

MULTIVOCAL ELASTICITY AND SEMIOTIC FLUIDITY IN THE MORPHO-SEMANTIC SPECTRUM OF THE POLITICO-RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE OF NATHAN NYIRENDA’S SONG *MWE MAKUFI*

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Abstract

The paper analyses the multivocal elasticity and semiotic fluidity in the morpho-semantic spectrum of the politico-religious discourse of Nathan Nyirenda’s song Mwe Makufi Yandi ‘My Knees’. The song is in the Bemba language which is spoken in Zambia and is classified as M42 (Guthrie, 1948). A qualitative approach, document analysis, and desktop research methods were used to collect and analyse data. Multivocality, resemiotisation, and lexical morphology theoretical locale underpinned the analysis of the song in this article. The study shows rich messages in the lyrics of Zambian politico-religious songs such as Nathan Nyirenda’s Mwe Makufi Yandi’s ‘My Knees’. The analysis also reveals that apart from using multivocality and resemiotisation to analyse the semanticity of musicology, it is also possible to analyze the morphology and other levels of linguistics using other theories such as lexical morphology. The study shows that the musician of Mwe Makufi Yandi ‘My Knees’ used several noun class prefixes, verbal extensions, and figurative language to present the elasticity and fluidity of the multivocal politico-religious discourses.

Keywords: Bemba, fluidity, morpho-semantic, multivocal, politico-religious song, Zambia

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study presents an analysis of a multivocal elasticity and semiotic fluidity in the morpho-semantic spectrum of the politico-religious discourse of Nathan Nyirenda’s 2005 song *Mwe Makufi Yandi ‘My Knees’*. The song is sung in the Bemba language which Guthrie (1948) classifies as M42. Higgins (2009a: 6) defines multivocality as “a set of interlinked concepts ... on voice as well as the multiple perspectives, or speaking positions, articulated through language.” The scholar relates the term multivocality to “the different voices” or polyphony that single utterances can yield due to their syncretic nature” (Higgins, 2009a: 7). This entails that the creative blending of language leads to the resulting form being bivalent, that is, to belong to two or more languages simultaneously leading to double-voiced usage and hence having multiple meanings all at once (Woolard, 1999). Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of multivocality is useful when accounting for multiple voices in the lyrics, sound, and visual performance of songs. The fluidity of the song under analysis lies in the depiction of two genres, that is, political and religious settings. The fluidity of the song is seen in the manner the singer intelligently uses the religious aspect to put across the message to political leaders. This quality of the song shows the elastic nature of switching from religious to political

spheres. The malleability of the song is seen in the title which is interlinked to the political setting as opposed to the religious one.

The song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' is philosophical and requires critical reasoning to understand it. The musician uses many linguistic discourses to knit the song and such attributes make the literature interesting. To present the semiotic fluidity and multivocal elasticity, the singer employs many Bantu noun class prefixes (cf. Mann, 1999; Möller, 2011). Noun classes are nominal morphological categories to which different noun prefixes of Bantu languages belong (cf. Crisma et al, 2011; Siame, 2022). The song also contains some verbal extensions such as the neuter, reflexive, and reduplicative which are prevalent in Bemba (cf. Givon, 1969), Tonga (Nkolola, 1997), Mambwe (Halemba, 2007; Siame, 2019 & 2022) and SuNdaLa languages (Mtenje, 2016; Mtenje, 2006).

The paper progresses as follows: Literature review, theoretical locale, methodology, results and discussion, and conclusion.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Zambia is a landlocked country and is found in South-Central Africa. Marten & Kula (2008) opine that Zambia has more than 72 ethnic groups that speak more or less related 72 tongues or languages. Miti (2006) shows that the languages of Zambia belong to the Benue-Congo family, a branch of the Niger-Congo family, which is a subdivision of the Niger-Kordofanian. We argue that Zambian languages are found in the Bantoid sub-group of the Benue-Congo group of the Niger-Congo branch of the Niger-Kordofanian family (also called the Niger-Congo family) of African languages. This shows that all the Zambian languages belong to the Bantu language family. It can be argued that out of the 72 local languages spoken in Zambia, only 9.7% are used in official capacities. The above is attributed to the language zoning of the country into seven linguistic areas in which seven languages are used for initial literacy, political organization, and local administration (cf. Nkolola, 2013; Siame, 2019 & 2022). The seven languages with the 'politicized' official status in Zambia are Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Luvale, Lunda, and Kaonde. The seven languages are regarded as regional official languages (ROL) because they are spoken and used for initial literacy in designated regions and provinces. Due to mobility and multilingualism in Zambia, languages spread in linguistic zones (Marten & Kula, 2008).

Literature on Zambian music ranges from the 1980s and before and focuses on the spiritual and cultural aspects of traditional music and instrumentation (cf. Musonda, 2023; Nchindila, 2008). Studies such as Mapoma (1988), and Davidson (1970) focused on ethnomusicology. Mapoma (1988) analyzed and documented the role of music in healing among the Bemba speakers of Northern Zambia. This shows that Zambian music plays a bigger role in healing the citizens with broken hearts in different spheres of life, which are closely associated with *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' - which seeks to heal the broken politico-religious hearts. Traditional Zambian music has been used during social interaction activities such as rites of passage, birth, funerals, and for entertainment purposes from time immemorial. This shows that traditional music and dance styles are dynamic as they change with time or the purpose for which they are performed.

Nchindila (2008) conducted a related study by analyzing different Bemba political songs and briefly dealt with the semantic implications of *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' which was used during Sata's campaign. Musonda (2023) also mentions *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' when taking stock of gatekeeping through music concerning the Patriotic Front in Zambia. Unlike the previous studies which only analyzed the semantics of Zambian songs, the present study analyses multivocality and semiotics in the morpho-semantic spectrum of *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' in terms of noun prefixes, verbal extensions, and figurative language which has not been studied.

Mtonga (2006) documents the masquerade dance called *Gule Wamkulu* ‘Big Dance’ of the Chewa found in Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe as an enterprise, whose performance and symbolisms change with occasion and time. It can be argued that *Gule Wamkulu* is not only versatile in execution but also innovative dance in which the dancer uses symbolisms such as mask, dress, and other accessories to portray the past and present history of the above countries, including their social, economic and political structures and discourses. Through suggestive dance movements, gestures, lyrics, and masks, the traditional dance of *Gule Wamkulu* has been used to present contemporary issues relating to social aspects of tradition and modern lifestyles, colonialism, as well as Christianity. Kunkeyani (2014) argues that contemporary times of using special masks, lyrics, and dance styles which started with the *Gule Wamkulu* have been ‘re-originated’ with times and situations and have continued in new songs and performances such as, in HIV and AIDS and malaria prevention programs. It can be argued that songs have promoted continuity in the spread of messages through music in dealing with contemporary issues to warn and admonish people about the dangers of HIV and AIDS. Music throughout the ages has played a pivotal role in the lives of citizens and has promoted societal cohesion.

We note that the aspect of dynamism of Zambian music and dance focuses on the transformation of the available semiotic material. Scholars such as Iedema (2003), and Prior & Hengst (2010) used resemiotisation principles to account for the circulation of semiotic resources in HIV/AIDS messages in Zambian music lyrics and videos. The above scholars have demonstrated that the semiotic appropriation of lived socio-cultural experiences and beliefs is used by musicians to exercise their creativity on specific compositions. Arguably, Kunkeyani (2014) did not analyze the multivocal elasticity and semantic fluidity of morpho-semantic magnitude to analyze the different kinds of genres of Zambian music, a gap that the present paper fills.

2.1 Multivocality, Resemiotisation, and Lexical Morphology Theoretical Locale

Bakhtin (1981) is instrumental in understanding the creative arrangement in Zambian politico-religious music. Multivocality guides scholars to understand that creativity enables musicians to traverse regional, national, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries to market their musical products. The theory proposes that the linguistic repertoire and semiotic resources at the disposal of musicians provide the ‘voice’ to their creativity and performance of multiple identities to produce multiple localities which enables the music to attain marketability across ethnic, regional, and national boundaries (cf. Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of multivocality is useful when accounting for multiple voices in the lyrics, sound, and visual performance of songs such as *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’. To this effect, Higgins (2009a: 6) defines multivocality as “a set of interlinked concepts ... on voice as well as the multiple perspectives, or speaking positions, articulated through language.” The scholar relates the term multivocality to “the different voices” or polyphony that single utterances can yield due to their syncretic nature” (Higgins, 2009a: 7). Woolard (1999) opines that the creative blending of language in music leads to the resulting form to be bivalent, that is, belong to two (or more) languages simultaneously, leading to double-voiced usage, and multiple meanings. On the other hand, Iedema (2003: 41) argues that resemiotisation “is about how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next.” which is the preoccupation of the present undertaking where the song shifts from political to religious spheres and vice-versa.

The notions of multivocality (cf. Bakhtin, 1981; Higgins, 2009a) and resemiotisation (cf. Iedema, 2003) in meaning-making are insightful approaches to explaining how politico-religious music lyrics reflect the manner of political and religious artifacts as semiotic material are recycled and recontextualized for extended meanings across regional and national boundaries. Higgins (2009a) has productively exploited the Bakhtinian notion of multivocality in works that document and analyze multilingualism. Higgins (2009a: x) argues that multivocality affords analysts the capacity to account for different voices in any given speech context, and thus treats “contexts of multilingualism as open-ended and creative spaces of language intersection” in which both local languages and English language interface, the result of which is

what she terms as the ‘hybridity and linguistic bricolage’. The paper uses multivocality and resemiotisation tenets to analyze the musicology of politico-religious discourses embedded in *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’ through the use of the productive semiotic strategy.

The paper adopts lexical morphology as a backup theory to guide the analysis of morphological aspects in the song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’. According to Chomsky and Halle (1968), lexical morphology is a refinement of the structure of the morphological components of grammar. Kiparsky (1973), Mascaró (1976), Halle (1978), and Rubach (1981) argue that there are two types of derivations, namely, word-level derivations and post-syntactic derivations. Chomsky’s (1970) lexicalist hypothesis claims that all word formation, including inflection, takes place in the lexicon. Furthermore, word formation rules interact with a subset of phonological rules called cyclic rules. This interaction is possible, because cyclic rules, like word formation rules, are placed in the lexicon, so they are called lexical rules. An important feature of this model is that other than the morpheme, it is the word that is regarded as the key unit of morphological analysis which is the concern of this article during the morphological analysis of Nathan Nyirenda’s song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’. Katamba (1989) argues that morphological rules are found in the lexicon where they are organized in blocks/strata which are arranged hierarchically one below the other such as noun class prefixes which build up from Cl. 1 to 18 in the case of the Bemba language that is under study and most of them have gender. The above-discussed theories are befitting during the analysis of the multivocal elasticity and semiotic fluidity in the morpho-semantic spectrum of the politico-religious discourse of Nathan Nyirenda’s song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’.

3.0 METHODS AND APPROACHES

This article adopted the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach refers to holistic, non-numerical, inductive, subjective, and process-oriented methods that are used to understand, describe, interpret, and develop theory on a phenomenon or a setting (Burns & Grove, 1997; Kapau et al, 2019; Kapau, 2021; Siame et al, 2023). Brink & Wood (1998) argue that qualitative research is a better means of understanding aspects that are difficult to quantify using assigning numerical values such as the politico-religious song under study. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the whole; hence, its use in the present paper provides a holistic understanding of the multivocality in the use of noun prefixes, verbal extensions, and figurative language as well as the semanticity of the song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees.’ By using abstract thinking processes, meaning, and theoretical implications emerge, thereby satisfying the fact that qualitative research uses designs that are flexible and unique and evolve throughout the research process (Burns & Grove, 1997). The findings obtained using the qualitative technique are reported descriptively using words and sentential expressions to justify the research gaps (cf. Mutch, 2005). The Bemba song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’, was transcribed and translated into the English language to analyse the tone (voice) used by the singer. Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The analysis of the linguistic experiences in the politico-religious song was subjected to meaning based on the researcher’s perception and the statement of the problem (cf. Merriam, 1998).

The study also adopted document analysis and desktop methods. Chaleunvong (2009) states that document analysis is the process of identifying documents that contain useful data about studies that have already been conducted by other researchers to act as reference materials. Chaleunvong (2009) adds that identifying and retrieving secondary sources of data required for the study is the systematic starting point of efficient data collection. In this regard, the researcher located and analyzed studies on multivocality, resemiotisation, and grammar of Bantu languages in general, and Bemba in particular. Data on Nathan Nyirenda’s *Mwe Makufi Yandi* ‘My Knees’ were presented and analyzed thematically and descriptively. The themes include noun classes, verbal extensions, and figurative discourses which express the semanticity of politico-religious aspects in the song under analysis.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of the findings are based on the musicology in Nathan Nyirenda's song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees', a Bemba song which is transcribed below:

***Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' by Nathan Nyirenda (2005)**

(Signature Tune: Zambia National Anthem)

1. *Mwe Lesa wandi ngafweniko* [My God help me]
Ubucushi, insala necipowe [Poverty, hunger and starvation]
Fyaisula icalo cesu konse uko ungaya. [Have filled our country wherever you can go].
2. *Amalanda nokuilishanya* [Suffering and dissatisfaction]
Ubupina no kubulilwa [Poverty and squalor]
Filepongoboka nge mfula pakuya [Gush out like the last rains of the rainy season]
Amatontokanyo yalilembwa [Thoughts have been written]
Pafinso fyabakalamba [On old people's faces]
Imisepele, abaice ne fitekwa. [Youths, babies, and domestic animals].

CHORUS

- Mwe makufi yandi mwinenuka* [My knees don't give up]
We mutima wandi nobe salapuka [My heart, you wake up]
Fimwandanshi ne mipanshi yakowela [devils and evil spirits]
Teti ficimfye Lesa wa mweo. [Cannot overpower the Living God].
3. *Imimana, amasabi fyaba mbwee* [Rivers, fishes are plenty]
Umufundo ponse wanyanta [Our soils are fertile wherever you step]
Imiti, inama nempanga umutatakuya [We have trees, animals and good vegetation
endlessly]
Amabwe nayo mintapendwa [We have numerous precious stones]
Nababomfi libumba [Workers are plenty]
Lelo ubunonshi bwabafye pamapepala [Yet wealth only remains on papers]
Imfula kwena ilaloka [It does rain]
Umutende twimbapofye pefyepfye [We are extremely peaceful]
Lelo tushalapofye necisungu mukanwa [We are just left with English in our mouths (We
seem to be only good at speaking English)]
4. *Ukupepa kwena tulapepa* [If it is praying, we do pray]
Nokufunga nipamushi [We also fast]
Amasambililo nayo ni lekaleka [If it is education we have needed, we are
extremely educated]
Ukubomba nako tulabomba [We do work hard]
Ngabasha nangu bakabalwe [Like slaves and donkeys]
Ulucelo, akasuba elyo no bushiku [Morning, afternoon and night]
Bushe ninkanda yafita [Is it because of the black skin]
Nangula mano ayacepa? [or we do not have enough brains]
Nacucutika mwe tata njebeniko. [I have suffered please God tell me]

4.1 Noun Class Discourses in the Song

The song uses an interplay of concrete and abstract nominal prefixes to present problems in the metaphysical world. To start with, in the first stanza in line 2, the song contains the nominal prefix [βu] in Cl. 14 in the noun *ubucushi* 'poverty'. In the same stanza and line, the nominal prefix [-n-] in Cl. 9/10 is used in the word *insala* 'hunger'. Through abstraction in stanza 1, the singer presents a problem at the metaphysical level. Being a physical mortal, the singer uses music in octave high notes and opening words of abstraction of Cl.14 nature to musically wail and surrender himself and prostrate before God Almighty who can fully comprehend the problem at hand as He is the supreme decipherer of the higher order of

reality. By transcending from the physical to the abstract through a high pitch at octave high and abstraction of Cl. 14 nature, the singer demonstrates the elasticity of voice perspectives in presenting human problems across the morpho-semantic spectrum of the Bemba nominal class system. Abstraction further indicates the limits of the human mind while at the same time acknowledging the existence of the unknown nothings and unknown somethings that only the metaphysical space can fully accommodate and comprehend. Such a start to the song, accompanied by a solemn music score (music notes), underscores the prayer-like nature of the song as a multivocal vantage point that the singer chooses to convey his message. The solemn atmosphere of the song – a musical style often associated with religious songs – that is used against a backdrop of political undertones, is strategically used to shift contexts of use to make the song more emphatic and appealing.

In stanza 2, lines 1 and 4 belong to Cl. 6 which represent things that are in plural form or multiples. By switching from abstraction and singular prefixation in Stanza 1 to abstractions being written on the faces of the elderly, youths, children, and domesticated animals, the singer indicates how abstract things affect the physical. At this stage, his voice intends to argue that metaphysical and the physical worlds are neither fixed nor unrelated but that experiences of one domain percolate to the other, hence elastic and fluid not only in grammatical terms but also in experiential terms. The plurality of the affected also reflects the unison of voice of experience among those experiencing the hunger, poverty, and general suffering mentioned in the song. This transforms the mentioned people's lamentation from some sort of multivocality (polyphony) to something we wish to call mono vocality (monophony) where the different parties project a single voice - a sort of system of diverse voices transcending into an organism refracting unison voice of complaint. In lines 3 and 5, the song uses the locative class prefix [pa] in Cl. 16 to describe the places where problems he is lamenting about are visibly seen such as *pafinso* 'on people's faces.' In line 6, the song uses the prefix [mi] to depict the plural form of youths in Cl. 3 to show another category of people who suffered due to poverty, hunger, and starvation. The song in the second stanza contains the prefix [ba] for nouns in Cl. 2 which are used to express the plurals of human beings. The stanza is a lamentation about the challenges of all Zambians.

The chorus expresses the dichotomy of nouns in Cl. 3 in line 2 and Cl. 4 in line 3 to link the physical impossibilities into the domain of the unconstrained metaphysical. Line 1 contains the prefix [ma] in Cl. 6 *makufi* 'knees'. In line 2, there is the prefix [mu] in Cl. 3 in *mutima* 'heart'. Line 3 uses [mi] in Cl. 4 in *mipashi* 'spirits'. We note that all prefixes in the chorus start with the voiced bilabial nasal. In these lines, what is linked are the knees and heart (the physical) about the spirit (the metaphysical). The knees are recontextualised from being mere organs of the body to being symbols of humility, submission, and faith while the heart now takes the role of being the center of human consciousness of the metaphysical in the fight with the evil spirits. While the knees are pluralized by '-ma-' [ma] in Cl. 6 to simulate individual and communal submission in the fight with the evil spirit (equally pluralized to connote a formidable foe), the heart is singularised to connote individualized redemption, and spiritual triumphs and battles. In this case, the language of biology and the language of spirituality create a bivalent voice as a spectrum of human experiential representation. The use of Cl. 4 nominal prefixes which embody inanimate, animate, and agentive nominal further present evil as agents of the devil which borders on the religious discourse. The chorus also deals with the plural prefix in Cl. 6 of the parts of the body that must be used in religious locale for prayer to drive out evil spirits and make the troubled hearts rest. Instead of just lamenting, the psalmist uses the nominal prefixes in Cl. 3 [mu], 4 [mi], and 6 [ma] to admonish the suffering Zambians to commit the political leaders in prayer for them to receive the desires of their hearts. We argue that the above three prefixes begin with the voiced bilabial nasal [m].

In stanza 3, the psalmist uses the dichotomy of noun prefixes [mu] in Cl. 3 and [mi] in Cl. 4 (lines 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8) to present his lamentations to political leaders about the abundance of natural resources which are found in rivers such as the fish, trees, peace and fertile soil which are not common in other places and yet Zambians are suffering. Through the use of prefixes [mu] in Cl. 3 and [mi] in Cl. 4, the song also reminds

the political leaders about empowering the young and the old with capital and inputs to enable them to do agro-business and utilise the precious stones and fertile land. This line of thought in the song is further consolidated by the use of the prefix ‘ma-’ [ma] in Cl. 6 (line 4) to describe the abundance of natural resources to challenge politicians against the suffering Zambians. We argue that the song uses a multivocal stance and flexible semiotic materials within it to remind politicians that Zambians do not benefit from the mining of precious stones (line 4). It can be argued that the song uses the noun prefixes [n] in *inama* ‘animals’ in Cl. 10 and [li] in Cl. 5 in *libumba* ‘a group, plenty or many’ (lines 3 and 5) to show that the country has enough animals in game reserves which Zambians can depend on. The stanza also uses concatenating locative prefixes such as *pamapepala* ‘on papers’ where [pa] in Cl. 16 concatenates with the inherent Cl. 6 prefix [ma] in (line 6) as well as *mukanwa* ‘in the mouth’ where the locative [mu] in Cl. 18 concatenates with the inherent Cl. 12 prefix [ka] (line 9) to multivocally show the semiotic fluidity that the wealth and resources in Zambia are just on papers and politicians merely talk about them. The above class prefixes have multiple prefixations where the locative noun combines an inherent class prefix and the locative prefix.

Stanza 4 uses Cl. 6 noun prefixes (lines 3 and 8) to depict plurals of abstract nouns which have been analyzed in stanza 1. The song also contains the locative [pa] in Cl.16 (line 2) and Cl. 11 [lu] (line 6) to express the adverb of time ‘morning.’ We note that nouns in Cl. 6 are used to express the plurals of nouns in Cl. 5. From a political spectrum, the above discourses on noun prefixes show that the education of Zambians does not match with the application probably because the most educated are more theoretical than practical. From the religious spectrum, the song also shows that there are failures in prayers that are conducted all day long without yielding the desired fruits which can be attributed to a lack of faith and/or lack of faith accompanied by a lack of understanding of how God works. The above morpho-semantic analysis of the song expresses the elasticity and fluidity of multivocality in Zambian music.

4.2 Verbal Extension Discourses in the Song

The use of reflexive extension *ukuilishanya* ‘complaining’ in the song in stanza 2, line 1 shows the dissatisfaction and lamentation of the singer regarding his suffering despite the abundance of resources and education. The extensions provide the conceptual stretching of suffering, dissatisfaction, and lamentations from the physical into the infinite including abstract spaces. Through the use of grammatical verb extensions, the singer stylistically presents a continuity of endless problems without a solution in sight. Even more interesting is that the extensions themselves act as the physical semiotic units in the grammar of the verbs to express the continuity of the problems that the singer is complaining about. Such a fluidity of contextual meaning of the extensions helps knit the song’s theme of a cry for help in the form of musical prayer. Lines 2 of the same stanza uses *ukubulilwa* ‘squalor or lacking’ as well as in line 4 in *yalilembwa* ‘have been written’ are used to express the passivation of the Zambians in national matters which have led to extreme poverty, hunger, and starvation. The high back vowel [u] is realized as [w] to passivize the verb root. The passive verbal morphological affix is added to the verb radical to indicate passivity regarding the noun that receives the action. The use of the passive form of the verb minimizes the role of the agent in the action that needs to be undertaken. The implied meaning of the noun that receives the action in the song points to Zambians who are passive and docile over national matters that adversely affect them. We also argue that the extension of the Zambian problems is partly because of a passive populace as marked by the passive verbal extensions in the morpho-semantic strand of the verbs used in the song.

Stanzas 3 and 4 contain the reduplicative verbal extension. Reduplication is a morphological process that is achieved by repeating the base stem of the main verb to form the reduplicative verb. The song contains the repeated verb stem in stanza 3; *umutende twimbapofye pefyepefye* ‘extremely peaceful’ (line 8) and in stanza 4; *amasambililo nayo ni lekaleka* ‘extremely educated’ (line 4). We argue that reduplication in the song plays the role of infinite abundance in education, ideas, and peace which ironically seem not to translate into anything worth appreciating. The discourses show that Zambians are quite educated and peaceful although their education and peace do not help them to resolve the challenges of poverty, hunger,

suffering, and starvation. We also argue that such a paradox of reality strengthens the singer's plea for help as indicated at the start of the song. Semiotically, one can decipher that the challenges mentioned above are endless to Zambians.

4.3 Figurative Discourses in the Song

The song contains two forms of figurative language, namely, similes and a metaphor. Stanza 2 contains the simile *nge* 'like', as well as stanza 4 which has *nga* 'like' in *ngabasha* 'like slaves'. The politico-religious discourses associate suffering, dissatisfaction, poverty, and squalor with the gushing out of the last rains of the rainy season. This shows that the challenges in Zambians have escalated to unbearable magnitude (stanza 2, line 3). Similarly, stanza 4 shows that when it comes to work or employment, Zambians are treated in the same way slaves are handled (line 5).

In stanza 2, the song uses metaphorical language to show that the intentions or plans of both political and religious leaders are usually made plain to be read and understood by followers or citizens as expressed in these words; *amatontokanyo yalilembwa* 'thoughts have been written' (line 4). The metaphoric expression advocates for the decolonization of the mindset of leaders. The above language demonstrates the multivocal elasticity and semiotic fluidity in Nathan Nyirenda's song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My knees'. To overcome the challenges, the song admonishes Zambians to be on their knees and in constant prayer.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study in terms of noun prefixes in the song are in tandem with Mann (1999) who argues that nouns of abstract nature in Cl. 14 represent humanity. The nouns in Cl. 14 are used to express humane characteristics and are neither paired nor pluralised (cf. Siame (2022)). The song uses the noun prefix [n] in Cl. 9/10 to describe the animate and inanimate natural resources in Zambia (cf. Mann, 1999). The analysis of noun prefixes agrees with Möller (2011) who observes that nouns in Cl. 6 are used to express the plurals of nouns in Cl. 5. The study correlates with Crisma et al, (2011) in terms of locative class prefixes which are attached to already inflected nouns such as [pa] to form *pafinso* 'on people's faces.' The analysis shows that nouns in Cl. 4 are classified to be animate, agentive, or plants which are also consistent in the chorus and stanza three (cf. Siame, 2019 & 2022). We note that there are rich messages in the lyrics of the politico-religious locale of Nathan Nyirenda's song *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees'.

The findings on verbal extensions are in line with Halemba (2007) who argues that the reflexive verbal extension shows an action that is done to oneself or by oneself. The analysis is also in tandem with Mtenje (2016) and Nkolola (1997) who argue that passive verbal morphological affixes are added to the verb radical to indicate passivity regarding the noun that receives the action. The analysis further correlates with Mtenje (2006a) who regards reduplication in most Bantu languages as a morphological strategy that is used to satisfy the minimality requirement which is achieved by repeating the base stem of the main verb to form the reduplicative verb. The analysis of figurative language also bears a resemblance with Siame & Lubungu (2023) who use metaphoric expressions to advocate for the decolonization of the mindset of leaders.

The study concludes that apart from using multivocality and resemiotisation to analyze the semanticity of musicology, it is possible to analyze the morphology and other levels of linguistics using other theories such as lexical morphology. The paper further concludes that the musician of *Mwe Makufi Yandi* 'My Knees' used many noun class prefixes, verbal extensions, and figurative language to put across the elasticity and fluidity of the multivocal politico-religious characteristics. It is worth noting that multivocality enables musicians to belong to several localities, social groups, and regions. Therefore, multivocality as a concept can be extended to different sound bites and visual performances associated with particular social groups and identities such as the politico-religious spectrum.

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