tichi	Kenracy	Jomino Records	2006	Ken 2006
5.	Maziwa Nairobi	Nonini and Sylvia	Calif Records	2007	Nnb 2007
6.	VutaPumzi	Longombaz	OgopaDjs	2005	Long 2005
7.	Najuta	SanaiperTande	Rkay Records	2010	Tande 2010
8.	Nasinzia	Nameless	Tedd Josiah	2006	Name 2006
9.	Kinyanyau	Deux Vultures	OgopaDjs	2007	Deux 2007
10.	Swing swing	Kleptomania	OgopaDjs	2006	Klep 2006

Semantic and Lexical Relations in the Hip Hop Songs

Here a semantic analysis of words used in the lyrics was presented. The presentation is covered under loaded expressions and lexical traits as identified by Stanford (1993). In the analysis, a word or text is taken as a semantic entity and a social exchange of meaning. Sharply (2003) argues that since hip hop is about women other than men, the artists have formulated lexis that distinguish and mark gender. In the study, the lexis was drawn from the description of words and naming words. The analysis demonstrated that the lexis used to mark gender in hip hop music within the sheng variety of language has a gender bias.

Nouns such as mama/mathe. (Mother),Kinyaunyau (small wolf),mahaga/manyake (butts), and dame/manzi, (pretty girl) either target specific gender roles or attributes for women which are domestic or are highly derogatory. On the contrary, vocabulary such as daddy/budaa (respectable father), mbuyu (respectable, strong man) are geared towards men's specific gender roles such as strength, protection, security and respect. It is important to note that most of the nouns used are symbolic of another reality hence they do notcommunicatedirectly.

The hip hop songs studied also have specialized vocabulary. Lexical traits according to Lakoff (1975) are specialized vocabulary items that men and women use. Lakoff goes on to argue that the lexicon used depends on how society has socialized users. They are words that reflect socially constructed gender roles for men and women. From the study, it was clear that the lexical traits used in hip hop songs had a gender perspective. The nouns which are gerunds for example "driving and drinking" are geared towards specific gender roles of men like protection, security, stability and achievement. Such activities like "banking" are associated with prestige and a mark of status in the society and are performed within public domains.

On the other hand, words such as "wewe ni msoft" (you are polite) and "Lazima uwe mpole na mvumilivu dada" (you must be nice and persevering my sister) used in the lyrics target gender roles for women which are domestic and most of them are within a private or home domain. They also relate to the aspect of submission in women yet the society is slowly changing as far as some of the gender specific roles being performed by men and women are concerned. Ndung'o (1998) observes that divisions of labour in most Kenyan ethnic communities is carried out on the premise that women are the weaker sex, and men are the stronger ones. However, a good number of women in Kenya are in formal employment and provide for their families just like men can do. To some extent some men have begun to stay at home to take up domestic roles. Therefore, the use of specific lexical items such as"Kinyanyau" (small wolf),"manyake/mahaga" (big buttocks) "mjanja" (cunning) and "lazima" (you must) obligatory word, that have negative connotations for women in the lyrics, is absolutely inappropriate.

Syntactic Analysis of the Hip Hop Lyrics

Linguists of whatever theoretical persuasion have always regarded the complexity of language to be such that it is necessary to set up more than one level of linguistic analyses (Leech, 1974). The linguistic analyses features of the hip hop language can therefore be determined from various levels including the syntactic level. A close analysis of the data drawn from all the lyrics in this study revealed the following syntactic forms: Clause types and their discourse functions, phrases and word classes.

The study showed that a great deal of linguistic forms in hip hop genre were declaratives which take the illocutionary forms of commanding, requesting, warning, promising instructing and challenging. Others are interrogative, imperative and finally exclamatory sentences. The discourse functions are meant to entertain, inform and educate among other emerging issues from the hip hop music such as drugs, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, social justice among others.

Declarative sentences that give information through praising occur very many times in the study data, (30.2%). They make use of descriptive words in the study data that express approval or admiration for either gender in the sentences. However, most of the hip hop singers honour and glorify men in terms of having a lot money for buying drinks and entertaining beautiful girls, being, handsome and living large. This was well exemplified in the praising illocutions given above where characters are elevated in terms of being in high status. Consider "msee una ganji kadhaa, na ma chupa kaadhaa, umetoka kwa bank na gari full kwa tank"to mean (the guy has a lot money to buy drinks, he is from the bank and also owns a car that has a full tank of fuel).

Similarly the ladies are also praised but something interesting is that in every honour they get, there is a sexual connotation to it in equal measure. For instance "Moto manzi ameiva"(means the beautiful girl is cooked and is hot). The seductive words imply that the lady is very sexy and ready for sex. This suggests that beauty for woman is for sex and nothing else. The same is not said about men yet it takes two to tango. It was therefore clear from the study data that praise speech acts targeting women were full of gender bias as they only associate women's beauty with negativity unlike men who are given higher status.

Promising illocutions also bring to the fore an aspect of gender bias. This was demonstrated in these lyrics "and I promise l will never be a player" This implies that men can be players; having many lovers at the

sametime. "Ndio maana wewe kimaisha nitakupa bila kukupimia. Here the male character is promising to provide his girl with the best in life. This speech act perhaps suggests that the man is always the provider, whereas the woman is there to receive and is thus always dependent. This is a clear manifest of gender skewness.

Informing speech acts also contributed to this question of gender bias as exemplified in this example: Ukipata manzi bora ni over 18, mrarue to hivo uchi. This translated as "if you encounter a girl who is over eighteen years, tear her into pieces when she is naked". Indeed the language used here is abusive and disrespectful to women folk. The Kiswahili word 'rarua' symbolizes forcefully having intercourse with the lady without her consent.

Interrogative illocutions such as Kinyaunyau hawa ndogondogo wanataka nini? Translated as "What do these small wolves want?" Here the teenage girls are being compared to wolves; this implies that they are indeed greedy for sex and are always after men's money. Therefore the girls are cheap and gullible. It was evident here that sentences describing the female gender have negative connotations. On the other hand, interrogative speech acts such as "Utasimamisha kifaru akiwa full speed?" is translated as "How can you stop a speeding buffalo?" The adjective speeding and noun buffalo describe men as unstoppable, aggressive, powerful and irresistible. These roles go with masculine attributes that any patriarchal society ascribes to. In these lyrics, men have been given attributes such as power to protect, leadership and ability to act skillfully and authoritatively. This is discriminative as far as the female gender is concerned as the women have been depicted as being active in sexual immorality, being dependent and pessimistic.

Such roles go together with feminine attributes such as love, care, gentleness, physical and intellectual weakness, among others. Craggs (1963) supports this argument when he says that every language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved.

Phrase structure types
The study revealed that verb phrases were the most frequently used with the highest frequency of 41.1%. This implies that hip hop artists make use of a great deal of simple and punchy, content phrases whose main function is to inform, educate and entertain the audience. It is important to note that some of the verb phrases carry meaning that are full of gender bias. For example in the lyrics below, stereotypical gender roles of women such as being passive are brought out. The fact that she is authorized to remain silent suggest submission on the part of the lady and authority on the part of men.

Lyrics	Gloss
Umejibeba hata usipunguze	you are fat, do not reduce
Nikiweka hata usiulize	when I penetrate don't ask me questions
Nikigeuza hata usilete	if I turn, do not quarrel

Female Artist Portrayal of Men in Their Lyrics
It was also evident in this study that Kenyan women have a share of blame as far as gender bias is concerned. From the lyrics, it was quite clear that female artists seem to have indeed accepted their position in the society as being second class citizens to men. All of them portrayed the men as superior in their lyrics. The fact that Sylvia, a female artist uses derogatory language to describe women as in the example, "Manzi mpoa hajavaa any ndani". (A beautiful girl does not wear underwear), and "mchukue manzi yeyote Yule humjui, kwa road yu mpeleke mbio" (pick any girl you do not know and be ready to be taken very fast in bed) but when it comes to men, she glorifies them, is certainly incredible, considering that she is a lady herself.

It is interesting to note that 70% of the hip hop artists in this study data are males compared to 30% of the female artists. The aspect of gender biasness was revealed by the fact that males significantly outnumber women in the production of the massive genre. However as much as the males dominate the hip hop industry, and also look down upon them, the female artists have perpetuated the widespread prejudice against themselves, hence are their own enemies.

Image Analysis of the Hip Hop Songs
The hip hop songs are in a number of cases supported by a video production of the songs. The visual presentation would tend to reinforce the attitude contained in the words for this reason, it was necessary to present an image analysis of the songs studied. The analysis reflected upon a fundamental novelty that video and photographic images have a gender dimension as noted by Creedon(1993). In this section, the main concern is to show the physical representation of images and also at the imagery or metaphorical level.

Generally, in the video excerpts, 80% of the images of the male artists and actors always clad in trendy hip hop fashionable clothesand expensive jewellery (bling bling). In the background for example from the excerpts, there are expensive and sleek cars, which implied that the artists were doing very well, were happy and ostensibly very rich. The red colour in the background of some of them (see figure below) certainly suggested

danger and power, hence the red tie for business people and the red carpet for celebrities and V.I.Ps as argued by Hunt(2010).

Image 1; male hip hop artist

It might be assumed that the colour signifies men's aggressive, authoritative and domineering nature. Generally, the images for men connoted wealth and high levels of sophistication and the idea that males in the hip hop industry were cultured, evident through the expensive cars and modern dressing styles.

Other images of the male artists were interpreted in relation to masculinity and virility; this included power, physical strength, security and protection as was self-evident in the field; tall and strong body builders with six-pack muscles guarding the artists (see image 2 below). Their big physique and masculine traits are markers of beauty and charm (Backland, 1994).

Image2: Hip hop artist and bodyguards

On the contrary the female images showed the female dancers as skimpily dressed; appear, flirty, vulnerable and provocative as was seen in posture and dressing. They are slender, light skinned and extremely stunning (see image4 below). From the survey that was done on why hip hop music is popular among the youth, 70% of the men that were interviewed between the ages of $13 - 35$ attributed the popularity of this genre to the beautiful women, and explicit images in the videos that show pretty girls involved in the sexy and dirty dance styles. According to Gary (2007), producers use features of beauty; that is light skinned women, long hair, slim and perfect bodies for modelling to appeal to potential buyers. This tended to confirm that there's a gender perspective in the genre; that women are simply used as sex objects to enhance the sales of the music. In agreement, Steffens (2010) notes that the reason why a woman finds herself in a rap video, sprawled over a luxury car is lack of self-esteem, as no one who values, loves herself would allow herself to be placed in such a degrading position.

Image3: Male dancers　　　　**Image 4: Female dancer**

Similarly, most of the female characters in the images play the roles of housewives and others are seen crying. In the images, ladies were portrayed as unhappy and frustrated housewives who had been jilted by their loved ones. The houses they lived in are indeed beautiful; however there was no happiness as the men are absentee husbands**.** These images showcased the typical gender role stereotypes and stereotypical traits attributed to women in the society; men's portrayal is positive whereas the women's portray is negative. This is individualized in terms of sexual stereotypes and culturally defined gender roles.

It emerged from the study that the settings which form the background of the images in hip hop music had gender dimensions. For example, male characters take a lead in outdoor settings. They also tended to be associated with settings of ostentation. On the other hand, females were more frequently placed in indoor settings such as being housewives and being great dancers in the clubs. Women were placed in the domestic contexts perhaps because homes are domains for women in an African society. This line of thinking has been adopted by Aloo (2002).

V.   SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Summary of Findings

The paper was an evaluation of gender perspectives in the language of Kenyan local hip hop songs which is the youth's favourite culture. From the sampled hip hop songs, it was evident that the language of local hip hop songs had a gender dimension. It is constructed with a gender bias through gender role stereotyping. The language of the songs also marked aspects of femininity and masculinity.

It was established that the lexis that distinguished gender was gender biased. This was clear especially in the loaded expressions such as nouns and adjectives. Most of them had negative connotations to the extent that they were either abusive or targeted specific gender roles and attributes that reflected the existing social and economic power relations in the society.

Similarly, it had been established that in syntactic analysis of the hip hop lyrics, there were a variety of sentence types, phrasal types and word class types that highlighted aspects of gender bias. According to the findings, women were stereotyped and unified in their common interest of beauty, love, care, cleanliness, family home and relationships. They were mostly seen in domestic settings, perform domestic chores, are unhappy and frustrated. They were also sexually immoral, dependent and pessimistic. Men on the other hand were shown in the syntactic analysis and prosodic features as competing and succeeding in prestigious roles like controlling finances decision making, providing security and shelter.

The language reflected attributes that subordinated women but uplifted, empowered and glorifiedmen especially when we focused on the sex of participants, background colour, setting and costumes. There was a clear manifest of gender skewness. Feminist researchers such as Smith (1989) posits that such idealized images bruise a woman's self-esteem and image.

The female artists had a share of blame in this gender question. There were not many in the industry (30%). This implies that men had taken control of the industry. What the ladies sang about was of critical concern. They were not likely to address issues that empower women but shockingly, they had joined their male counter parts in the sense that they looked down upon themselves.

VI.   CONCLUSION

Gender bias must be eliminated if we have to uphold the principles of fairness and equity for all human beings. It is important to free women from oppressive patriarchal gender roles and traits that society has ascribed to them. This will give women an opportunity to compete equally with men.

It is observed that hip hop music tries as much as possible to be faithful to the gender role stereotypes assigned by society to males and females.

We expect to see a new social reality like a marked change in women's and men's social status, occupation and roles reflected in the language of this favourite youth culture.

VII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Artists, directors, managers and producers should be gender sensitive in the use of language because of the wider implications, not only to the growing girl child and women but also to young boys' views and attitudes in general.

The players in the industry should extend and broaden the application of a gender balanced language both in the lyrics and images.

People need to be sensitive and be sensitized to the nature of gender bias that is carried in the language of hip hop music. The language of hip hop needs to reflect our current culture- one of balancing of power relations in the modern society where the youth are taking centre stage in every aspect.

Gender discriminatory songs and videos should be censored from the media to enable both sexes to compete equally. By so doing, both men and women will be freed from the rigid gender roles that society has imposed upon them.

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