

RESEMIOTISATION AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN MUSICAL DISCOURSES: THE SOCIOCULTURAL NARRATIVES OF 'DUNUNA REVERSE', A ZAMBIAN POLITICAL PARTY CAMPAIGN SONG

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Abstract

We draw on 'Dununa Reverse', the Patriotic Front's 2016 campaign song to argue that the lyrics are politically charged discourses best understood as semiotic assemblages. As our locus, we foreground resemiotisation and intertextuality as defining attributes for the production and the consumption of political messages to leverage on the sociological construct upon which the voters' lifeworld is built. This is in a quest to trace and glean sociocultural narratives that often inform the Zambian people. Thus, the article is guided by three interrelated objectives. Firstly, it intends to interrogate the notion of translanguaging to show how artists deploy various semiotic resources at their disposal while 'sliding in and out' of multiple languages such that the perceived boundaries among languages become blurry. Secondly, the article attempts to show how sociocultural discourses are resemiotised from different sources, including the lived experiences of the people to musicology. Lastly, taking the lyrics of the song as a text, the article intends to explore how individual texts are inescapably related to other texts in a matrix of irreducible plural and provisional meanings.

Keywords: Patriotic Front, Musicology, Campaign Song, Zambia, Resemiotisation, Intertextuality

Introduction

That music is central to the effective dissemination of politics, and that politics, especially in African countries, is articulated through the lyrics and the musical aspects of songs (Allen, 2014), is a position that many actors seem to agree with. Lumbwe (2017), drawing on the Patriotic Front's campaign song, *Dununa Reverse* shares this view when he explored the role and significance of musical arts in shaping Zambia's social, cultural and political landscape. In his conclusion, Lumbwe (2017) observes that besides being a catchy rendition, *Dununa Reverse* possesses latent meanings within its holistic performance structure and that one has to understand the poetic constructions and permutation inherent in the song, instrumentation and dance. Without taking anything from his findings, it is our considered view that an approach of semiotic assemblages avails much. This is so much the case when it is integrated with analytical tools of resemiotisation and intertextuality seeing as music can be looked upon as a collage into which we must gain insight, highlighting semiotic connectivity of materialities present (cf. Pennycook and Otsuji, 2017, Simungala and Jimaima, 2021, Jimaima and Banda, 2019).

In the present undertaking, we draw on the underpinnings of '*Dununa Reverse*', a Patriotic Front campaign song during the 2016 General Elections, to appreciate the linguistic and literary materialities. Our interest lies in the lyrics of the song, which we view as politically charged discourses in arguing for the semiotic assemblages, resemiotisation and intertextuality as defining attributes for the production and the consumption of political messages to leverage on the sociological construct upon which the voters' lifeworld is built. This is in a quest to trace and glean sociocultural narratives that often inform the lived experiences of the Zambian people. In this regard, three interrelated objectives will guide the study. Firstly, the article examines the creativity of Zambian artists who draw upon translanguaging to deploy various semiotic resources at their disposal for political expedience and, secondly, the article attempts to show how sociocultural discourses are resemiotised from context to context. The article concludes with the treatment of the campaign song as a text and, argues for the interconnectedness of texts showing that individual texts are inescapably related to other texts in a matrix of irreducible plural and provisional meanings.

For us to attend to the objectives sketched above, the upcoming section discusses the role that music plays in politics, especially in Africa to provide insights that situate the study in popular culture. This will be immediately followed by a discussion of historical perspectives on the paradigm shift from the one party system to multi-party state, the outcome of which brings into the spotlight many political players, who consequently endeavour to sell their campaign messages through song. Translanguaging, semiotic assemblages, intertextuality and resemiotisation as conceptual matters undergirding the study are then attended to, followed by materials and methods. After this, a discussion of the data is presented, and conclusions are drawn.

Music and Politics in Zambia

It has been argued that Africans (and by implications, Zambians) are music lovers and that music features as an indispensable handmaid of any meaningful behaviour and sustainability of the being of any African person whether young or old (Mbaegbu, 2015). It is, therefore, not surprising to note that music is the first form of popular culture in Africa, which has been (noticed and) studied outside the African continent (Barber, 1997). While there are variations on what constitutes African music, with others insisting only on sounds produced by traditional elements of the playing of indigenous African instruments like the wooden drums (Mbaegbu, 2015), it is generally accepted that contemporary music, as Impey (2010) argues, is mediated by a complex corporate network comprising companies that record, manage, advertise, publish, and broadcast mass-produced music, which constitutes African music. Impey (2010) observed that the introduction of gramophone records presented African musicians with a new spectrum of imported styles, the extent of which has seen their works embody creative interaction between foreign values and local styles.

The historicity of music in Zambia is replete with the use of traditional instruments and a slow movement to electric instruments in the production of '*Kalindula*', a mimic of the traditional. According to Sichinga (2012), *Kalindula* music became popularised in the late

1970's when the electric guitar and other Western instruments were introduced to enhance it. Kalindula popular music flourished given the political environment that existed under the rule of the first Republican President Dr Kenneth Kaunda who made a policy that the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) was to play 95 per cent of Zambian music on both television and radio. Given that ZNBC has had the widest coverage over the years across the country, Zambians became lovers of Kalindula music. Later, Kalindula would become the music that would be used as social commentary and as a platform to air grievances by the general populace to the government of the day. This is because producers of music operate within the context of certain political, social and economic conditions with particular intentions (Chye and Kong, 1996). For our data in this article, we lean towards Banda (2019) who explains that in terms of semiotic repertoire, cultural flows and associated identities, the lyrical content and instrumentation have elements of traditional Kalindula music by the Lunda and other ethnic groups from the rural areas of Luapula Province, Lovers Reggae from Jamaica and the Caribbean, and Rap/Hip Hop/R&B from the United States of America.

Mbaegbu (2015) has rightly argued that music plays an indispensable role in the being of Africans at work, in politics, in their socioeconomic engagements, in religious worship, integral development and moral life. For Onyebadi (2019), Africans are no strangers to political messaging through music as they use songs to articulate their thoughts and feelings about politics. Both Longwe and Clark (1998) and Brusila (2001) observe that politics, culture and gender determine who produces and uses music. Music is central to the effective dissemination of politics and that politics, especially in African countries is articulated through the lyrics and the musical aspects of songs (Allen, 2014). As will become apparent, music is central to the administration of politics in Zambia as campaign messages are crafted and resemiotised into musicology. Given that music and songs command public attention and generally appeal to a large number of people (Onyebadi, 2019), during the 2016 General Election in Zambia, politicians and their political parties virtually took over the musical space to woo voters. It is from this instance that we pick out the Patriotic Front's campaign song, '*Dununa Reverse*'. Critical to this undertaking, will be to show how the song in question is loaded with critical social, cultural and historical information and how language practices in music intersect with multicultural practices and meaning making in fluid African multilingual contexts (Banda, 2019).

Theoretical Appraisal of Translanguaging, Resemiotisation and Intertextuality

To frame the study in the broader theoretical underpinnings of the social and the cultural, we now address the conceptual and terminological framework upon which the study is built. As we argue for resemiotisation and intertextuality, it is important to first consider the language(s) through which the two theoretical standpoints are expressed. As will become apparent, the song under study has about four languages creatively used in one song. This draws us to the theoretical notion of translanguaging as it confirms that the issue of the co-existence of multiple languages within an individual or a community is not new, and that multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception around the world (Bui and Tai, 2022). Translanguaging, argues Vogel and Garcia

(2017), posits that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts. It will be shown that this is the case for the lyrics of *Dununa Reverse*, which draws on five languages that include Zambian and the English languages. Li (2018) proposed translanguaging as a practical theory of language as it captures the dynamic, fluid, flexible, and creative nature of language use in the real world and transcends the boundaries of named languages and the socio-historical features attached to them.

The second conceptual element we wish to unravel is resemiotisation, a notion which has been traced to Iedema (2003: 33) who defines it as ‘how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next’. It is about the way texts and meanings change through various phases of meaning-making processes as we shall show with the various semiotic resources that are assembled into musicology and subsequently charged as political discourses. Resemiotisation is about ‘weaving people, their meanings and behaviours into increasingly reified, complex and obdurate semiotics, enabling them to create new realities’. In this connection, resemiotisation then, looks at how certain semiotics are set in motion to create new social meanings as afforded by different contexts and modalities (Marthinus, 2015). Our treatment of resemiotisation in *Dununa Reverse* aligns with Connolly (2014) who discussed resemiotisation as linked to recontextualisation. He views the latter as the process whereby content that has been given expression in one context is subsequently reused in a different context. He concludes that recontextualisation (as we show with the musical discourses), is often accompanied by ‘resemiotisation’, the process whereby content is lifted from one text and recast in a modified form during the production of a subsequent text.

Seeing as we take the song as a text, together with its assemblages, we turn to intertextuality as the last conceptual element informing the study. According to Orr (2015), ‘intertextuality’ names a text’s relations to other texts in the larger ‘mosaic’ of cultural practices and their expression. An ‘intertext’ is, therefore, a focalising point within this network or system, while a text’s ‘intertextual’ potential and status are derived from its relations with other texts past, present, and future. Julia Kristeva, a literary scholar devised the concept ‘intertextuality’ based on the works of Bakhtin, Barthes and Vilosinov (Orr, 2010). Kristeva (1986) argues that any text is the absorption and transformation of another within a particular social context and should for that reason be examined within the social interaction it is produced. For Roux (2015), intertextuality refers to how ‘the environment is marked by duplication, interpretation of texts and the circulation and recirculation of images; word in multiple form and formats’ (Roux, 2015:50). No text exists on its own as it is always connected to other texts. Thus, intertextuality manifests because everything that can be said has been said before and thus, people reuse and, therefore, manipulate existing texts, images and other semiotic materialities in song and other modalities.

Materials and Methods

We drew on content analysis as the methodology for our study. As an approach of data collection, content analysis is often deployed to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts

within some given qualitative data. In this case, the lyrics of *Dununa Reverse* constituted our data to which interest was drawn to words and phrases as well as the emergent themes. According to Harwood and Garry (2003), content analysis enables the reduction of phenomena or events into defined categories so as to better analyse and interpret them. Framed from this perspective, we analysed the presence, meanings, and relationships of such words, themes, or concepts in *Dununa Reverse*. Below, are the lyrics of the song. For each stanza, we have included the predominant language used alongside English or other indigenous languages.

(Tumbuka and Bemba Language)

Adada munalemba Edgar Chagwa Lungu
Apitilize ulamulili wamu Zambia(2)

Dununa Dununa iye

Aye

Aye dununa reverse(2)

Again

Aba bambi bali mucibe

Bola naikosa (2)

Lolo Lolo

(Cinyanja and Bemba Language)

Nakwela bus zinalake

Ni double decker (2)

Kalusa sa nga ikwele

Ba Lungu baikwela kale (2)

Lolo Lolo Lolo

(Lamba)

Aikona ukulaikata amasangaltoni webo

nemo nalikupele nefunde webo

taumfwapo cabe

Wise ndi nefing ukukweba webo

Batila icidunu webo cilalishya abanike

Tabasangwako

Iyashi lya mutulo webo

Under 5 politics

Nebo shitita ifya musango uyu

Webo cimo no mwana wandi saulosi webo

Wapona grade seven seventeen times per hour

Five times ulepona cabe

Cita retirement webo walangonawila amatoni

Shititita ifya musango uyu
Aikona kulacita amasangaltoni

(English and Bemba Languages)

As a king of the dance floor
I say ndai cleaner
I say ndai pukuta
I say ndai wamya
Ka Opposition nda kagaya
Gaya Gaya Gaya Gaya

Yapasuka aya tula monde, tiye nayo Lungu
Aya anyada tiye nayo Lungu
Iyapasuka
Lolo lolo

Apa pene Edgar Lungu awine, ee awine,
Nafuti awine
Edgar Chagwa Lungu awine
Nafuti again awine awine

Translanguaged Musical Discourses: The Creativity of Artists in Music Production

From the lyrics presented above, we are quick to note that four languages, namely; Tumbuka, Lamba, Cinyanja and English are assembled. The languages are creatively blended to a point that they appear as one. In this way, the perceived boundaries between the English language and the indigenous languages, on one hand, and the perceived boundaries amongst indigenous languages appear blurry, on the other hand. The meaning making in the song is indicative of multilingual practices of social actors, which highlights that these languages constitute their linguistic repertoires. It is our considered view that the wide acceptability of *Dununa Reverse* is (partly) based on the artists' incorporation of translingual practices in the composition and performance of the music. Evidently, the use of multiple languages orients to what has come to be known as music multilingualism. According to Olusegun and Ayokunle (2011), this refers to popular music developed within socio-cultural settings, which combine in its lyrical texts multiple words of different languages predicated on random language mixing.

It is important to mention that most Zambian popular musicians draw on regional languages in their songs. For mention, Bemba is the regional language for the Copperbelt, Luapula, Northern and some parts of Muchinga and Central Provinces; Cinyanja is designated for Lusaka and Eastern Provinces, while Citonga for the Southern and parts of Central Provinces; Lozi for the Western Province and Lunda, Kaonde and Luvale for the North-Western Province (Simungala and Jimaima, 2021b; Simungala, 2020). The said languages have been widely used in most hit songs

that the country has witnessed. However, we notice the use of Tumbuka and Lamba, languages considered as minor. The integration of these languages in the song enables their circulation and appreciation. Thanks to the reality that languages in Zambia belong to the Bantu language family, mutual intelligibility is a given (Simungala and Jimaima, 2021c; Simungala et al., 2022). The assembling of both major (regional) languages and minor languages, some of which are considered dialects of the major languages in the song does not obscure the meaning of the song nor the authorial intent of the politicians. The song is a case of a message well-crafted and sold.

The creative and strategic use of translanguaging is an instance of assembling artefacts and semiotic assemblages (Otsuji and Pennycook, 2017) to appeal to ethnic enclaves in a quest to leverage Zambian votes that are largely built on ethnic and tribal lines. While it is the feeling of Jimaima and Banda (2021:2) that ‘political parties deliberately disassemble semiotic material that shows their candidate’s ethnic or regional inclinations . . .’ what we notice in the song as evident from the choice of languages is the exact opposite of this view. The Patriotic Front Party had many provinces as its strong holds and one of them was the Eastern (were Tumbuka and *Cinyanja* are primarily spoken). They would often use the phrase of ‘*wako ni wako*’ translated as ‘your own is your own’ to mean that one is expected to support a candidate from the same ethnic group as theirs. The presidential candidate for the party, was Edgar Chagwa Lungu who hailed from Eastern Province. The party had support from the Copperbelt, Muchinga, Luapula and Northern provinces were *Icibemba* (Lamba) is spoken as the founding leader of the party was Bemba. Thus, it can be seen that in the composition of the song, the artists practiced tribal politics. However, as we later see in the 2021 General Elections, we look back to Roberts and Silwamba (2017) and note that they were on point when they noted that Zambian youths do not believe ethnicity should be a political factor as they overwhelmingly perceived politicians as engaging in political tribalism but chose to defy the status quo and voted for a candidate as president who had a supposed tribal tag. The use of translanguaging is not only to pass on campaign messages in a number of languages but it is also, as Jimaima and Banda (2021) demonstrate, about assembling semiotic resources that show the party as having membership from different ethnic groups and regions.

Resemiotisation of Musical Discourses: Tracing the Trajectory of Lyrics

In tracing the trajectory of the lyrics of *Dununa Reverse*, we draw on resemitotisation, which entails that discourses or materials can be created and recreated in different forms and practices. Iedema (2003) provides that resemitotisation is meant to occasion the analytical means for, firstly, tracing how semiotics are translated from one form into the other as social processes unfold and secondly, asking why these semiotics (rather than others) are mobilised to do certain things at certain times. In this section, we trace the trajectory of the lyrics.

The word *Dununa* is drawn and constructed from the word ‘ukudununa’ translated as ‘kick it’, which comes from an indigenous game called ‘Icidunu’ (cf. Lumbwe, 2017). Ukudununa is a key activity in this game. Icidunu is a version of hide and seek using a ball made from paper and plastic. The word *Dununa* has undergone morphological operations of clipping were the morpheme ‘uku’, a combination ‘u’ an augment and ‘ku’ a prefix, have been clipped to remain

with *Dununa*. It is important to quickly point out that like any other game, there has to be winners and losers, and so it is quite strategic for the artists to draw on a word from the name of the game as politics is about those in power and those being ruled. In this way, we see the creation of new social actions and yet retaining the same word. The word *dununa* is then translated from a child's play to politics. It changes contexts from the sociocultural lives of children to that of adults. We return to this matter in the next section to make a comment on how the discourses of the song are inescapably related to the lifeworld's of social actors.

In line four, we have the lyrics *Aba bambi bali mucibe* translated as 'the others have a tough time'. Again, we see these discourses as borrowed from a popular saying during a football game where one winner is expected. Zambians being lovers of football, the phrase is well known such as has been used and reused in many different contexts. Like the *dununa* above, we see the translation of these discourses from spaces of football to spaces of politics. Thus, in accounting for resemiotisation of the musical discourses, we have established where the lyrics in question are coming from, but we should also point out why the said discourses are crafted into lyrics and not the others. It is Iedema's (2003) view that we need to ask why these semiotics (rather than others) are mobilised to do certain things at certain times. Thus, as noted above, and will be explained as we look at intertextuality, the discourses in question are all coming from the idea of the game where one has to emerge a winner. In this way, the discourses speak and fit into the authorial intent in a politically charged space. Thus, popular music draws on current issues and language practices, historical, traditional and modern, rural and urban, and generally, local and global semiotic material in the construction of the songs (Banda, 2019).

Intertextuality of Discourses: The Inescapable Relations of Lyrics in Broader Sociocultural Contexts of Zambia

It is often the case that intertextuality is discussed together with resemiotisation. In this undertaking, our interest is to simply show how semiotics are translated from one form into the other as social processes unfold. In this section, we build on points we raised above and expand this thematic thread to other stanzas of the song. In the opening line of the song, we notice the Tumbuka words '*Adada munalemba Edgar Chagwa Lungu*' translated as 'Father (Lord) you wrote that Edgar Chagwa Lungu'. The mention of Father in this context is in reference to the Supreme Being, God. And this mention relates to the place and role of Christianity in Zambia. The intent to link the discourses to the Christianisation of space (cf. Jimaima, 2016) in a quest to attract voters is not surprising as it affirms what is already known about the country, that Zambia is a Christian Nation. Gilford (1998) historicises that Christianity was central to the change of regime in Zambia in 1991 after its new president, Frederick Chiluba, declared Zambia a 'Christian Nation'. And as recent as October 2015, the then Zambian president, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu broke the ground for a new National House of Prayer, a building project meant to reaffirm the country's status as Africa's only self-proclaimed 'Christian Nation' (Haynes, 2021). Thus, the line that Father you have written that Edgar Chagwa Lungu should continue his leadership is then situated in the social narratives of the Zambian people, which intersects with their Christian faith.

The life worlds of social actors, seen from children's play of 'icidunu' is indicative of the game of politics in which making and claiming victory is good practice for campaigning. Further to this, we notice a sociocultural experience of daily lives. We see in stanza 4, lines 5 and 6, the lyrics 'Ka Opposition nda kagaya, Gaya Gaya Gaya Gaya', which translates as 'I will grind the opposition, grind, grind, grind.' These discourses double articulate crushing or rather grinding the enemy, in this case, the opposition and, also, the grinding of maize into powder. Thus, by using the word 'grind or crush,' we see how the choice of words are inescapably related to the sociocultural narratives of the Zambia people as 'grind or crush' is casually used in their daily interactions. Further, it is a given that most rural dwellers grind their maize at the hammer mill. Allan et al., (2019) confirms this view when they indicate that in fact, 69 per cent of rural dwellers use hammer mills. Thus, the concept of 'grind' is well known and well situated as a symbol that avails much for the political intent of the composers of the song.

Summary and Conclusion

While conceding to the view that music affords political parties a platform to sell their candidates and lay out their manifesto (Kalobwe, 2021), the present study has brought into the spotlight three interrelated conclusions. Firstly, it can be noted that drawing on a variety of languages while crafting campaign messages that are predicated on multiple materialities and resources can be looked upon as an instance of assembling artefacts, as well as semiotic assemblages. At first sight, the semiotic materialities in the song may seemingly appear unrelated, but the creativity of the artists occasions their convergence in time and space for meaning making. Since the various artefacts come together for meaning making in the song, Pennycook and Otsuji (2017) would refer to them as semiotic assemblages that enter new and momentary relationships. This is particularly the case when Iedema (2003) advises, and we see resemiotisation at work that in the way texts and meanings change through various phases of meaning-making processes whereby the lyrics of the song are translated from everyday sociocultural narratives to musicology. The trajectory that the lyrics take, is one that is visible as content is lifted from one text and recast in a modified form during the production of *Dununa Reverse*.

Secondly, and related to the point raised above, we would like to point out that the wide acceptability of *Dununa Reverse* was partly based on the artists incorporation of local popular languages in the composition and performance of the music (Liadi and Omobowale, 2011). Thus, the thematic thread of translanguaging raised above afforded the Patriotic Front an opportunity to speak to masses, while at the same time enabling the circulation of marginalised minor languages like Tumbuka and Lamba. What we see in the lyrics is that different semiotic resources were deployed so as 'to potentialise meaning-making, cognitive engagement, creativity and criticality' (Garcia, 2014: 42). Thus, by inference, this confirms Blommaert's (2010) view of language as a mobile resource that cannot be tied to locality as it is intrinsically and perpetually mobile. While campaigning, the Patriotic Front covered all the parts of the country and used *Dununa Reverse* as their lead song. Thus, catapulted the song into the realms of a mobile semiotic resources.

Finally, as noted by Kalobwe (2021), music has become an important element during Zambian electioneering as parties have recognised how effective they can reach masses and by extension, music in politics achieves much as it is followed with dance. Namuyamba et al., (2018) advises that well composed political music (as can be seen from the case of *Dununa Reverse*) has a huge influence on the candidate people voted for as music helped to pull the crowd, sell candidates and their manifestos, empower and educated the learners and substituted public rallies in unbreakable to reach areas. By well composed songs, we wish to highlight that these are songs that bear a complex interrelationship with other texts that relate and extend to the social happenings and the lived experiences of the social actors. It is no wonder Kristeva (1986) observes that any text is the absorption and transformation of another within a particular social context and should for that reason be examined within the social interaction it is produced.

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