

# Thematic Analysis of an Afan Oromo Song Entitled “Fayaa Moo”

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## Abstract

The main purpose of a song is to communicate certain messages, tell a story, illustrate drama, express great power and religion, and preserve cultural traditions. Hence, songs are written for different purposes and in different situations. Songs can express numerous realities of the society such as culture, politics, social, economic, religious etc. Hence, it is said that societies across the globe compose their own songs in various situation and for different purposes. This fact is also common among the peoples of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is the home of numerous peoples who belong to different ethnic groups and speak various languages. Amharic and Afan Oromo are two major languages spoken which are spoken in Ethiopia. Various songs have been written, composed and produced in these two languages. The songs could contain different themes and may have different shortcomings. Hence, this study is intended to: Assess general themes communicated by the song, The short comings observed and areas that needs consideration and Implications of the song for the use of language. To do so, the song entitled "Fayaa Moo" was selected from the 13<sup>th</sup> track in the Jahlude's album "Yachin Neger". Like other songs in the album, "Fayaa Moo" is arranged in Reggae style. Regarding the lyrics, the poem of the song is written in both Afan Oromo and Amharic. Before directly began analyzing the song, it is necessary to see its lyric. Thus, the lyric of the song is taken from the original cover of CD. For the purpose of analysis, the stanza of the song is coded. Finally, the song is generally analyzed considering its overall content, message, language use and strong and weak sides.

**Keywords:** Fayaa Moo, Afan Oromo, Song, Lyrics, Jahlude

## 1. Introduction

Song is a short lyric or narrative text set to music. Usually song is a short piece of music with words that are sung. In other words, song is a composition for voice performed by singing or alongside musical instruments. A vocal song may be accompanied by musical instruments, or it may be unaccompanied. It is said that often reproduces the mood of and lends a heightened emotional expression to the song's text, which is often a lyric or poem. Lyric is a short poem that conveys intense feeling or profound thought. It expresses the personal thoughts and feelings of the person who wrote it. The lyrics (words) of songs are typically of a poetic, rhyming nature, though they may be religious verses or free prose.

Songs widely varies in their style and structure based on the culture of the people in which they are used. Thus, it is possible to categorized songs according to different criteria. For instance, songs can be classified based on their lyrics, music, tone, culture and other related factors. Accordingly, there are different kinds of songs. For instance, based on their lyrics and rhythm songs are categorized as Classical, Pop, Rock, Country, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Blues, Ballads, Dance, Love, Gospel, etc. These songs have their peculiar features.

## 2. Background Information

Jahlude Awol released his first album entitled "Yachin Neger" in 2012(G.C). There are 16 tracks(songs) in this album. Lyrics and melody of all songs is made by Jalude himself. The recordings and arrangements are done by Kamuzu Kassa and Peace Balachew participated in mixing and mastering of the songs. Taddele Roba is executive producer of this album. These profile show that the known artists take part in the work of "Yachin Neger". The lyrics of the songs seem short and simple to understand but the songs communicate numerous messages. The songs are arranged in reggae style.

Jah Lude wrote all of his songs. His music is highly influenced by the cultural and old plays which are almost forgotten by the new generation. The artist also celebrates his belongingness to his homeland in his music. Concerning the focus of the songs Jah Lude said that "*My songs literally preach identity and belongingness*". With this album he was able to get the attention of large audiences.

It is said that two artists, Kamuzu Kassa and Peace Balachew, helped him to produce the album and made him known by audiences. Though he is unknown to music listeners before hand, his album get the attention of audiences within short time. Jalude gets popularity and attention by his only album. It is commented by others that his new singing style, simplicity of the songs and the issues covered helped him to get audiences heart in the competition field. I am also one of those audiences to give attention to this album. I am impressed by the songs and listen to them repeatedly. Then, I was interested to analyze one of the songs, track 13.

Jah Lude was asked about the 13<sup>th</sup> song. A journalist asked him "One of your songs, Fayamo, is mixed with Oromiffa[Afan Oromo]. How did you come up with the idea of mixing Oromiffa [Afan Oromo]. with

reggae? He replied that “People from the neighborhood where I grew up are Oromiffa/[Afan Oromo] speakers. My family speaks Oromiffa/[Afan Oromo]; but I can’t speak the language. However, an Oromiffa/[Afan Oromo] singer, Tadele Gemechu, brought up the idea and asked me if I can do it and I did it. But to sing the song I had to study the accent of Oromiffa/[Afan Oromo] and the language as well.

### 3. Methodology used in the Song Analysis

#### 3.1. “Fayaa Moo, the Song Selected for analysis: General information about the Song

The song entitled “Fayaa Moo” is the 13<sup>th</sup> track in the Jahlude’s album “Yachin Neger”. Like other songs in the album, “Fayaa Moo” is arranged in Reggae style. Regarding the lyrics, the poem of the song is written in both Afan Oromo and Amharic. Both the Lyrics and melody of this song is made by Jahlude himself. The song lasts for 4 minute and 10 seconds.

#### 3.2. The Lyric of the Song.

Before directly began analyzing the song, it is necessary to see its lyric. The lyric of the song is taken from the original cover of CD. But it is not complete. There are lines missed from the cover page, but seemed relevant to the analyses. Hence, I transcribed the remaining lines and combined it with the already existing by inserting them in their appropriate place based on the flow of the song. For the purpose of analysis, the stanza of the song is coded.

**“Fayaa Moo”**

**A** Ani moo Oromiffa kuankua  
Tinish tinish bicha

**B** Fayaa moo sabni Oromo Fayaa?  
Jirtamoo biyya Shashamane(2X)  
Oromo burka Sekoo Mandoo

**C** Metalish libe anchin weddo  
Jaladhe sagni Oromticha  
Gin Afan Oromo tinish bicha

**D** Ani moo Oromiffa zare kuankua meche hichilalew  
Shashe koo koltef hiyalkugh andi andun himokiralehu  
Hinema beken asir gize hasabe kanchi gar

**E** Huli gize tinafikignalesh ye Jamayika lijoch mender

Ani moo Oromiffa Kuankua tinish bicha newo  
Tinish tinish bicha(X2)  
Xiqqo xiqqo bicha  
Tinish tinish  
Xinno xinno bicha  
Xiqqo xiqqo bicha  
Tinish tinish bicha  
Tinish tinsh

**F**

**G** Shashe biteragn tiri dankira  
Walkugh Chilalo Terara  
Shagoyen wadjewalehu  
Shubisam hichefirahehu

#### 3.3. Why and how to Analyze of the Song “Fayaa Moo”.

##### A. Why to analyze it : Reasons to analyze the song

As can be seen from the lyric, the song touches different things(i.e., language, history, culture, genealogy, etc.) related to Oromiya, Afan Oromo and Oromo people are reflected in the song, with all its imperfections. The lyric is written by mixing Afan Oromo and Amharic. These seem important for the development of Afan Oromo and for the speakers of other languages. There are some perceived shortcomings in the song that needs consideration. These reasons call for the analysis of the song.

##### B. How the Song was analyzed: Criteria considered during the Analysis of the Song “Fayaa Moo”.

The song is generally analyzed considering its overall content, message, language use and strong and weak sides. Specifically, the song will be analyzed considering:

- The general points communicated by the song,
- The short comings observed and areas that needs consideration and
- Implications of the song and the way forward.

#### 4. Analysis of the Song “Fayaa Moo”.

##### 4.1. Contents of the Song:

When we critically analyze the lyrics of the song the song touches different things(i.e., language, history, culture, genealogy, etc.) related to Oromiya, Afan Oromo and Oromo people are reflected in the song. One of the issues

communicated by the song is love: Both Romantic Love and Country Love. In the 4<sup>th</sup> (D) Stanza line 2, the term ‘Shashe’ can represent a name of a person as well as a name of a place. For example, “*Jaladhe sagni Oromticha*” expresses that the singer loved a lady from Oromo clan. “*Jirtamoo biyya Shashamane*” and “*Huli gize tinafikignalesh ye Jamayika lijoch mender*” describes the love of a land, Shashamane. Shashee koo and Shashee also indicates love or proximity. His love of town/lady makes the singer to learn the language of the area. In expressing his love, the singer tried to communicate the culture, history, genealogy of Oromo people.

**4.2. Limited Proficiency in Afan Oromo:** In the song “*Fayaa Moo*” the singer indicated that his proficiency in the language of Shashe, Afan Oromo, is limited. This can be also one of the major focuses of the song as can be observed from the poem of the song. Let consider the following as example for the argument:

- A** Ani moo Oromiffa kuankua  
 Tinish tinish bicha  
 Oromo burka Sekoo Mendoo
- C** Metalish libe anchin weddo  
 Jaladhe sagni Oromticha  
 Gin Afan Oromo tinish bicha
- D** Ani moo Oromiffa zare kuankua meche hichilalew  
 Shashe koo koltef hiyalkugh andi andun himokiralehu  
 Ani moo Oromiffa Kuankua tinish bicha newo  
 Tinish tinish bicha(X2)
- F** Xiqqo xiqqo bicha  
 Tinish tinish  
 Xinno xinno bicha  
 Xiqqo xiqqo bicha  
 Tinish tinish bicha  
 Tinish tinsh

As can be seen from the stanza illustrated above (A,C,D, F), the singer focused on expressing his limited proficiency in Afan Oromo. Out of the 24 lines of the lyric of the song, more than half lines, 13 described the limited his proficiency. This frequency shows the emphasis or attention given to the issue-limited language proficiency. Language is a barrier to express love. But the impact having limited proficiency in Afan Oromo is not vividly indicated in the song. Even though it is not explicitly indicated, one thing can be drawn from his intention. The limited language ability seems hindered Jahlude not to express his love to Shashee. Accepting the level his proficiency, he is attempting to learn the language through trial and error. Indirectly the song necessitates the learning of the language, Afan Oromo, for communication.

**4.3. Appropriateness of the song:** The song seems appropriate to the situation as can be understood from the title and contents of the song. “*Fayaa*” is a cultural song around Arsi area(Shashamane is a biggest town in Arsi). The contents like, **sanyii Sekoo Mandoo,Shubisaa, Chilalo** reflects the reality that are found in the stated area.

**4.4. Use of Some Afan Oromo Words and Phrases in the Song**

The song is written by the combination of Afan Oromo and Amharic. Jahlude is not the first singer to sing mixing Afan Oromo and Amharic. For instance, other singers such as Ahmed Mohammad(Dimbi),Gosaye Tesfaye, Birhanu Tezera,Mikias Cherinet and Mekete Taddesse sing the two. These artists mix a line or two lines in their song and/or use Afan Oromo for featuring. But the Song of Jahlude “*Fayaa Moo*” is a great song for its contents and messages-it transmits different messages. The title of the song is written in Afan Oromo. Unlike other songs, many Afan Oromo Words are used in the song. Out of the total words of -94 in the lyrics, 39 are Afan Oromo words and the 55 are Amharic. It seems that the song is dominated by Amharic. However, the song easily reaches the ears of both the speakers of the two languages. In addition, the use of Afan Oromo in the poem can initiate others to learn the language. That is, the use of Afan Oromo terms can encourage ‘other’ to question the meaning of the words and thereby they can learn the language.

**Table 1: Words used in the song “Fayaa Moo”**

Stanza →	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
<b>Afan Oromo Words</b>	3	8	9	5	1	9	4	39
<b>Amharic Words</b>	4	0	7	9	11	17	7	55
<b>Total</b>	7	8	16	14	12	26	11	94

In some stanza one language dominates over the other. For example, in stanza B, all the 8 words are in Afan Oromo. On the other hand in stanza E, out 12 words 11 are in Amharic and one is in Afan Oromo. In addition to number words used in the song, there are numerous messages communicated by the song. We will

see them one after the other.

#### **4.5. Language and Dialect Matters Expressed in the Song:**

Critically observing the lyrics of the song, language and dialect issues related to the Afan Oromo expressed in the song can be identified.

##### **A. Language expressed in the Song**

From the intention of Jahlude it can be understood that having limited language ability hamper to express the feeling we have. For this reason, he is trying to learn Afan Oromo as indicated in the poem of the song- “Shashe koo koltef hiyalkugh andi andun himokiralehu” which means “My Shashe, I am trying to learn the some words through trial and error”. Thus, indirectly Jahlude is telling his audiences the importance knowing a language.

The use of Afan Oromo in the song can also initiate others to learn Afan Oromo. That it, when the non-speakers of Afan Oromo hear the words of Afan Oromo they may not understand it. Then, they may be initiated to know the meaning of the words by asking the speakers of Afan Oromo. Thus, the song “Fayaa Moo” can initiate the learning of Afan Oromo terms and expressions, at least those used in the song.

It is natural that a single language exists in different varieties (Wolfram et al., 1999). It is argued that all varieties of a language are equal and none of the varieties are superior or inferior to the other varieties as far as their linguistic features and functions are concerned (Trudgill, 2001) Afan Oromo also shows variations based on the geographical areas where it is spoken. Such variations are termed as regional dialects. Hence, there are different dialects of Afan Oromo spoken in and out side Ethiopia.

##### **B. Dialect Issues Expressed in the Song**

The other issue expressed in the song in relation to Afan Oromo is the use of Dialects.. According to the recent classification made by Kebede (2009), presently there are five dialects of Afan Oromo spoken in Ethiopia. Jahlude did not use only the language but also the dialects of the language. In the song” Fayaa Moo” the singer, Jahlude Awol used the dialects of the Afan Oromo to express same meaning. For example, in Stanza F the words “Xinno xinno” and “Xiqqo xiqqo” are interchangeably used. And hence they carry the same meaning but they are used in different parts of Oromiya. “*Xiqqo xiqqo---*” and “*Xinno xinno---*” are words that used in different dialect areas to express amount. The word “*Xiqqo xiqqo---*” is commonly used in Western dialect around Wollagga area, whereas the second “*Xinno xinno---*” is used in commonly around Central Dialect around Borana area.?? However, both terms express the same meaning limited amount. The use of such different words from different dialects to express the similar meaning may indicate the equality of the dialects.

In addition, in the song the collections of dialects are used. For example, the word used as a title of the song, “*Fayaa*” is commonly used around Arsi area to indicate beauty and the word “*Koo*” is used around Wallagga to show possession. Further, as the words are used in combination with Amharic terms, listeners can easily understand their meaning and their sameness. Generally the song has its own implication to Afan Oromo and its dialects, if it observed critically.

The song is selected to be analyzed as it expresses cultural, historical and genealogical and social issues related to Oromo with its imperfection.

#### **4.6. Cultural issue expressed in the song:**

The song, ”Fayaa Moo” is a cultural song around Arsi Area. Two other cultural dances of Oromo people living in different areas: Shagoye common around Hararge and Shubisa common around Arsi and Bale area is also indicated in the song.

#### **4.7. Historical and Genealogical issues indicated in the song**

**Genealogy:** is the study of the history of families and the line of descent from their ancestors, especially that of a specific person or family. The song also describes some historical and genealogical matters. For example at the third Stanza the singer said:

Oromo burka Sekoo Mendoo  
Metalish libe anchin weddo  
Jaladhe sagni Oromticha

This indicates the origin and historical background of people around Shashemane. The first line “Oromo burka Sekoo Mendoo” is evidence for this. People of Bale trace back their descent to Sekoo, who is believed to be their ancestors, whereas Mendoo is ancestor for the Arsi people. In doing song, the song could teach the history and genealogy of the people. This is one of a great lesson transmitted by the song as it connects generation to the past genealogical source from which the present generation comes.

**4.8. Geographical Description:** The song also describes geographical areas in Arsi, Oromiya. For example, it says: Shashe biteragn tiri dankira

Walkugh Chilalo Terara

Chilalo is one of the longest mountains in Oromiya. The love that the singer ,Jahlude, hat to Shashe not made him to learn, the language but also forced him to visit him the geographical attractions that exist in the area.

## 5. The Perceived Shortcomings of the Song

Apart from the strong sides of the song, some areas are perceived as having short comings. One objective of this analysis is to indicate the weak sides of the song so that it can be a lesson for others. So the assumed shortcoming is identified and described.

### 5.1. Wrong Usage of the Language form/s.

Oromo people prefer to call their language Afan Oromo. Hence, the terms, Oromo kuankua, Oromo language, Oromigna or Oromiffa, is not usually preferred by Oromo people to represent their language. In contrast to this fact, the term Oromeffa is repeatedly used in the song. For example, see Stanza A(line1),D(line 1) and F(line 3). The term seems to be used wrongly. The words and expressions that we use in song should be according to the preference of the native speakers of the language. Thus, the above cited point needs careful attention. The singer must consult the native users of the language before using words and expression in the song. If not, the message may be misunderstood and make disgust the speakers of the language.

**5.2. Redundancy:** is when something is unnecessary because it is more than is needed. In the song “ *Fayaa Moo*”, if it is assumed that the term “ *Oromiffa*” stands for Afan Oromo, the suffix “ *-ffa*” is assumed to indicate language or carry a meaning – language. If this logic is taken to be true, no need of adding other forms or words to indicate “ *Oromiffa*” as a language. But in the above song, Stanza A and F it says “ *Ani moo Oromiffa kuankua*” as well as Stanza D, it says “ *Ani moo Oromiffa zare kuankua meche hichilalew*” In Amharic the word “ *kuankua*” refer to a language. Thus, using the suffix “ *-ffa*” and “ *kuankua*” redundancy. Some times scholars in the field of writing refer to the condition as wordiness or wordy (i.e., containing an unnecessarily large amount of words). Poems in general and songs in particular are intended to transmit an intended message using as limited word as possible. So, to make the message to be communicated clear and to use a language economically, it is necessary to avoid redundancy.

### 5.3. Misplaced Modifier:

Misplaced Modifier refers to ambiguous modifier. It is a condition when a word or phrase positioned so that it is unclear what exactly it refers to, e.g. *lying in the gutter* in "Lying in the gutter, we saw a dead rat". In a song/lyrics and poetry some grammatical rules can be left out to transmit the intended messages or to beautify the work. Being this, the message intended should not be confusing for the audiences. But in the song “ *Fayaa Moo*” the problem of misplaced modifier is observed. For example in the Stanza D, “ *Ani moo Oromiffa zare kuankua meche hichilalew*” it is not clear what the terms “ *zare*” and “ *kuankua*” are modifying in the sentence. Locally, the word “ *zare*”(today) modify time(*meche*) and “ *kuankua*”(language) modify language(*Oromiffa*). Thus the sentence, do not seem to express the intended message clearly rather it confuses listeners. To avoid confusion and improve clarity rewriting is needed. The sentence can be written as “ *Ani moo Oromiffa kuankua zare meche hichilalew*”

## 6. Summary

Song is a short lyric or narrative text set to music. Usually song is a short piece of music with words that are sung. In other words, song is a composition for voice performed by singing or alongside musical instruments. Songs widely varies in their style and structure based on the culture of the people in which they are used. The main purpose of a song is to communicate certain messages, tell a story, illustrate drama, express great power and religion, and preserve cultural traditions. Hence, songs are written for different purposes and in different situations. Songs can express numerous realities of the society such as culture, politics, social, economic, religious etc. The songs could contain different themes and may have different shortcomings. Hence, this study is intended to: Assess general themes communicated by the song, The short comings observed and areas that needs consideration and Implications of the song for the use of language. To do so, the song entitled “ *Fayaa Moo*” was selected from the 13<sup>th</sup> track in the Jahlude’s album “ *Yachin Neger*”. Like other songs in the album, “ *Fayaa Moo*” is arranged in Reggae style. Regarding the lyrics, the poem of the song is written in both Afan Oromo and Amharic. Before directly began analyzing the song, it is necessary to see its lyric. Thus, the lyric of the song is taken from the original cover of CD. For the purpose of analysis, the stanza of the song is coded. Finally, the song is generally analyzed considering its overall content, message, language use and strong and weak sides. While we critically analyze the lyrics of the song the song touches different things(i.e., language, history, culture, genealogy, etc.) related to Oromiya, Afan Oromo and Oromo people are reflected in the song. Besides, the song have its own shortcomings.