

Readers' Perception of Metaphors Used in Kiswahili Sports Newspaper's Headlines in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study addresses a significant gap in understanding how metaphors are used and interpreted in Kiswahili sports journalism, particularly in Tanzania. While metaphors are widely recognized for their ability to simplify complex ideas and evoke emotions, little research has explored their role in sports newspapers within this context. Using Lakoff's metaphor theory, which explains how metaphors link abstract concepts to familiar experiences, the study analyses 62 metaphorical expressions from popular Tanzanian sports newspapers, Mwanaspoti and Champion. The research has two specific objectives: (1) to identify and categorize the types of metaphors used in Kiswahili sports headlines, and (2) to explore how Tanzanian readers interpret these metaphors in the context of sports reporting. The metaphors are categorized into Structural, Orientational, and Ontological types, revealing how they frame sports events as relatable narratives, such as describing competition as a "battle" or team strategies as "machines." The findings highlight the critical role of metaphors in making sports stories more engaging and accessible, while also shedding light on the unique interplay between language, culture, and sports journalism. This study not only fills a gap in the literature but also provides valuable insights into how metaphors shape readers' perceptions and engagement with sports narratives in Tanzania.

Keywords: Metaphors, Kiswahili, sports journalism, Tanzania, reader perception, Lakoff's metaphor theory, cultural context, media engagement.

1.0 Background to the Study

Metaphors are not just dazzling features of language, but are, in fact, important cognitive devices that determine how people structure their perceptions and interactions with the world. People use them to make links between abstract concepts and real events in their lives. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their key work on Cognitive Linguistics argue that metaphors are a way of organizing thought and perception and thus a way of understanding and reasoning about the world. Therefore, the use of metaphor is vital in language

and communication, which enables speakers and writers to express abstract ideas in a more relatable way to the context.

In journalistic contexts, particularly in sports newspaper headlines, metaphors have two functions: they draw readers in and adjust the story by making it more vivid, relatable, and emotionally impactful. In sports journalism, metaphors help to bring abstract sports events to life by invoking feelings, illustrating action, and capturing the drama and excitement of the event (Dalu & Awad, 2018). Metaphors are important in sports reporting as they draw in readers and develop their comprehension of the actions taking place in the game. According to McEnnis (2021), the stylistic and emotional aspects of language which is expressed in the course of metaphor are key in keeping readers interested, especially in a media setting increasingly centred by digital platforms.

The headlines of Kiswahili sports publications use metaphors that relate Tanzanian cultural references, societal ideals, and shared social experiences in a way that is more relevant to local readers while simultaneously portraying the events on the field. Cultural references abound in metaphors that invoke images linked to the team's spirit, as "Simba wamewaka moto" (Simba is on fire) (Charteris-Black, 2011). In addition to explaining a sporting event, these metaphorical concepts evoke readers' feelings, curiosity, and pride in the events, which enhances the sports content's vividness, intrigue, and relatability.

However, it can be difficult to interpret metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism because it requires readers to draw on their understanding of both the sports world and local cultural norms. This complexity increases the cognitive strain on the reader, especially in cases where metaphors contain cultural references that are not understood outside the Tanzanian context (LibreTexts, 2024). Understanding these metaphors is also a challenge given that, readers who are unfamiliar with the sports-specific jargon and the cultural context from which the metaphors emerge might face difficulties in interpreting and understanding such metaphors. While research on metaphors in English-language sports journalism has provided valuable insights (e.g., Butterworth, 2020; McEnnis, 2021), there is a remarkable gap in literature regarding the perception of metaphors in non-English-speaking contexts, particularly in Kiswahili.

This study aims to fill in this gap by focusing on how Tanzanian readers perceive metaphors in Kiswahili sports newspaper headlines. Although there is extensive research on the cognitive and structural functions of metaphor (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002), much of these works has been centred on classical languages such as English contexts, with little attention given to how metaphors in Kiswahili sports newspapers are perceived by local readers. Furthermore, Gibbs (2008) argue that existing research on metaphor in newspapers often overlooks the cultural specificity of metaphors, which shape the way readers interpret and link with the contents.

Given how deeply football and other sports have grown into Tanzanian society, it's important to explore how readers interpret metaphorical expressions in sports newspaper headlines. These metaphors carry cultural significance, but their meaning may not always be clear to readers from different regions or backgrounds. In particular, metaphors that draw from local culture such as references to animals, historical figures, or traditional customs might be understood differently depending on a reader's familiarity with these cultural elements.

This study delves into the connection between language, culture, and media by examining how metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism are perceived. By analyzing how readers interpret sports headlines, it aims to shed light on the role of metaphors in Tanzanian media and how they influence audience engagement with sports content. It will also look at the challenges readers face in making sense of these expressions, especially in a context where sports terminology and cultural references can differ across regions.

Ultimately, this research seeks to provide insights into how local cultural narratives and social values shape the way metaphors are understood in Kiswahili sports journalism. Additionally, it will explore how these metaphors enhance emotional connection and contribute to the overall significance of sports reporting in Tanzania.

1.1 Key Knowledge Gap

While a significant amount of research has explored the use of metaphors in English-language newspapers (McEnnis, 2021; Butterworth, 2020), studies specifically examining Kiswahili sports newspaper are surprisingly rare. Most existing work tends to focus on metaphors in literary or abstract cognitive contexts, meaning there is still much to uncover about how Tanzanian readers interpret and engage with sports metaphors in their everyday media consumption. Moreover, little attention has been given to the influence of cultural references on the way metaphors are understood in Kiswahili, particularly in the context of sports reporting a genre that relies heavily on figurative language to capture excitement and drama.

This study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring how metaphors function in Kiswahili sports newspapers and how cultural background shapes readers' interpretations. By doing so, it will offer fresh insights into the relationship between language, media, and culture in Tanzania.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims on understanding the perceptions of metaphors in Kiswahili sports Newspaper headlines within the Tanzanian cultural context. The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the types of metaphors commonly used in Kiswahili sports Newspaper headlines.
- To examine the Readers' Interpretations of Metaphors in Kiswahili Sports Newspaper Headlines.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Metaphor

This study is based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which suggests that metaphors are not just decorative elements of language but fundamental to how people think, understand, and interpret the world around them. Introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), CMT changed the way metaphors are viewed by showing that abstract ideas such as emotions, time, or morality are shaped through familiar, real-life experiences. This theory has become a crucial tool in metaphor research, helping to explain how metaphors influence our perception of different concepts. For example, phrases like “argument is war” or “life is a

journey” are not just creative ways of speaking they reflect deeper mental structures that shape how we understand complex ideas.

In the context of this study, CMT is a powerful theoretical tool for analyzing how metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism shape the perception and interpretation of sports events among readers. The theory’s focus on systematic mappings and how abstract concepts are grounded in more concrete experiences resonates well with how sports metaphors work. For example, in Kiswahili sports headlines, metaphors such as “Simba wamewaka moto” (Simba is on fire) or “Yanga ni Mfalme wa uwanja” (Yanga is the king of the field) go beyond the literal meaning of words. These metaphors connect abstract emotions (such as excitement or dominance) to concrete, familiar experiences that readers can easily relate to. In this sense, CMT provides a useful way to analyze how metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism reflect patterns of thought and cultural experiences that influence how readers interpret them. However, like any theory, CMT has its limitations. One of its main criticisms, raised by scholars such as Lyons (1995) and Sharifian (2017), is that it focuses too much on the universality of metaphors and does not always account for cultural differences in how metaphors are used and understood. This is particularly relevant in Tanzania, where Kiswahili sports journalism is not just about language it is deeply connected to local traditions, storytelling, and social values. As Cameron (2003) points out, understanding metaphors is not just a mental process; it is also shaped by the speaker’s intention, the audience’s background, and the broader cultural context. In Tanzania, sports metaphors go beyond simple expressions as they capture elements of community life, identity, and local ways of thinking, which CMT does not fully explain.

Given this gap, this study aims to explore how CMT applies in a uniquely Tanzanian context. By building on the core ideas of CMT, this research will examine how metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism balance both universal patterns of thought and culturally specific influences, offering a deeper understanding of how language, media, and culture intersect in Tanzania.

2.2 Metaphor Classification

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) classification of metaphors provides a structured framework for analysing how metaphors function at the cognitive level. They categorize metaphors into three primary types:

- Structural Metaphors – Where one concept is understood in terms of another, such as “time is money.”
- Orientational Metaphors – Which organise concepts spatially, e.g., “happy is up.”
- Ontological Metaphors – Where abstract concepts are represented as tangible entities, e.g., “the mind is a container.”

These categories help explain the cognitive foundations of metaphor but they fall short when applied to Kiswahili sports journalism, where metaphors are deeply rooted in cultural and contextual elements. In this context, metaphors often go beyond conventional classifications, reflecting local identities, cultural symbols, and social experiences that cannot be categorized within the framework of CMT.

For instance, Kiswahili sports metaphors frequently incorporate imagery tied to community, national identity, and animals—symbols that carry rich cultural significance. A phrase like “Simba ni Mfalme wa Uwanja” (Simba is the king of the field) is more than just a structural metaphor about dominance. It draws

on the powerful national symbolism of Simba, a well-known Tanzanian football club, representing pride and strength. Similarly, the use of animals such as lions (Simba) reflects deeper cultural associations linked to national identity, sports rivalries, and collective pride.

Although CMT provides a strong cognitive framework for understanding metaphorical mappings, this study moves beyond its broad categories to explore how metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism function at the crossroads of universal thought patterns and local cultural expression. By taking a more nuanced, context-driven approach, this research aligns with its goal of identifying different types of metaphors and analysing how they enhance reader engagement and emotional connection in sports journalism.

So, CMT serves as a foundation for understanding the cognitive mechanisms behind metaphors in Kiswahili sports newspapers. However, by acknowledging its limitations and incorporating critiques, this study extends CMT's application to the Tanzanian context, where language, culture, and social influences play a vital role in shaping how metaphors are understood. This theoretical framework not only supports the first objective identifying and categorizing metaphors but also their interpretation and emotional impact in Kiswahili sports reporting.

2.2 Reader Engagement and Emotional Resonance in Sports Newspaper Headlines

Metaphors in newspapers, especially sports newspaper reporting, play a vital role in attracting readers' engagement and emotional relevant. According to Butterworth (2020), sports metaphors express relatable image and emotions, changing primary events into dramatic narratives. Similarly, According to McEnnis (2021), the stylistic relevance of metaphors in setting sports writing apart from other genres is that they improve reader relatability and narrative.

Dalu and Awad (2018) note that metaphors in sports headlines frequently connect textual content with real-life experiences, allowing readers to imagine the excitement and intensity of sports events. Nonetheless, these studies mainly concentrate on English-language journalism, resulting in a lack of exploration in Kiswahili sports journalism. In Kiswahili, metaphors such as “Simba wamewaka moto” (Simba is on fire) reflect team identity and strongly connect with local cultural metaphors related to nature and feelings. Difficulties emerge when the use of metaphors creates cultural or language obstacles, especially for audiences who are not acquainted with specific sports terminology or culturally rooted phrases. LibreTexts (2024) describes sports journalism as a genre marked by its figurative intricacy, potentially distancing readers who are not accustomed to its conventions.

This study builds on these insights by analysing how metaphor usage in Kiswahili sports journalism enhances reader engagement and emotional resonance, aligning with Objective 2. It evaluates the aesthetic and emotive dimensions of metaphorical language while addressing the cognitive challenges readers face in interpreting culturally specific expressions.

Although there is a considerable amount of research on metaphor, significant gaps still exist, especially in its use within non-Western settings like Kiswahili sports journalism. Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and similar frameworks have offered important understandings of the cognitive and cultural roles of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002), they frequently overlook the subtleties of African languages, particularly Kiswahili, which is fundamentally intertwined with

Tanzanian cultural identity. A significant portion of current studies on metaphor, especially within journalism, has concentrated on English-language outlets, resulting in a lack of investigation into metaphor use in Kiswahili (Butterworth, 2020; McEnnis, 2021).

Moreover, there is a notable deficiency of empirical research exploring how readers perceive and understand metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism, especially concerning sports headlines, where the employment of metaphor is crucial for attracting readers (Dalu & Awad, 2018). Current literature has not adequately investigated how cultural references, social values, and linguistic customs influence the understanding of metaphors in Tanzanian sports media, resulting in a significant gap in grasping the localized cognitive processes involved (Kövecses, 2002).

This research aims to identify metaphors in Kiswahili sports journalism by filling existing gaps, exploring the cultural and contextual influences on their understanding, and examining how they contribute to increasing reader engagement and emotional impact, utilizing CMT within a Tanzanian cultural framework. This method provides a localized view on the use of metaphors, adding new understanding to the overlap of language, culture, and media within Tanzanian sports journalism.

3.0 Research Methods

This part outlines the research techniques employed in the study, covering the research approach, design, population, sampling procedures, data collection, reliability and validity, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The research employed a qualitative approach because it emphasizes descriptive analysis, offering a profound insight into the participants' experiences and interpretations (Amoakohene, 2017). The goal was to grasp how readers perceive metaphors employed in Kiswahili sports news headlines. The data collection process included semi-structured interviews and document evaluations, allowing the researcher to examine participants' opinions and analyze metaphorical elements in the headlines (Brinkmann, 2013; Bowen, 2009).

A descriptive research design was selected to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the issue, providing insights into the interpretations of readers. The design allowed for the use of different data collection tools, such as interviews and document analysis, to examine metaphoric language in sports headlines and the perceptions of readers (Cresswell, 2006).

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mwanza, specifically Nyamagana district in Mwanza-Tanzania, selected for its significant population and newspaper readership (Enock, 2005). Mwanza is a key region for sports media consumption in Tanzania, with Nyamagana providing relevant data about sports newspaper readership and understanding (Mwamasso & Onyango, 2020).

3.3 Population, Sampling and Sample Size

The study employed a target population consisted of Kiswahili sports newspaper readers aged 18 and above, with at least a standard seven education level. This demographic was chosen for their developed interest in sports and engagement with newspapers (Krennmayr, 2011). The study focused on sports headlines from June to August 2024, a period marked by major sports events in Tanzania. The study employed purposive sampling for both newspapers and readers. Mwanaspoti and Champion were selected

for their broad readership and influence (Maricha, 2021). 62 headlines with metaphors from these newspapers were chosen, representing various sports events. A total of 30 readers were chosen through purposive and snowball sampling, in which early participants referred additional individuals for more interviewees in order to meet the outcomes required (Naderifar et al., 2017).

3.4 Data Collection Tools

Data collection used semi-structured interviews, allowing in-depth exploration of readers' interpretations of metaphors. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions. Additionally, a document review of the selected newspapers helped identify metaphors used in the headlines (Bowen, 2009).

3.5 Research Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the study-maintained sample relevance and reduced bias by adhering to research protocols. Reliability was guaranteed through inter-rater reliability, as various coders examined the same data set to confirm consistency (Hurbeman et al., 2002). The research tools were standardized to guarantee consistent data gathering.

3.6 Analysis and Presentation of Data

The research employed Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) for data evaluation. This approach assisted in classifying and coding the metaphors found in the sports newspaper headlines of Mwanaspoti and Champion, highlighting common themes (Schreier, 2012). A tabulation technique was employed to classify metaphor types, enabling a systematic analysis and presentation.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritised throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. The research respected cultural norms, and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Ethical standards were followed, ensuring the integrity of the research process (Willie, 2022). Additionally, the research permits were taken from St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) and the Regional Administrative Secretary of Mwanza.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Types of Metaphors in Kiswahili Sports Newspaper Headlines

The results of this research aimed to identify and analyse the metaphors found in Kiswahili sports newspapers, particularly Mwanaspoti and Champion. A sum of 62 metaphorical expressions was recognized, grouped into three main categories of metaphors: Structural Metaphors, Orientational Metaphors, and Ontological Metaphors. These metaphors were examined through the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) metaphor theory, which suggests that metaphors are essential in influencing human thinking by connecting abstract concepts to more tangible, familiar ideas. The results were analysed alongside earlier research on metaphors in the media, sports journalism, and Kiswahili literature to enhance the comprehension of how metaphorical expressions operate in these areas.

Structural Metaphors

Structural metaphors provide a framework for understanding complex concepts by mapping abstract experiences onto familiar, concrete experiences. In sports journalism, these concepts often simplify the

dynamic and competitive nature of sports by using metaphors related to conflict, violence, or machines. Table 1 presents the structural metaphor as observed in Swahili Newspapers.

Table 1:

Structural Metaphors in Sports newspaper headlines

Type of Metaphor	Example	Publication	Gloss/Interpretation
Structural Metaphor	"Mastaa gofu vitani Arusha Open"	Mwanaspoti, 19th July 2024	"Golf stars at war at the Arusha Open" – War metaphor for competition, simplifying the dynamic into a familiar conflict.
	"Arsenal yashusha mashine za kazi"	Mwanaspoti, 29th August 2024	"Arsenal is lowering work machines" – Work machines metaphor frames the team's actions as mechanical or strategic.
	"De Ligt aitolea macho Man Utd"	Champion, 13th July 2024	"De Ligt keeps his eyes on Manchester United" – Eyes on represents focus or attention in the context of competition.
	"JKT yaitembezea kichapo vijana"	Mwanaspoti, 16th August 2024	"JKT delivers a beating to Vijana" – Beating metaphor emphasizes the dominance of one team over another in the match.

The use of structural metaphors like 'beating' and 'war' is consistent with other studies in sports media, such as Cameron (2003), who shows that competition is often portrayed in sports journalism as including conflict and aggressiveness. Metaphors like "war" in the title "Mastaa gofu vitani Arusha Open" are commonly used to convey the intense nature of competitiveness, for example, confirming research by Krennmayr (2011) that claims sports metaphors aid in the clarification of abstract concepts like rivalry and competition. The depiction of events via the prism of violence or machines is consistent with other studies, such that of Charteris-Black (2005), who highlights how metaphors related to aggressiveness and machinery represent both strategy and domination in sports.

4.1.2 Orientational Metaphors

In orientational conceptual metaphor, a system of ideas is organized in the relation and interaction in space like up-down, inside-out, front-behind etc. In the context of sports journalism, these metaphors help to convey concepts such as success, failure, pressure, and challenges faced by teams and athletes. Table 2 is an illustration of orientational metaphors observed in Sports newspaper headlines in Tanzania.

Table 2: Orientational Metaphors in Sports Newspaper Headlines

Type of Metaphor	Example	Publication	Gloss/Interpretation
Orientational Metaphor	"Tanzania yarudi kichwa chini Olimpiki"	Mwanaspoti, 11th August 2024	"Tanzania returns with heads down from the Olympics" – Heads down metaphor indicates defeat or failure.
	"Kigamboni Queens yakiona cha moto"	Mwanaspoti, 31st July 2024	"Kigamboni Queens felt the heat" – Heat metaphor conveys pressure, challenge, or adversity faced by the team.
	"Kocha Mkenya akabidhiwa mikoba Tabora United"	Champion, 30th July 2024	"Kenyan coach handed over the bags of Tabora United" – Bags metaphor suggests responsibility or burdens given to the coach.

The employment of orientational metaphors such as "heads down" and "heat" illustrates the research of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who found that metaphors concerning spatial relationships frequently depict emotional conditions. The "heads down" metaphor, illustrated in "Tanzania yarudi kichwa chini Olimpiki", relates to previous studies by Krennmayr (2011), who contends that these metaphors frequently convey failure or disillusionment. The imagery of "heat" seen in "Kigamboni Queens yakiona cha moto" corresponds with research by Johnson (2007), who highlights that heat often serves as a metaphor for pressure or challenging circumstances, a concept effectively illustrated in sports where teams confront obstacles.

Ontological Metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) believed that the conceptualization of our experience under the conceptual domain of material or tangible things helps us extract abstract experiences and ideas out and see it as objects or concrete substances. These metaphors were identified frequently in the headlines, offering insight into how sports journalism conveys concepts like admiration, burden, or success. Table 3 presents the data on ontological metaphors.

Table 3: Ontological Metaphors in Sports Newspaper Headlines

Type of Metaphor	Example	Publication	Gloss/Interpretation
Ontological Metaphor	"Curry ammwagia maua Lebron"	Mwanaspoti, 27th July 2024	"Curry sprinkles flowers on LeBron" – Flowers symbolize admiration or praise, making abstract emotions tangible.
	"Grealish afunguka kutemwa England"	Champion, 31st July 2024	"Grealish opens up about being spat from England" – Opens up metaphor presents personal experiences as physical actions.

	"Makocha Pamba Jiji wabebeshwa mzigo"	Mwanaspoti, 25th July 2024	"Coaches at Pamba Jiji are burdened with a load" – Burden metaphor conceptualizes stress or responsibility as physical weight.
	"Yanga yalamba Milioni 20 goli la mama"	Mwanaspoti, 17th August 2024	"Yanga pockets 20 million for the mother goal" – Pockets metaphor depicts earning or receiving a reward in a tangible form.

Ontological metaphors such as flowers, burdens, and pockets are consistent with previous studies showing that metaphorical expressions often provide real form to abstract emotions and events. Cameron (2003) and Krennmayr (2011), for example, emphasize the importance of ontological metaphors in comprehending complex emotional states. When it comes to "flowers" in "Curry ammwagia maua Lebron," the metaphor of adoration as a material thing is similar to the findings of Charteris-Black (2005), who found that metaphors involving physical items are used in sports media to convey emotions like respect and admiration. The "burden" metaphor, which is frequently used in sports literature, is used in "Makocha Pamba Jiji wabebeshwa mzigo" to show how the emotional difficulties coaches experience are perceived as something heavy to bear (Johnson, 2007).

The study's findings suggest that metaphors are crucial to sports writing because they help readers comprehend complex athletic events and emotional states by connecting them to more relatable, everyday situations. The headlines in Mwanaspoti and Champion newspapers provide a profound, poignant, and relevant method of understanding the complex and abstract world of sports by utilizing structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. These metaphorical expressions demonstrate the mental processes through which people make sense of their environment, which is in line with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) view that metaphors play a significant role in our cognitive processes and affect how we understand and express both concrete and abstract experiences. These findings align with previous studies, particularly by Cameron (2003), Charteris-Black (2005), and Krennmayr (2011), who have examined how metaphors are important to the construction of meaning in sports newspapers.

4.2 Readers' Interpretations of Metaphors in Kiswahili Sports Newspaper Headlines

This section analyses how readers interpret metaphors used in Kiswahili sports newspaper headlines. Metaphors in these headlines serve as influential tools to convey emotions, actions, and the intensity of sports events, making it easy to understand how readers interpret them. Below is a table with key metaphors found in Kiswahili sports headlines, followed by a more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Table 4: Interpretation of Metaphors Used in Kiswahili Sports Newspaper Headlines

Metaphor in Kiswahili	English Translation	Readers' Interpretations
"Dube, Baleke moto mkali"	"Dube, Baleke fierce fire"	Represents intense power, unstoppable energy, and aggressive performance.
"Vibabu Inter Milani vyawasha moto tu"	"Veterans Inter Milani just set the fire"	Suggests that the team is gaining momentum, dominating with unstoppable energy.

"Mastaa BDL walivyoiteka Taifa cup"	" How BDL stars seized the national cup"	Symbolizes control, domination, and conquest of the competition.
"Kitasa cha Simba chatangaza vita mpya"	"Simba's roar announces a new war"	Refers to a battle or competition, highlighting the combative nature of the sport.
"Dabo aingiwa ubaridi Azam"	"Dabo feels the cold at Azam"	Suggests emotional detachment, loss of enthusiasm, or defeat.

Fire Metaphor

The fire metaphor is one of the most well-known in Kiswahili sports headlines. It is used to describe powerful performances, fierce competition, and unstoppable energy. For example, the headline "Dube, Baleke moto mkali" (translated as "Dube, Baleke fierce fire") and "Vibabu Inter Miami vinawasha moto tu" ("Veterans Inter Miami just set the fire") employ fire metaphor to express the intensity and passion of the players' performances. One reader interpreted the phrase "fierce fire" as representing a force on the field that cannot be extinguished:

“Ninaposoma neno moto mkali, naona nguvu ya ajabu kwenye uwanja. Ni kama moto usioweza kuzimwa, Dube anacheza kwa nguvu na ujasiri.” ("When I read the phrase 'fierce fire,' I imagine an unbelievable force on the field. It's like a fire that cannot be put out, Dube plays with power and confidence.")

Another reader explained the metaphor as a representation of a team gaining momentum, their strength growing as they move forward:

“Neno kuwasha moto linanifanya nione timu hiyo kama moto unaoshika kasi, hauwezi kuzimwa. Wanashinda lakini pia wanavutia mashabiki kwa nguvu zao.” ("The phrase 'set the fire' makes me see the team as a fire gaining speed, they cannot be put out. They win but also attract fans with their strength.")

This interpretation aligns with previous research, such as the work of Evans & Mason (2017), which suggests that fire metaphors often symbolise unstoppable power, energy, and aggression, highlighting the intensity of athletic performance.

War Metaphor

The war metaphor appears in Kiswahili sports newspaper headlines to signify fierce rivalry, conflict, and victory. For example, "Mastaa BDL walivyoiteka Taifa Cup" (" How BDL stars captured the national cup") and "Kitasa cha Simba chatangaza vita mpya" ("Simba's Door Knob declares a new war") illustrate the combative spirit of sports as a type of conflict. A reader expanded on the expression "seize the national cup" by stating that it implies a team fully dominating, akin to warriors conquering a land:

“Walivyoiteka ni kama walikalia uwanja na kulifanya kombe miliki yao. Wanashinda kwa kishindo na kuonyesha ubabe wa kweli.” ("Seizing it feels like they took control of the field and owned the cup. They win with strength and show real dominance.")

Another reader explained the "knob of Simba" as an announcement of a new defender, evoking the idea of soldiers preparing for battle:

“Vita ina maana ya mapambano ya kweli, wachezaji wa Simba wanakuwa kama wanajeshi wanaojiandaa kwa vita, si mchezo tu.” (“War means real struggle, Simba’s players become like soldiers preparing for war, it’s not just a game.”)

This interpretation aligns with the findings of Smith and Bailey (2015), who observed that sports metaphors often reflect the aggressive nature of the game, framing it as a battle between competing forces, where athletes are likened to warriors or soldiers.

Cold Metaphor

The cold metaphor is not as frequently utilized but serves an important function in illustrating emotional detachment, defeat, or a sense of demotivation. For example, "Dabo aingiwa ubaridi Azam" ("Dabo feels the cold at Azam") suggests that the coach has experienced a decline in emotional warmth, passion, or drive. A reader interpreted the "cold" metaphor as an indication of emotional disengagement or acceptance following a loss:

“Neno baridi linaonyesha hali ya kutokuwa na hamu tena au kujawa na hofu, Dabo amekata tama baada ya kipigo.” (“Cold shows a lack of motivation and fear, Dabo has lost his will after the defeat.”)

This study aligns with the findings of Hogan and Jameson (2015), who found that cold-related metaphors are commonly used in sports to describe emotional detachment or a loss of enthusiasm after a setback, reflecting the psychological impact of failure or tough times.

The analysis indicates that readers interpret metaphors in Kiswahili sports headlines based on their emotional and psychological understanding of events.

- **Fire metaphors** represent strength, determination, and high energy. Readers associate them with unbeatable power and dominance in sports success.
- **War metaphors** emphasize struggle, control, and the competitive nature of sports, portraying athletes as warriors fighting for victory.
- **Cold metaphors** convey emotional distance, lack of motivation, fear or defeat, illustrating the mental toll of poor performance or challenges

5.0 Summary of Findings

This study had two main goals: firstly, to identify the types of metaphors used in Kiswahili sports newspaper headlines and secondly, how readers interpret these metaphors. By analysing headlines from Mwanasport and Champion, the study revealed interesting ideas into how these metaphors shape the way sports stories are depicted and understood in sports context.

The first objective was to identify and categorize the metaphors used in Kiswahili sports headlines. A total of 62 metaphorical expressions were found and grouped into three main types: Structural Metaphors, Orientational Metaphors, and Ontological Metaphors.

Structural Metaphors make complicated sports events easier to understand by linking them to common, daily experiences. For instance, terms such as "battle" and "struggle" were often employed to illustrate fierce rivalry, while "machines" symbolized team tactics as automated procedures. These analogies help readers understand the dynamics of sports by relating them to known ideas such as conflicts or machines.

Oriental Metaphors utilize spatial imagery to express emotions or circumstances. Expressions such as "heads down" represented failure, while "heat" referred to the stress or obstacles encountered by teams. These metaphors enable readers to see success, failure, or challenges in a manner that seems relatable and tangible.

- **Structural Metaphors:** these make complicated sports events easier to understand by linking them to common, daily experiences. For instance, terms such as "battle" and "struggle" were often employed to illustrate fierce rivalry, while "machines" symbolized team tactics as automated procedures. These analogies help readers understand the dynamics of sports by relating them to known ideas such as conflicts or machines.
- **Oriental Metaphors:** These metaphors use spatial ideas to express emotional or situational states. For instance, "heads down" symbolized defeat, while "heat" represented pressure or challenges faced by teams. These metaphors help readers to see emotions like success, failure, or challenges in a way that is tangible and relatable.
- **Ontological Metaphors:** these transform intangible emotions or concepts into concrete objects or materials. For example, "flowers" stood for admiration, "burden" indicated stress, and "pockets" illustrated rewards or income. These metaphors make abstract emotions more concrete, enabling readers to engage with the feelings in sports narratives at a more profound level.

To examine how readers interpret these metaphors was the second goal of the study. The study found that readers frequently relate particular metaphors with strong emotional and psychological meanings, which influence how they understand and interpret sports events.

- **Fire Metaphors:** these metaphors were interpreted as symbols of unstoppable force and energy in phrase like "Dube, Baleke moto mkali" ("Dube, Baleke fierce fire"). Readers described these metaphors as representing players who play in the field with confidence and strength, like a fire that cannot be put out. The idea of "setting the fire" was also related to a team gaining momentum and control in the game.
- **War Metaphors:** Expressions like "Mastaa BDL walivyoiteka Taifa cup" ("How BDL stars seized the national cup") were employed as passionate competition and struggle. Readers see athletes as warriors or soldiers fighting for victory, with phrases like "seizing the cup" symbolizing dominance and conquest. The metaphor of 'kitasa cha Simba chatangaza vita mpya' ("Simba's lock announces a new war") was interpreted as a call to battle, highlighting the aggressive scenery in sports.
- **Cold Metaphors:** Phrases such as "Dabo aingiwa ubaridi Azam" ("Dabo feels the cold at Azam") were understood to signify emotional detachment or defeat. Readers comprehend the "cold" metaphor as a symbol for loss of motivation or enthusiasm, often following a tough defeat or

setback. This metaphor captures the emotional downfall and fear that can come with disappointment.

6.0 Conclusion

The results of this research emphasize the influence of metaphors in Kiswahili sports newspapers. Through the use of structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors, journalists simplify complex sports events and emotions, enhancing accessibility and engagement for readers. These metaphors assist audiences in relating to the rivalry, the emotional downfall experienced by athletes, and the emotional peaks and valleys of sports.

The interpretations of these metaphors by readers show the extent to which they relate with the audience. Fire imagery brings a sense of power and progress, war metaphors highlights conflict and control, while cold metaphor express the emotional impact of loss and fear. These interpretations demonstrate that metaphors go beyond mere linguistic element as they influence how readers perceive and emotionally respond to sports.

The research further emphasizes the notion, suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), that metaphors are essential to our understanding and expression of experiences. In Kiswahili sports journalism, metaphors link abstract ideas and daily experiences, aiding readers in understanding the vibrant and emotional realm of sports.

7.0 Recommendations

For Sports Journalists: they should guarantee that metaphors are clear and relatable to avoid confusion. For example, using fire metaphors to describe a team's momentum or war metaphors to depict competition can make headlines more vivid and impactful.

For Future Research: This study focused on two Kiswahili newspapers, but there's room to explore metaphors in other media formats, such as radio, TV, or online platforms. Additionally, comparing Kiswahili sports metaphors with those in other languages or cultures could provide deeper insights into how metaphors vary across different contexts.

In Media Literacy Initiatives, teaching audiences about the significance of metaphors in sports journalism can enhance their critical engagement with media. By comprehending how metaphors influence narratives, readers can gain a greater understanding of the emotional and psychological dimensions of sports journalism. This understanding enables them to analyse sports narratives with a more critical perspective.

Integrating lessons on the deliberate use of metaphors into journalism training programs can enhance the quality of sports reporting. Instructing journalists on how to create captivating and relatable metaphors guarantees that their storytelling connects with audiences, enhancing the engagement and impact of sports journalism.

For Future Research on Metaphors, although this study examined structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors, subsequent investigations might investigate further types, including animal metaphors or personification. Examining these variations would provide a deeper insight into how metaphorical language affects the narration and comprehension of sports stories.

In Audience Perception Studies, additional research could explore how particular metaphors shape readers' views on teams, athletes, or sporting events. For instance, does regular employment of war metaphors result in a more combative view of sports? Grasping these effects may offer important insights into the way language influences audience perceptions and involvement with sports journalism.

These findings and recommendations can further shed light on the role of metaphors in sports journalism and their impact on audience engagement and interpretation as metaphors serve more than just words by shaping how we face and understand sports reporting.

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