

Analysis of Language used in *Gikuyu* Marriage Negotiation Discourse

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Abstract

This paper which focuses on language use within the formal discursive process of negotiating and legalising marriage in the domain of ‘*Ruracio*’ or bride wealth payment amongst the *Agikuyu* of Kenya was conceived on the premise that language is a significant phenomenon in the production and maintenance of social relations of power. The focus is on language elements that are both linguistic and non-linguistic and their influence on the concepts of

gender and power as brought out through the data collected for this study. Data, consisting of five recorded discourses from sampled negotiation sessions and five focus group discussions from Kiambu County Kenya, was translated, transcribed and analysed with a view of examining how people use language to accomplish social acts. The findings are that language use, linguistic or non-linguistic, demonstrates that *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation discursive domain is male dominated, it constructs roles and identities and also defines how people can have power over others to a level that they control their behavior. It is hoped that the findings will be useful to all language users in this domain as well as contributing to knowledge in discourse analysis.

Keywords: Terminologies, Address forms, Notations, Turn-takings, Language use

1. Introduction

There is need to increase consciousness concerning how language affects people's behavior towards each other (Fairclough, 1989). Actually, language is a significant phenomenon in the production and maintenance of social relations of power. Fasold (1990) has also observed that when people use language, they do more than just try to get another person to understand the speaker's thoughts and feelings. In King'ei's (2002) view, language is an integral part of the human society and thought system. This concept concurs with Catalan and Rose's (2005) view that language is a means, through which people shape their view of society, organize their knowledge, learn new things and above all assimilate the norms and social patterns of their community. Language too articulates consciousness, reflects culture and affects socialization. Thomas et.al (2004) argues that there is a perceived link between how we talk about things and how we construe them.

Language constructions such as figures of speech make significant constrains on interpretation processes. Katz *et al* (1998) have observed that an understanding of the processing of figurative language is central to several important issues such as relationship of language and thought, how we process language and how we comprehend abstract meanings. Important issues to consider are what figures of speech tell us about the structure and conceptual system in language use, why people choose to speak metaphorically, the role of culture and social factors in comprehending figurative language and why language users choose to be figurative language users.

Metaphors are comparisons where meanings are derived from a sharing of features. The relevance of a given property to a topic can best be described at the level of dimensions of attribution. According to Katz, *et al* (1998), the function of a metaphor is to extend human communication and conceptual capacities. They are windows to the systems of knowledge that are relevant and central in a given culture. They have linguistic identity to events, persons and entities that use already existing systems of knowledge In Katz *et al's* (1998) view; context will influence contextual or literal meaning According to Jaszczolt and Turner (2003), literal language refers to words that do not deviate from their defined meaning while non-literal or figurative language refers to words or expressions that exaggerate the usual meanings of the component words. Figurative phrases provide linguistic evidence of conceptualization.

Another perspective adopted by language users is the use of non verbal communication. Numerous examples are identifiable from the data collected for the current study. The process of using non-verbals involves sending or receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues. It encompasses body language, paralanguage, proxemics, and haptics, among others. Culture plays an important role in nonverbal communication since it does not only influence interpersonal interactions but also conveys cultural values. People use them unconsciously sometimes such as signals and the mediation of space. Wrong messages can be established if the body language conveyed does not match the verbal message. When absorbing a non verbal message, people focus on the entire environment around them meaning that they are using all their five senses. The extraction of meaning from a verbal or nonverbal act has to do

with discovering the motivation behind that act. Schiffrin (1994) has observed that language creates and is created by social context. Thus, social action does not only display knowledge but is also critical to knowledge. It is important to note that interpretations of nonverbal acts sometimes have dependent variables such as age, cultural diversity, cognitive and interpretation functions among others. According to Key (1977), verbal and nonverbal expressions for instance those that express status or male/female differences are examples of important features of differentiation in the dynamics of human interaction.

These views are insightful for discussions on the various language aspects identified from the discourse under study: linguistic, non-linguistic and extra – linguistic elements and their influence on the concept of gender and power. Analysis of discourse as a form of social interaction examine how people use language to accomplish social acts, such as constructing roles and identities (Van Dijk, 1997). These ends are achieved not only through the content of what is said –what is selected, implied or omitted but also through the structure and patterning of talk.

2. Materials and Methods

Data for this paper was collected in Kiambu County, Kenya. This is a predominantly rural county but according to the Institute of Social accountability (Tisa), its urban population is increasing as Nairobi city is rapidly growing. The *Agikuyu* are the dominant tribe. The county is divided into five administrative regions namely; Githunguri, Kiambaa, Kikuyu, Lari and Limuru. One *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation and a focus group discussion were captured from each of these regions so that the study would capture regional variations and dynamics if any.

The National Commission for Research, Technology and Innovation and the Kiambu county administration gave permission for data collection. The target population was the *Gikuyu* community particularly those involved in marriage negotiations. Since this is an unspecified population, the sample items for the study were selected deliberately by the researcher. The study used a purposive sample of five marriage negotiation sessions where each was capturing a different stage of the five key steps of a *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation. Creswell (2007) has observed that a study of this nature intentionally samples a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under study. In this respect, groups that were undertaking the practice and were willing to allow the researcher to video or tape record the proceedings were identified. The focus groups were constituted by bringing together at least six people who have been spokes persons during such negotiations. The members of each focus group were drawn from the same administrative region. The discussions were recorded and later translated, transcribed and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

During analysis, focus groups were labeled as FG with numbers between 1 and 5. The respondents are labeled (F) for females and (M) for males. Data from the negotiations has respondents labeled as BSPM (bride's spokesman) GSPM (groom's spokesman), BSPW (bride's spokeswoman) and GSPW (groom's spokeswoman).

3. Results and Discussion

The discussions in this section focus on language elements that are both linguistic and non-linguistic and their influence on the concepts of gender and power as brought out through the data collected for this study. Analysis of discourse as a form of social interaction examines how people use language to accomplish social acts, such as constructing roles and identities (Van Dijk, 1997). These ends are achieved not only through the content of what is said but also through the structure and patterning of talk.

3.1 Terminologies and Expressions Used in the Discursive Domain

There are specific terms used in the *Agikuyu* marriage ceremonies. The terms are symbolic and have meanings that describe the people, activities and the materials used in the ceremony. Some are just actions done and by them a number of meanings arise. The following are some of the terms used and an explanation of what they signify within this domain. They have been captured in the data collected for this study as demonstrated through the example below:

Example 1

F1: Let me describe for you the whole process so that you can understand the essence of the *ngoima* ceremony.

At the beginning of the process when the in laws to be are welcomed into the bride's family, they have to '*kuhanda ithigi*' ((mark that they are interested in something in that family)). Must also give a young sheep and goat, (('mwati na harika')) after which they start filling their '*kiara*' with property. For instance, during the visit where the virgin ewe and she goat are given, they might decide to deposit something into their '*kiara*.' Meaning they've started accumulating what will eventually be counted during the visit called '*kuunirwo miti*.' when the full amount of bride wealth to be paid is determined.

FG 1

'*Kuhanda ithigi*' is a symbolic ceremony where the groom's parents visit the bride's family to report that they are interested in a daughter of that family. The money or 'goats' given to the woman's parents are a kind of "territory marking" such that such a woman cannot start a relationship with another man. After this, the groom's party is given a go ahead to prepare for bride wealth payment. They are the ones who say when they will come back for bride wealth payment.

'*Kiaara*' is a term that refers to the action of accumulating bride wealth money or goats in readiness for bride wealth payment. For example, during the first visit called '*kuhanda ithigi*' the groom can give out what he has for the in laws to keep for him. Anytime he brings anything else it is added to what he has deposited until it adds up to the amount stipulated for the full bride wealth payment. The groom gives a young virgin sheep and goat ('*mwati na harika*') after which they start filling their '*kiara*' with property. The goats must be young in order to reproduce. The groom has started accumulating what will eventually be counted

during the visit called *'kuunirwo miti'* when the full amount of bride wealth to be paid is determined. Therefore, the real bride wealth starts with whatever is in the *'kiara.'* This one can even be refunded if the negotiation fails or there is divorce later. However, whatever is given as a gift to allow them into the bride's homestead, the virgin sheep and goat and the items meant for marking their interests in that family are not refundable.

'Kuuna miti' is a concept that is derived from the act of counting sticks. In the context of marriage negotiation discourse during determination of the actual bride wealth, *'Kuunirwo miti'* is a symbolic way of counting the number of goats that the groom's party is supposed to pay for their bride. Sticks symbolize the key requirements of the whole *'ruracio'* process and their quantity. After all the counting is done, the groom is usually asked to seal the bargain by providing another extra goat which signifies a kind of sealing the deal - tying the sticks - *'gukunja miti.'* The practice as described above demonstrates power since it is exercised within a relational network (between the in-laws). One side is exercising power while the other one resists it. Consequently, people in society are able to make sense of who they are as well as others within the world in which they are situated (Foucault, 1977).

Another terminology which has both literal and significant meanings is 'goat'. The word 'goat' has several meanings in this discursive domain. One reference is where goats (animals) are driven into the compound of the intended bride's home. A cleansing ritual is performed to ensure that they do not bring any evil into the family. The belief is that if for instance the groom's father had taken someone's goat and then uses it for bride wealth, it could bring bad omen hence the cleansing ceremony. These goats were put in one of the sheds awaiting the negotiation meeting when the sticks will be counted (*'kuuna miti'*). During that time, the groom's relatives would be told the bride wealth demands for that particular clan and then they would hand over the *'ruracio'* goats. Part of bride wealth requirements are goats referred to as *'ugendi'*. This is a herd of six goats meant for the bride's brothers and were required to officially open up the negotiation.

The term was also used to significantly refer to women in this society. In a sense, a father who had daughters looked at them in terms of the goats he would get when she finally got married as seen in the example below:

Example 2

M 2: I want to clarify that there was also another form of initiating marriage negotiations. This would happen when a young man took somebody's daughter for a wife without going through the formal process. In such a case, the young man would report the matter to his father who would in turn send a message to the girl's father saying, "If one of his 'goats' has disappeared, let him not look for it." Through such a message, the father was meant to understand that his daughter has disappeared to be married. Formal negotiation would follow thereafter.

FG 3

'*Ngoima*' is another special term used to refer to a big healthy male sheep. This is a requirement during the '*kiande*' ceremony. The number required is determined by the customs of different clans. During the '*kiande*' ceremony, the groom's side must provide two of these. This kind of language use is a clear demonstration that language creates and is created by social context (Schiffrin, 1994) because such language users require the knowledge of the cultural system in addition to knowledge of the linguistic system to make sense of such linguistic items.

Another common terminology is '*kugurana*' that refers to the '*ruracio*' process. The literal meaning of the term is 'buying' and referring to the groom as a '*mugurani*' (buyer) and the bride as '*mugurwo*' would logically equate the transaction to a business one: consider the excerpt below;

Example 3

M1: =After the agreed bride wealth was paid, the groom would come with his friends to visit the bride. They would find she had made porridge which is to be given to his groom referred to as '*mugurani*' ((a term that is used to refer to a buyer of an item)).The groom would be given the porridge to sip by his bride ...Bride price however must have been agreed upon and part of it paid up.

M1: ... The ceremony being done in the open made the whole clan aware that the bride is fully paid up for; '*nimugure*.'

FG 3

However, the context brings in a different kind of understanding in recognition that these linguistic elements are windows to the systems of knowledge that are relevant and central in this particular culture (Katz et al, 1998).It does however, convey power differentials because the terms is used unilaterally: the bride can never be referred to as '*mugurani*' or the groom '*mugurwo*': a scenario that shows that social action does not only display knowledge but is also critical. Such linguistic variables serve to demonstrate how culture has constructed more power for the male in an issue that affects them both (marriage) while they also define societal expectation of the woman now that bride wealth has been paid for her. This concurs with Wodak's (1997) argument that language choices are drawn from social-cultural norms which invoke gendered norms and thus perform gendered identities.

'*Ngurario*' is another common terminology in this discursive domain. It simply refers to a *Gikuyu* wedding and is part of the bride wealth payment process. During this ceremony, the groom cuts the '*Kiande*' (shoulder meat) for his bride. The action symbolically tells the wife that her husband is above her and she is below him. She was also given 'ears' to signify that she needs to be a good listener. The whole act also signified that any four legged animal in a home is the man's. That the man is the only one to be slaughtering and the woman can only wait to be given. This is well illustrated through the contribution of the respondent below and observations from one of the cases:

Example 4

(a)M2: This is the true *Gikuyu* wedding where the '*kiande*' scapula is

cut. It is the symbol of the wedding which can be equated to the modern day wedding ring. A bride married this way is truly married and even the modern government recognizes such a marriage.

FG 4

(b)((...The ceremony involved the husband cutting his wife the scapula section of goat meat. As the elder leading the ceremony explained, the ceremony of cutting the scapula marks an equivalent of a wedding ring.

The other part of the goat meat given to a bride are the goat's ears signifying that she is going to be a wife who listens to her husband. She is also given some intestines and kidneys as a bride's portion traditionally together with a whole limb. The second scapula is given to show that any time the husband slaughtered, he will be remembering to give some to his wife...))

CASE 4

Each of the terminologies is also a symbolic act within this discursive domain. They are used as mediation strategies and influence interpersonal interactions. They are also important avenues of conveying culture. The extraction of meaning from such an act involves discovering the motivation behind it and determining how dependent variables such as cultural diversity, age, and cognition, (among others) all factor in the interpretations. Key (1977) argues that non verbal cues can be useful expressions of status in the dynamics of human interactions for instance; the '*kiande*' ceremony shows the power differentiations between the bride and groom, '*ruracio*' shows the power dynamics between the negotiating parties while '*ngoima*', '*ngurario*' among others demonstrate the power dynamics that comes into play through the act such as gendered issues. Thus, as Katz et al (1998) argues, an understanding of how we process and comprehend abstract meanings and the role of culture and social factors in understanding why language users choose diverse frames depend on what they are communicating. This study concludes that all these terminologies show that language use is an important aspect in the construction of social identities and that they are a powerful means of exerting social control (Thomas et.al, 2004).

3.2 Address forms in the Discourse

There are specific names that parties involved in marriage relations call each other. Names are intended to display respect and to determine the degree of formality or intimacy and of relative relationship status of the participants involved (Thomas et.al, 2004). They further observe that the words that speakers choose to address people in are important ways of situating themselves in relation to others such as creating social distance, expressing attitudes and signaling status especially when repeatedly used. . The following are some of the address forms identified in the study:

Example 5

BSPM: Thank you our '*athoni*.' However, goats must be escorted

with *'ngoima.'* ((He turns to some old men on his side and asks:::))
have you ever seen bride wealth goats that are unescorted in our
Gikuyu culture?

CASE 2

'Athoni' refers to in-laws and is used by members from both the groom and the bride family when addressing each other. It refers to people who were once not related but now are because of marriage connections. These people respect each other and will do everything possible to ensure that nothing upsets this. The word *'uthoni'* in this context has the meaning of misbehavior in the presence of a respected person; a clear demonstration of an address form with power relations. In the discursive domain, one's *'muthoni-wa'* (usually used by males), which is derived from the same term, controlled behavior.

'Wamwani' is an expression used by the women who are in an in-law relationship. Greetings such as *'wamwani niirume'* meaning 'let the in law relationship be strong' demonstrated respect and great honour.

Example 6

M 1: *'Uthoni'* refers to a relationship created through the marriage process that demands so much respect between the two parties that one should be ashamed when doing something wrong in the presence of one with whom such a relationship exists. ((It is also seen as a gift from God (*'mwene nyaga'*) between two young people who love each other and this makes it an obligation for the society to strengthen it. That is why after the bride wealth is paid, women from both parties greet each other, *'wamwani niirume'* meaning 'let the in law relationship be strong' while the men greeted each other, *'muthoniwa arorathimwo'* meaning 'may my in law be blessed.'))

FG 5

Address forms are used by speakers to designate the person being talked to. The linguistic forms are simple and their distribution directed by social factors. For instance, not just anybody can call another *'wamwani'*. This shows that address forms are culturally determined and the way they are used help to establish identity within a context. The usage thus makes a fundamental point that social context is an important influence on language use (Brown & Gilman, 1960). Similarly, choices of address forms are important ways of speakers situating themselves in relation to others such as creating social distance or intimacy. For example, *'wamwani'* among the women demonstrates the intimacy that is created after the stipulations of bride wealth are fulfilled. The two parties are now in agreement hence can afford to even dance together. According to Brown and Gilman (1960), address forms reveal social relationships to a level that a person can have power over another to the degree that he or she can control the other person's behavior. This study observes that the concept of solidarity may also apply here because the two negotiating families are in a sense equal as parents of the bride and groom. This gives them a common ground but it should be noted that

this does not necessarily mean that they have equal power. Language users therefore must be careful to ensure that power and solidarity do not conflict.

3.3 Proverbs and Sayings

Proverbs and sayings are linguistic elements that are largely used in many of the *Agikuyu* discursive domains including the one under study. Proverbs use metaphors. These are comparisons where meanings are derived from a sharing of features. They extend human communication and conceptual capacities and are windows to the systems of knowledge that are relevant and central in a given culture. They have linguistic identities to events, persons and entities that use already existing systems of knowledge (Katz et al, 1998). The study captured quite a number of proverbs and sayings as discussed below.

Example 7

((...After the girl is married and she happens to be lazy, quarrelsome among the man's relatives will be saying "our goats were a waste" or the groom could say, "**My goats got lost.**" A common expression was, "**our goats were carried away by the waters as we crossed the river.**")

FG 2

Example 7 above demonstrates language use that requires cultural knowledge for correct interpretation. After the girl is married and she happens to be lazy, quarrelsome among the man's relatives will lament by saying "our goats were a waste" or the groom could say, "My goats got lost." A common expression was, "our goats were carried away by the waters as we crossed the river". The embedded meaning is that they are not getting the worth of their goats (as they had anticipated).

Example 8

BSPM: *The visitor is usually the carrier of news*

CASE 1

Example 8 contains a saying that is used by the host, bride's spokespersons, at the introductory session of the marriage ceremony. The saying sends a message that the grooms entourage have come to present bride wealth which is good news to the host. This way he pre-empts his anticipation (good news).

On the other hand, example 9 below was used to initiate negotiations by informing a girl's father that her daughter has been taken for marriage by a man. This would happen when a young man took somebody's daughter for a wife without going through the formal process. In such a case, the young man would report the matter to his father who would in turn send a message to the girl's father saying "if one of his goats has disappeared, let him not look for it." Through such a message, the father was meant to understand that his daughter has 'disappeared' to be married.

Example 9

M2: 'If one of the 'goats' has disappeared, let the father not look for it'

FG 3

Language use in example 10 extends the communication that fathers must not exploit their prospective in-laws but instead adhere to laid down societal conventions that govern the context of use.

Example 10

M3 The term is derived from an expression '*ngoima uria maitu oimire*' meaning that a woman's bride wealth should be equivalent to what her mother was paid for.

FG 4

Language users in this domain should remember that figurative language is based on learned conventions and so the meaning is based on both, the ordinary meanings of the words and the syntax of these words. For instance in the proverb below:

Example 11

M 1: A Gikuyu *uthoni* does not end. In fact, a groom could be stopped from paying too much so that something can remain which the bride's father will be consoling himself with when he remembers that somebody owes him something. That's the reason for the saying, '*mwatu ndurengagwo igwa riothe*' meaning when harvesting honey, one must leave something small in the beehive.

FG 2

This means that a honey harvester should leave some in the beehive so that bees can come back and make more for him to harvest in future. The structure simply uses an ordinary example. The listener however should decode such a message in the context of marriage negotiation discourse for it to mean that bride wealth should be paid in installments in such a way that the groom will remain indebted to the bride's family. This way, they will always have 'a place to harvest' as they will not have 'dried up their beehive'.

Decoding figures of speech is usually aided by context and the process influences meaning. For instance, in example 12 below:

Example 12

'*Muiritu mwega ahitukagira thome wa ngia*'

(A good girl passes outside a poor man's gate)

FG 5

A Gikuyu girl was supposed to be a virgin and a virtuous woman (interpreted as good). Such

a girl was the pride of her father and many young men competed to win her. However, they must also be ready to pay the bride wealth. Those who would not afford her bride wealth would express their misfortune by use of such a proverb. The meaning can only be understood in the context of bride wealth discourse, that is, ‘the girl is good but the poor man cannot afford her prize’. Outside this context, the meaning would be different. In this kind of a usage, the speaker frames what he wants to say in such a way that the listener appreciates the difference between the expressed literal expression and the intended non-literal meaning (Katz, et.al, 1998). In such a case, the processing of figurative language is central to such important issues as the relationship between language and thought or how people process language and so are able to comprehend abstract meanings.

This study concludes that proverbs in this study aid the participants in understanding abstract meanings. This enables language users to understand the structure and conceptual system in language use, the role of culture and social factors in comprehending figurative language, and understanding why language users choose to be figurative users. Metaphors too have a role in comprehension and their meaning is generated when there is sufficient contextual support. The study too has established through the analysis of the proverbs identified that when absorbing a non-literal verbal message, focusing on the environment around them helps in the extraction of meaning and discovering the motivation behind that usage.

3.4 Figures of Speech

The *Gikuyu* bride wealth negotiation discursive domain is rich of figures of speech. This refers to use of language that is indirect, significant and symbolic. The figures of speech are used during the bargain for the bride wealth to demonstrate scenarios of gender and power relations. Each figure of speech used makes a significant point in the interrogation of the contributions of language in relation to power and gender. This study identified figures such as irony, metonymy, litotes, hyperbole and euphemisms.

Irony is a figure of speech in which there is a contradiction of expectation between what is said what is really meant. It is characterized by an incongruity: a contrast, between reality and appearance. The study identified verbal irony with a contrast between what is said and what is meant. For example in the discourse excerpt below:

Example 13

BSPM: Now that we have introduced ourselves I wasn’t to ask that you tell us why you and your delegation have visited this home. First of all, I want to ask G_____, who are these people and what are they are doing at your father’s home?

G_____: ((Doesn’t know what to say but is advised by her ‘mother’)). I brought my husband and his family so that they can know my parents, relatives and our home.

BSPM: Oh::: So you only came to visit. I guess then that the mission is over.

G_____: No:::((She doesn’t know what else to say)).

BSPM: Let me ask candidly, if these people that you came with

give us anything, do you allow us to take or you might in future say that you have no such idea?

CASE 2

The bride's spokesman's comment "Oh! So you only came to visit..." came after the bride said that she had taken her husband and his family so that they could 'know' her parents and relatives. The bride's spokesman knows that the visitors came to negotiate and initiate the payment of bride wealth. Irony is manifest when the bride's spokesman says "I guess then that the mission is over." Actually the mission has just started. There is a situation of power contestation demonstrated here by the bride's spokesman (he has power to call off the meeting). The grammatical constructions used are deliberately chosen to influence interpretation in a way that provides evidence that understanding concepts is dependent on both culture and knowledge (Jaszczolt & Turner, 2003).

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept:

Example 14

GSPM: I am so grateful for this opportunity and for being accepted in this home. Our main intention is to know G____'s home because we have never come here. We have come willingly, so because we know and can see that you are good people we believe we shall agree:: Do not send us away.

Another man from groom's side: First, we have come to apologize for taking someone's 'goat,' staying with it without reporting.

BSPM: I know you are guilty of all that but I can't talk with nothing in my hand. You have said you came to report yourself but I know a few steps that you must also fulfill and it all depends on your readiness. If you want to report yourself, start payment of dowry (*kiaara*) so that I count for you (*kuuna miti*) and you '*kuguraria*' tomorrow, I am ready. It all depends on you...

GSPM: That is well said I just wanted to remind you that I am aware of my guilt so that you treat me well.

BSPM: There is nothing I need to be reminded of. Just give me what you have::: and then we can talk. ((He is given some money)). Let me first take water. ((takes the water as everybody anxiously waits, then continues to talk)). Let us go in stages. First, there is the fine for theft::: what you have given is not enough. You cannot show me goats and then you go back and hide them. (referring to the money the groom's spokesman is returning to the pocket. Continues...)).

CASE 2

In the discourse excerpt above, the first usage of the word ‘goat’ is a metonym for the bride while the second one refers to bride wealth. In a subsequent statement, the bride’s spokesman says that “there is the fine for ‘theft’”. The word ‘theft’ means that the groom stayed with the bride illegally by not paying the bride wealth at the inception of their stay as a husband and wife. This kind of language choice is ideological and reveals societal values. It is a means of legitimizing existing social relations (Fairclough, 1989). Though belated, the groom is trying to remedy the situation and this is an ideological expectation.

Litotes, which consist of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite, was also identified. In example 14 above, the groom’s spokesman says that “I just wanted to remind you that I am aware of my guilt so that you treat me well.” In real sense, the groom is actually not guilty because the bride stayed with him (groom) willingly and ‘the being treated well’ here is a kind of request to the bride’s family not to demand a very high bride wealth. The use of politeness in making this request for consideration is an acknowledgement of the fact that he appreciates the bride’s spokesman’s powerful position. This concurs with Hale’s (1998) observation that people often use negotiation and mediation techniques sometimes without even realizing.

Hyperboles, which are exaggerations that create emphasis or effect, were also identified. The bride’s spokesperson in example 14 above says, “You cannot show me goats and then you go back and hide them”. The verb ‘hide’ is a hyperbole referring to the money the groom’s spokesman is returning to the pocket. The use of such a strategy implies the emphasis that the speaker aims to achieve. Lickson et. al (2005) argues that as we negotiate to achieve our needs, we adopt collaborative problem solving strategies to avoid antagonizing or defeating others as the negotiators exercise their own judgment.

These examples of figures of speech demonstrate how language users’ understanding of the creative power of language influences comprehension of how it shapes people’s thoughts as well as outcomes in a negotiation (Hale, 1998). This study in illuminating this kind of language use demonstrates the power within linguistic elements. As Foucault (1977) argues, such discourses embody power relationships in such a way that form and function enable us to make sense of the world in which we are situated.

3.5 Use of Non Verbal Cues in the Discursive Domain

The study identified nonverbal acts as can be identified from the examples below:

Example 15

(a)GSPM: We should do this procedurally. First, have you accepted us? ((he gives some money to the bride’s spokesman who picks, stands up to shake his hands as a sign of acceptance then sits down. During negotiations, all parties are supposed to conduct proceedings while seated)).

CASE 1

(b)((...The ceremony involved the husband cutting his wife the

scapula section of goat meat. As the elder leading the ceremony explained, the ceremony of cutting the scapula marks an equivalent of a wedding ring.

The other part of the goat meat given to a bride are the goat's ears signifying that she is going to be a wife who listens to her husband. She is also given some intestines and kidneys as a bride's portion traditionally together with a whole limb. The second scapula is given to show that any time the husband slaughtered, he will be remembering to give some to his wife...))

CASE 4

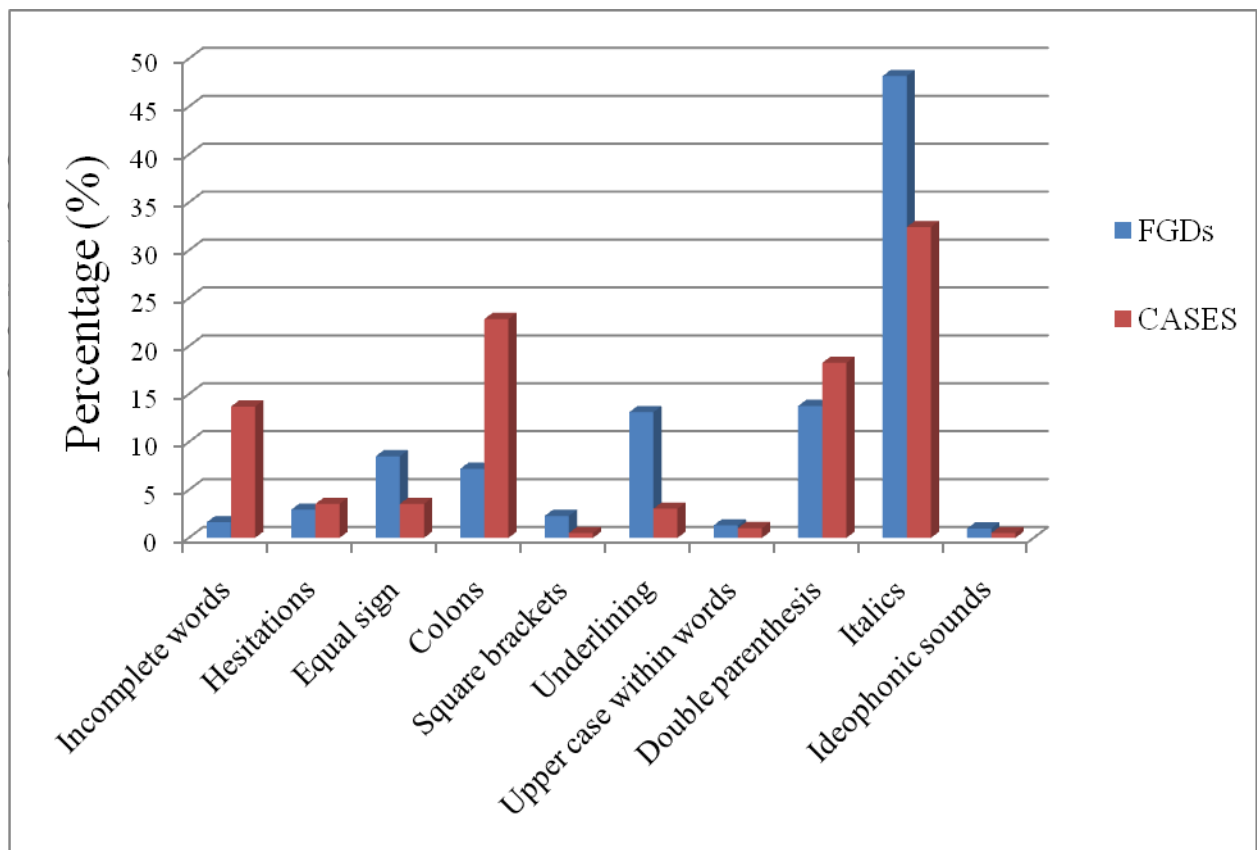
Embedded within them are deep implications on gender and power relations. For instance the way the two parties sit facing each other at the negotiating table could demonstrate readiness for combat or a demonstration of their different positions (refer to example 15a above). The fact that people talk while seated could be a demonstration of trying to bring about a situation of power equals although a serious look at the language use (within this context) reveals a serious case of power differentials. The act of the bride being given ears at the 'ngurario' (refer to example 15b above) demonstrates the powers that the groom acquires over his wife after paying bride wealth. These acts among others demonstrate the power that ideologically culture bestows on the man by virtue of bride wealth payment. He can now make demands on the woman which could not have happened before.

This study in analyzing these non-verbal acts demonstrate that people use language to accomplish social acts such as constructing role and identity (Van Dijk, 1997). This is clarified through taking into account the context of the interaction such as social relationships, history and culture because such an analysis will bring about an understanding of the influence of these socio-cultural products of discourse (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Specifically, an analysis of non-verbal cues have made a discussion on gender and power as evidenced in the *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation discursive domain possible. They also underscore the fact that language use goes beyond linguistic elements as it encompasses the non-verbal cues as well as the extra linguistic features of a conversation. Wodak and Meyer (2004) have observed that power is discursively exerted not only by grammatical terms but also through a person's control of the social occasion.

3.6 Extra- Linguistic Variables in the Discursive Domain

These are aspects of communication that do not rely on words. These include features of a communication that are extra to the linguistic elements such as those that use the voice or the context of an interaction. They are used to signify particular meanings which sometimes are extra to the ones provided by the linguistic elements. This study identified two such features; conversation notations and turn taking. Marks and Yardley (2004) have observed that during transcriptions, details provided through aspects such as pauses, stresses laid on particular words, overlaps between different speakers among others can yield useful insights during analysis. In this study, some of the notational conventions used in conversation

analysis were used in such a way that details of talk and interactions were captured. The symbols used are adapted from Clayman and Herritage (2010). These were enriched by taking into account the context of interaction beyond the transcription such as the social relationship between the participants, their lives, roles, history and culture in which the excerpts of dialogue is embedded (Marks & Yardley, 2004). The figure below summarizes this representation;



4

Such a pattern of talk ensures that the participants do not stray from the agenda of discussion (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

Figure 1. Showing conversation analysis notations identified

Below are examples of latched speeches that provide details regarding the social conventions that govern interactions in the discursive domain for example, the fact that a father should not ask for more bride wealth than custom stipulates as well as the procedure of a marriage proposal. This way, the process of analysis is accomplished with an understanding of the influence that arises from these socio – cultural products and elements of discourse (Marks & Yardley, 2004).

Example 16

M3: Bride wealth payment is also determined by ones generosity and how much the family can afford=

F3: =There was also the issue of how much was paid when the bride's mother was getting married. A man was not supposed to ask for more. This has however changed and it is against our culture::

M3: After sometime, the young men would come back for a report. Meanwhile the girl would consult her parents. When reporting back to her prospective groom she'd indicate a positive response by saying, "yes, so and so's son can be adopted in our family." To indicate rejection, she would say, "Our family has no space for an extra person at this time."=

M2: =It is after this that the negotiation would be planned. Let us remember that since time is immemorial, a prospective groom is the one who visited the bride's family- They are supposed to be respectful and humble.

FG 3

Out of all the conversation notations identified for this study, this particular one contributed 8.54 and 3.55 per cent from the focus groups and the cases respectively.

Another notational convention is the use of parenthesis. The double parenthesis used in the study enabled the researcher to capture details beyond the transcriptions such as original implications, social relationship between participants and their history and culture all of which could be embedded within the excerpt of dialogue (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Some of such details include; the traditional significance of beer, meanings of terminologies 'goat', '*mwati na harika.*' '*thingira*' '*ithigi*' '*kiara*' among others, as well as symbolic acts such as the handing in of the money by the groom's spokesman. The use of parenthesis yielded 13.77 per cent from the focus groups' discussions while the cases yielded 18.27 per cent. This way, as Marks and Yardley (2004) argues, we are able to develop a sense of our history as demonstrated by the discourse excerpts below:

Example 17

GSPM: We should do this procedurally. First, have you accepted us? ((he gives some money to the bride's spokesman who picks, stands up to shake his hands as a sign of acceptance then sits down. During negotiations, all parties are supposed to conduct proceedings while seated)).

After being accepted, where I come from, we start by giving '*mwati na harika.*' ((virgin ewe and a virgin goat)) and Mine is here.((He hands over some money)). I also give something for '*ithigi*' ((signifying to know the home)). Secondly, I start building my '*kiara*' ((bonded goats that will be added as bride wealth payment)) now that you have accepted me. I will start by putting in something which I will continue building now that I know where to put my things.

BSPM: We are continuing well. ((meanwhile, women could be heard giving their own suggestions but in the background which the spokesman did not acknowledge)).

Case 1

Stress and emphasis are other aspects that are captured through conversation notations of underlining or upper case as shown through the excerpts below:

Example 18

M 3: For the Agikuyu, negotiations meant a form of relationship characterized by mutual respect. Therefore all the parties involved did everything possible to safeguard this fragile relationship.

M1: People were veRy understanding. They knew what a particular groom was capable of and so did not press him hard. He only had to know what he needs to give before the wedding and what eventually he owes his in laws.

FG 3

Stress and emphasis in conversations usually is indicated through the form of a raised voice which indicates authority. It is a strategy mainly used by those with authority. For example, between the bride's and groom's spokesmen, the bride's spokesman has more power and that is why he can raise his voice to issue a warning regarding the expected bride wealth. Out of the data from the focus groups, the raised voice as signaled either by the underline or upper case letters indicate the power of knowledge by the respondent in question. This concurs with Foucault's (1977) observation that power is a practice that is exercised within a relational network. However, language users need to remember that commonsense assumptions which are implicit in the conventions according to which people interact linguistically for instance those that treat hierarchy and authority as natural, can take power differences for granted (Fairclough, 1989). In such a case, one party will behave as the one that knows and so should make decisions and control the interaction while the other one should just comply. This is not always the case as established by this study because power basis in society are several (Brown & Gilman, 1960) and it is not only exerted through grammatical terms but also through a person's control of the social occasion (Wodak & Meyer, 2004). In the current study, underlining had 13.11 per cent from the focus groups and 3.04 from the cases while upper case within words had 1.31 from focus groups and 1.01 per cent from the cases.

Simultaneous speech in this study has also been used as a negotiation strategy. The notation that signifies this in the study is the square brackets ([]). The study identified 2.29 per cent of these from the focus groups and 0.5 per cent from the cases. They are a reflection of Lickson et.al's (2005) observation that members of a negotiating team are given some leeway to exercise their own judgement in terms of how and when to negotiate.

Prolongation is another strategy used by language users to signal power and control if it is used by those perceived to have more power in an interaction as in the excerpts below:

Example 19

GSPM: Ok::: next time we shall see.

BSPM: Thank you our ‘*athoni*.’ However, goats must be escorted with ‘*ngoima*.’ ((He turns to some old men on his side and asks:::)) have you ever seen bride wealth goats that are unescorted in our *Gikuyu* culture?

GSPM: I had [earlier said::]

BSPM: [You wait:::] we should do things accordingly because we are not going to be here forever. This way, our young people will know the right procedure. So far we are continuing very well

BSPM: =Good. Then bring ‘*ngoima*’ too. We must teach our youth our custom.

GSPM: (looking so defeated)) well, as I had said earlier:::

BSPM: Listen::: what I know and there are witnesses here is that bride wealth goats must be escorted. Soon you shall come so that we determine how much each goat will go for and how many you will need to give me...

CASE 2

In this particular study, prolongation which is a stretching of sounds is indicated by use of the colon. The more the colons, the longer the stretching. In the excerpt above (example19), the bride’s spokesperson uses it to demonstrate his superior position as accorded to him by traditions while the groom’s spokesman uses it to demonstrate his politeness and humility which is also defined by the position accorded to him by traditions in such an interaction. This concurs with Foucault’s (1977) observation that power is a practice that is exercised within a relational network that includes those with power and those who resist it. This study observes that while the bride’s spokesman demonstrates his power through the use of prolongation, the groom’s spokesman uses the same strategy to demonstrate humility and thereby resist his counterpart’s power demonstration.

Prolongation can also be used to signal the need for a speaker to be given a speaking turn or calling the listeners’ to attention as seen in the excerpt below:

Example 20

Woman’s voice: Before you leave::

BSPM: The bride’s mother seems to have something to say:::

Case 2

Prolongation too is used to signal uncertainty if one is not sure about the details regarding the content of talk. This sometimes could be as filler or a way of seeking for assistance in dealing with some content as seen in the excerpts below:

Example 21

(a)M 3: OppositE:: the two sides face each other, they don't mix up.

FG 1

(b)BSPM: Oh::: So you only came to visit. I guess then that the mission is over.

G _____: No:::(She doesn't know what else to say)).

Case 2

(c)BSPM:...By the way, you have started accumulating debts very early::you have not even gone out once for consultations:::Anyway, there is a step I wanted us to complete. Are you saying that what you have paid today should be credited to you?

GSPM: Meaning::?

BSPM: Just answer then::: (laughs)

CASE 2

(d) GSPM: Continue:::

BSPM: Then you should also give me three he goats which you brought and they are good.

GSPM: Anything else?

BSPM: Yes:::' *Soda ya athuri*' (Drinks/refreshments for men)

GSPM: continue:: That one is there ((He gives 5000/= which is given to another relative of the bride to count and confirm))

CASE 3

This kind of language use is a strategy that is exploited by negotiators so that they avoid antagonizing their opponents while at the same time ensuring that they do not lose because as Lickson et.al (2005) have observed, every utterance made within a negotiation is an act with repercussions. The study identified 7.21 per cent from the focus group discussions and a significant 22.84 from the cases.

Ideophonic sounds describe an action making it vivid for the listener. In this study, it has not been extensively used but whenever used, it creates an aura of reality and oral participation. This is in line with Hale's (1998) observation that strategies used in negotiation are influenced by the participants understanding of what 'concessions' and 'compromise' mean. The study identified only 0.98 per cent of these from the focus groups and 0.5 per cent from the cases. Below is an excerpt that illustrates this;

Example 22

F 1: There is a Gikuyu proverb that says "No one is able to shave the back of his head." Therefore, traditionally, the Gikuyu believed that it would be wrong to talk "tau tau tau" before the in-laws

FG 1

Punctuation marks mostly commas, periods and question marks were extensively used during transcription not just for grammatical purposes but also for intonation as reflected through the few excerpts below:

Example 23

(a)BSPM: Let me ask candidly, if these people that you came with give us anything, do you allow us to take or you might in future say that you have no such idea?

CASE 2

(b)BSPM: No problem. If that is the reason for your coming, do not leave now, we realize you might have good news.

CASE 3

This way, the study was able to capture different intonations used by different participants and which signaled different meanings. The question mark (?) For example, by using the rising intonation indicates instances when information is being solicited for while the period (.) through the falling intonation indicates declared information. The comma (,) indicates a continuing intonation. This was important because as observed by Wodak and Meyer, (2004) language is not powerful on its own but it is a means to gain and maintain power depending on the use made of it.

Italics were used to enable the study capture foreign (*Gikuyu*) words during transcription. It was observed that there was a danger of losing the original meaning if these words were translated yet it was very important that the study captures all issues related to language, gender and power in the data collected. According to Cohen (2001), languages are not only vehicles of current meaning but also serve as living archives of a civilization. They are in fact repositories of past customs and attitudes. The study identified a significant 48.19 and 29.44 per cent from the focus groups and cases respectively. The excerpt below captures some of the italicized foreign words and serves as an example:

Example 24

GSPM: For now, I was ready to go those three steps; to know the home where my son's bride is coming from and '*plant ithigi*' bring my '*mwati na harika*' to open up the negotiation talks and be shown my '*kiara*' so that I start putting my things in it. After it has grown substantially, I will come again you count sticks for me so that I know how much I need to pay ('*kuunirwo miti*').

CASE 1

The dash, denoted through incomplete words, in this study has been used as a conversation notation that conceals the identity of the participant because such usage creates confidentiality. The study identified 1.63 per cent of these from focus groups and a significant 13.7 per cent from the cases. Below are a few excerpts that serve as examples;

Example 25

(a) BSPM: Now that we have introduced ourselves I want to ask that you tell us why you and your delegation have visited this home. First of all, I want to ask G_____, who are these people and what are they are doing at your father's home?

G_____: I allow you to take.

BSPM: Ok. That's good. Now that we have permission, we go back to the groom's spokesman. I think the visitor is usually the carrier of news. So what news do you bring to us?

GSPM: I am so grateful for this opportunity and for being accepted in this home. Our main intention is to know G_____'s home because we have never come here. We have come willingly, so because we know and can see that you are good people we believe we shall agree:: Do not send us away.

CASE 2

Turn taking is another non linguistic variable that the study identified. It is a component of conversation analysis. The focus was on the frequencies of the turns taken in terms of gender taking into consideration the kind of interaction that yielded that data. According to Sidnell (2010), people interact with each other by taking turns at talking because turn taking is an organized co-ordinated activity. In this study, the disparity between the contributions of males and females is clearly evident; 79.14 and 63.69 for the males while the females have 20.86 and 36.31 in the negotiations and focus groups data, respectively as demonstrated by the table below:

Table 1. Showing combined percentages of turn takings from the two sources of data

	NEGOTIATIONS	FOCUS GROUPS	AVERAGE
Males	79.14	63.69	71.41
Females	20.86	36.31	28.58

* The digits represent percentage (%).

The information serves to demonstrate the fact that *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation discursive domain is male dominated judging by the percentages of the turns taken by each gender. According to Jones (2008-2009), turn taking can enable a reader to tell who is in authority within a group and the underlying power relations. In this case, power is seen through the construction of turns and the relationships between turns as evident in example 19 above where the groom's spokesman is seen attempting to forestall the effects of the powerful strategies being used by the bride's spokesman who in this case has the natural incumbency of power. The identified latched speeches within turns (as discussed above) can convey a situation of self selection of the next speaker within a turn (Sidnell, 2010). This too can enable a reader to infer power relations.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that all the terminologies used show that language use is an important

aspect in the construction of social identities such as gender. Regarding the address forms used, the conclusion is that the choices speakers make to address people in are important ways of situating themselves in relation to each other. They create social distance for example among in-laws and also express attitudes especially when repeatedly used. Moreover, social relationships are defined to a level that a person can have power over another to the degree that he or she can control the other person's behaviour. This study in illuminating figures of speech demonstrates the power within linguistic elements: have power to influence and shapes people's thoughts as well as outcomes in a negotiation. Other language aspects considered and which are non-linguistic are for instance those that use voice or context of an interaction. They serve to demonstrate that *Gikuyu* marriage negotiation discursive domain is male dominated.

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