

Metaphorical Conceptualizations of Love in the Amharic *azimari* Lyrics

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Abstract

This paper examines the Metaphorical Conceptualizations of Love in the Amharic minstrels (the Amharic equivalent is azimari, hereafter I will use azimari for singular and azimariwotf for plural) Lyrics. In order to carry out this research, descriptive qualitative research methodology has been employed. A total number of 48 songs and 16 printed documents (from all over the Amharic speech community and available sources) have been collected. In sum, more than 2000 stanzas have been collected from both audio cassettes and written documents. However, lyrics with explicit and offensive references to sex or bodily functions and unpleasant stanzas; the portrayal of women in a very degrading way; racial and disgraced of one nation stanzas, and repeated stanzas have been removed. Consequently, 1180 stanzas were selected for the analysis. By doing this, metaphorical conceptualized lyrics are found and phonetically transcribed using IPA. According to the Leipzig Glossing Rules, the data were presented in interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme in three lines. The Metaphorical Conceptualization of Love is thoroughly discussed in the data analysis. The azimari metaphorically conceptualize Love as an Opponent, a unity, valuable commodity, Captive animal, Fire, Rapture, and Container. In-depth research on the semantics and pragmatics of azimari lyrics in other Ethiopian languages is called for by this study. Furthermore, there is a need for more interdisciplinary research into the applied elements of linguistics.

Key words: Amharic, metaphor, love, azimari

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1. Background of the study

Amharic belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family of the transversal South Ethio-Semitic family (Endalew, 2019; Baye, 2016; Derib, 2016). Mulugeta and Gasser (2012) argued Amharic is a Semitic language, related to 'Hebrew, Arabic, and Syria. Next to Arabic, it is the second most spoken Semitic language with around 27 million speakers, and serves the country (Ethiopia) as a lingua franca. Furthermore, the FDRE 1994 Constitution proclaimed that Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government (Baye, 2016; Derib, 2016; Mulugeta and Gasser 2012).

This paper examines the metaphorical Conceptualizations of Love in the Amharic *azimari Lyrics*. The paper presents and analyzes the data that has been gathered through the utilization of diverse tools, followed by a comprehensive discussion. The main objective of this chapter is to ascertain and establish conceptual metaphors that are evident in different metaphorical linguistic expressions within language usage. The investigation of the conceptual metaphors that underlie the lyrics of *azimari* songs is guided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Considering that this study falls within the domain of cognitive linguistics, the aim of this chapter is to investigate both structural and ontological metaphors, along with their corresponding metaphorical linguistic expressions.

2. Literature review

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. It is a wide subject within the general study of language. Cruse (2006:2-3) explained that an understanding of semantics is essential to the study of language acquisition (how language users acquire a sense of meaning, as speakers and writers, listeners and readers) and of language change (how meanings alter over time). It is important for understanding language in social contexts, as these are likely to affect meaning and for understanding varieties of a language and affects the style. It is thus one of the most fundamental concepts in linguistics.

The term *azimari* is derived from the verb 'zəmmərrə', which has the equivalent meaning of praising God. (Tigist, 2010; Bryan, 2019; Abrha, 2011; Kimberhine, 1976; Bolay, 1999; Kawase, 2005) stated that, the name *azimari* derived from the Ge'ez term 'azəmmərrə' which means, "He sang". Formerly, *azimariwotfif* task presumed that they existed for the sake of entertaining audiences by playing *məsənk'o*. It was also assumed that they are skilled at singing extemporized verses and the *azimariwotfif* found in entertainment venues and

traditional hotels, which usually serve *t'ella* and *t'əḍḍ* with no sex requirement. Furthermore, Kawase (2005:30) noted that the main tasks of *azimariwotfif* were entertaining the princess and the royal family in general. He stated *azimariwotfif* were going to the battleship to encourage troops. He also noted that *azimari* entertained local communities and in return, the community provides them with food and some rewards.

The *azimari* reflect or tell tales of heroes, recite the genealogies of the great, and disseminate the precious tradition of a given society with their unique, creative, and strong lyrics. The lyrics created by *azimariwotfif* are usually timely (i.e. considering the current situation that has been observed in the country as well as the globe). Considerably, political issues are significantly emphasized. Since the *azimariwotfif* creates burning issues, the audiences reward them. Moreover, while the *azimariwotfif* explore different political issues lyrics, usually support or object to current political leaders together with competing parties' members. In line with this, social and economic issues are also the center of supporting lyrics by the audiences.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Metaphors are a ubiquitous linguistic tool employed to draw comparisons between two entities. While some may view metaphors as a mere embellishment of poetry and song, they are in fact an integral part of everyday communication. In fact, metaphors are so deeply ingrained in language that they cannot be avoided. As Lakoff and Johnson (2003:4) assert, metaphors are an inherent aspect of our daily lives, regardless of the language we use. Additionally, Saeed (2003:345) posits that metaphors serve to provide a visual representation of a word or idea, enabling one to conceive of it in a figurative sense, particularly in the context of poetry and literature.

According to Kövecses (2016), a conceptual metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that enables individuals to comprehend abstract concepts by relating them to more concrete ones. This process involves considering a domain as the source domain and another as the target domain, with the former serving as the basis for understanding the latter. Kövecses (2016) notes that the definition of conceptual metaphor encompasses both the process and the product, with the former referring to the cognitive procedure of mapping one domain onto another, and the latter referring to the resulting conceptual pattern. Furthermore, Kövecses (2016) posits that conceptual metaphor is a systematic process, with the source domain and the target domain representing the process and the product, respectively.

3. Method

Since the study attempts to examine the Metaphorical Conceptualizations of Love in the Amharic *azimari Lyrics*, I employed a descriptive qualitative research methodology. In this study, a purposive sampling technique has been employed to select the audio song lyrics. Data were mainly gathered from two principal sources, which are *azimari* song albums (mostly cassette) and a written corpus of Amharic *azimari* lyrics. Aside from consulting the primary origin or source, data can also be collected through a third party, a process common with secondary data. It takes advantage of the data collected from previous research and uses it to carry out new research. The present study used a collection of written *azimari* lyrics from Addis Ababa University undergraduate student studies as one of the foremost data sources. The data were collected from the archive of Kenedy Library.

As far as Amharic *azimari* lyrics are concerned, audio data from five different *azimari* cassettes were purposively selected and a total number of 48 songs has been collected. All the selected recordings are one-hour length cassettes and the *azimariwotfif* are selected because they are well-known, pioneers, and prominent singers.

Furthermore, a total number of 16 printed documents (from all over the Amharic speech community and available sources) have been collected. In sum, more than 2000 stanzas (the stanzas may contain from two to 12 lines) have been collected from both audio cassettes and written documents. However, lyrics with explicit and offensive references to sex or bodily functions and unpleasant stanzas; the portrayal of women in a very degrading way; racial and disgraced of one nation stanzas and repeated stanzas have been removed. Consequently, 1180 stanzas were selected for the analysis. This means that, the present study employed a comprehensive sampling technique to gather all the available printed Amharic *azimari* lyrics. Those lyrics which contain metaphorical conceptualization of love were transcribed phonemically using standard IPA. Then glossed Morpheme-by-morpheme correspondence using the glossing rule which is consisting of three tires. The first tire consists of the Amharic lyrics segmented by morpheme and separated by hyphens, the second tire consists of the grammar representation of each morpheme, and the last consists of the English equivalent of the Amharic lyrics.

4. Data Presentation and discussion of Metaphorical Conceptualization of Love

The utilization of metaphors in literature and popular culture serves to elucidate the abstract and elusive nature of love, rendering it more comprehensible and relatable to readers. The topic of love is particularly conducive to the use of metaphors, as evidenced by the prevalence of such comparisons in various literary genres and musical compositions.

The concept of love is commonly perceived as a formidable adversary, akin to other emotional states. This notion is exemplified by various idiomatic expressions that suggest that love has the capacity to ensnare, compel submission, inflict pain, or even bring about demise.

azimari have been known to critique all manner of misdeeds, and have sung on a wide range of subjects with a tendency towards hyperbole. The majority of songs performed by many *azimari* are centered on the theme of love, which has been described in various ways. Love has been likened to fire, with some singers lamenting that it has caused them to be consumed, while others have portrayed it as an opponent, causing them distress and robbing them of their peace. The present mapping establishes the conceptual metaphors from **LOVE IS AN OPPONENT**, **LOVE IS A UNITY**, **LOVE IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY**, **LOVE IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL**, **LOVE IS FIRE**, **LOVE IS A RAPTURE**, and **LOVE IS A CONTAINER**.

4.1 LOVE IS AN OPPONENT

Love can be perceived as a formidable opponent, as it engages in an ongoing struggle with individuals. This concept is encapsulated through the utilization of metaphors, which effectively communicate the intricate and diverse essence of love. Through the application of metaphors, one can delve into the numerous facets of love, emphasizing its capacity to both empower and impede individuals. **Let us consider the following examples**

- a. *bəstərrdʒdʒna fɪk'k'ər libb-e-n asitʃ'ənnək'əw*
in my old age love heart-DEF-ACC worry.PFV

In old age love worried my heart

- b. *fɪk'k'iri jʒələmm əl-lill fɪk'k'iri assigədədə-ɲ*
love no NEG-say love force.PER-1S

I cannot say there is no love love forced me

- c. *fɪk'ir-wa imimi arigo jizo-ɲ-al ine-n*
love-3SGF sickly cath-1SG-AUX me-ACC

Her love sickly cath me

- d. *bə-fɪk'iri-f motə-li-f bəlw-at jatf-n kənitu*
by-love-2SGF die.PFV-for-2SGF tell-her that-ACC imbecile

Tell her for that imbecile that I died with her love

In the above example the metaphor conceptualization of love broadcasted through an opponent. *fɪk'k'ər libb-e-n asitʃ'ənnək'əw* in example (a), *fɪk'k'ər asigədədə-ɲ* in example (b), *fɪk'ir-wa imim arigo* in example (c), and *bə-fɪk'iri-f motə-li-f* in example (d) the utterance conceptualized as opponent. The primary emphasis of the **OPPONENT** metaphor appears to be on the control-related facets of the concept, specifically the endeavor to evade a deficiency of control. The utilization of the **OPPONENT** metaphor would be logical and deemed reasonable in the context of "negative" emotions, such as anger. However, when considering paradigmatically "positive" emotions, such as love, its application necessitates further elucidation.

4.2 LOVE IS A UNITY

In Ethiopia, there exists a rich tradition of verbal and musical expressions that depict the bond between married couples or lovers. Numerous poets and singers have crafted compositions that eloquently convey the essence of this intimate relationship. Moreover, the country's elders have imparted wisdom on the importance of cherishing

this union, advising couples to remain together, age gracefully, and nurture their offspring with affection. Consider the following examples

- a. *ʔinazih hulət-u-n man nəw ja-miləj-atfəw*
These two-DEF-ACC who AUX GEN-separate-2PL

Who is going to separate these two?

- b. *zare jizaf mət't'a-f gimaf akalf-n*
today have come-2SGF half body-ACC

Lit: Today you come up with your half body

- c. *fik'r-e səwinət-e akalat-e nəh*
love-POS.1SG body-POS body-POS AUX.2SGM

My love, you are my body

The UNITY metaphor connotes a state of perfect harmony and idyllic balance. This is attributed to the ideal fit or match between two parts, resulting in a maximal complementarity that forms an ideal unity. As Zoltan. (1986:63) explained, in the biological context, unity is characterized by symbiosis, wherein one part is dependent on the other for survival and functionality. In a romantic relationship, this manifests as a sense of incompleteness in one's self, with the other half being fulfilled by the beloved.

ʔinazih hulətun man nəw ja-miləjatfəw 'who is going to separate these two, *gimaf akalf* 'your half body, and *akalate nəh* 'you are my body' are terms which metaphorically conceptualize to refer love. The above examples illustrated that love can be perceived as the connection or attachment between two individuals. The terms attachment, ties, and bond are synonymous with the concept of love, serving as the foundation that unites two individuals. The term "who is going to separate them" also alludes to the existence of this emotional connection. The strength of these bonds or ties can vary, and this knowledge of the physical world informs our comprehension of the stability of our romantic relationships. Consequently, we often refer to the unbreakable ties and indissoluble bonds that exist between two individuals.

4.3 LOVE IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY

The human tendency to cherish and retain possession of a valuable object is mirrored in our emotional attachment to those we love. This metaphorical comparison highlights the concept of attachment, which is intrinsically linked to the notion of love. Mind the following examples.

- a. *jaləp-n sa-lsəst sət't'tfe-h fik'r-e-n*
have.1SG-ACC NEG-greed give.PFV-2SGM love-POS-ACC

I gave you all my love without being greedy

- b. *mətəkija-m jələwm jantfi fik'ir lə-ne*
replacement-FOC don't has your love for-me.1SG

your love doesn't has a replacement for me

- c. *waga asat'afiw fik'r-atfən-n hullu*
price make.PFV love-1PL-ACC all

you made all our love priceless

- d. *fik'ir-e tizita-je bət'am-u-n widdi nəf*
love-POS nostalgia-mine very much-DEF-ACC expensive AUX

my love my nostalgia you are so expensive

The aforementioned examples illustrate that a significant portion of the notion of LOVE is perceived and understood through the lens of commercial transactions. Example (a) the term *jaləpn salsəst sət't'tfeh fik'ren* 'I gave you all my love without being greedy' revealed that the speaker gave all the love she has for the addressee, however, in return, the addressee is not good enough in commercial transaction to give the love that he received. In this regard, I gave you all my love without being greedy is metaphorically

conceptualized term refer love as a commodity. In example (b) the speaker revealed that *mətəkijam jələwm jantfi fik'ir ləne* his loved one love doesn't has a replacement. In a existing world we know that there will be a replacement for the good or service that we used or purchased, nonetheless, the speaker metaphorically conceptualized his love as an expensive commodity that doesn't has a replacement.

In example (c) the term *waga asat'afiw* 'you made it priceless' is also a metaphorically conceptualized term. In this example i.e. example (c), the speaker tried all his best to stay in tune for their love, nevertheless, he felt that he waited in vain for her love. That is why he uttered *waga asat'afiw fik'ratfnin hullu* 'you made all our love priceless'. This means that, their love had a price. In this regard we presuppose that their love metaphorically conceptualized as a valuable commodity. The speaker in example (d) clearly stated that his love is so expensive. This alludes that their love had a price. Since the speaker used modal *bət'am* 'very', we can presuppose that the price was so expensive.

In a nut shell, the application of metaphorical language has resulted in the conceptualization of love as a circumstance in which it operates as a valuable commodity, and the individuals involved in a romantic relationship as merchants who exchange goods. Within the context of commercial transactions, the act of giving goods necessitates the receipt of goods, and furthermore, the goods exchanged must be of equal value. Analogously, the concept of mutual love is predicated on the notion that love is reciprocated, and that the love given and received is of commensurate magnitude.

4.4 LOVE IS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL

The metaphor of LOVE AS A CAPTIVE ANIMAL operates in a distinct manner. It posits that the animal, in this case love, is not necessarily contained within the individual. Rather, it is perceived as being external to the individual, and the individual endeavors to restrain it from escaping.

- a. *fikri-f al-astəŋŋa-n bə-hilm-e ʔijə-mət't'a*
 love-2SGF NEG-sleep-1SG by-dream-POS PROG-come.PFV

your love made me sleepless while it came in my dream

- b. *man fəto lək'k'ot nəw fik'ri-f jə-mimət'a*
 who untie release AUX love-2SGF GEN-come.IMPV

Who untie and *unleashed* your love that come to me

- c. *jə-fik'ir simet-u jəmijizəw at't'a*
 GEN-love feeling-3SGM grip lose.PFV

He lost his grip on his feelings of love.

The individual in question is the one who is experiencing love, and the animal represents the love that is attempting to flee. The successful prevention of the animal's escape corresponds to the successful avoidance of losing control, while the failure to restrain the animal corresponds to a loss of control over love. In all the above examples, i.e. examples (a), (b), and (c) the terms *alastəŋŋa-n bəhilm-e ʔijə-mət't'a* 'made me sleepless while it came in my dream', *man fəto lək'k'ot nəw* 'Who untie and *unleashed*', and *jəmijizəw at't'a* 'He lost his grip' accordingly referred to losing control over love. In example (a) the speaker uttered that her love came in his dream and due to that, he cannot sleep. Furthermore, he underlined that he cannot control it and it is out of rage.

Likewise, in example (b) *man fəto lək'k'ot nəw* is the term that metaphorically conceptualize love as a captive animal. The speaker uttered to the addressee that her love was tied and due to the speaker was safe. However, now he indicates her love is out of control. *jəmijizəw at't'a* in example (c) metaphorically conceptualize that the love that comes out of control. Hence in the above examples, the speakers witnessed that the love that they experience gone wild and out of control. They also exemplified that the exertion of significant effort is required to keep the animal at bay, and this corresponds to the energy required to maintain control over love. The utilization of metaphors, such as the "captive animal" yields intriguing implications in our contemplation of love. The animalistic nature of humans, which can inflict harm upon others and oneself, necessitates the restraint of such IPFVulses. Similarly, relinquishing control over love is deemed unfavorable. This metaphorical implication highlights the discord between individual desires and societal expectations.

4.5 LOVE IS FIRE

In Amharic language, the concept of love is often associated with the metaphorical representation of fire, which has the potential to inflict pain. The degree of agony experienced is contingent upon the degree of love that is responsible for its occurrence. The present study examines a series of illustrative instances that were identified within the collected data.

- a. *jə-fikri-f wəlafən si-gərrəfə-n adərə*
GEN-love-2SGF heat while-burn.PFV-1SG stay

The heat of your love burned me the whole night

- b. *fikri-f ak'k'at't'ələ-n angəbəgəbə-n*
 love-2SGF burn.PFV-1SG hurt-1SG

'your love burned and hurt me'

- c. *lib-e tək'at'ələ fik'iri-f anədədəw*
heart-POS burn.PFV love-2SGF fire.PFV

My heart was burned Your love fired it

- d. *fik'ri-f jak'at'ələ-n tʃ's-u bə-af-e wət't'a*
love-2SGF burn.IPV-1SG smoke-DEF by-mouth-POS come out

Your love that burn me and the smoke come out with my mouth

The sentences we find in the examples listed above show how Amharic speakers assimilate love with fire, burning, frying and painful things. The LOVE IS FIRE conceptual metaphor is characterized by a range of correspondences, which serve to highlight various aspects of the nature of love. These include the intensity of love, which is conveyed through the use of fire-related imagery such as flames, sparks, and consumption.

jə-fikri-f wəlafən si-gərrəfə-n 'while the heat of your love burned me' in example (a), *fikri-f ak'k'at't'ələ-n* 'your love burned me' in example (b), *lib-e tək'at'ələ* 'My heart was burned' in example (c), and *fik'ri-f jak'at'ələ-n tʃ's-u bə-af-e wət't'a* 'Your love that burn me and the smoke come out with my mouth' in example (d) uttered by the speaker assimilate their gravity of the situation with burning in fire. The metaphor also acknowledges the frustration and pain that can be caused by love, as represented by the experience of getting burned. Additionally, the metaphor emphasizes the existence of love, as well as its coming into and going out of existence, as represented by the kindling and extinguishing of a fire.

For instance, *jə-fikri-f wəlafən si-gərrəfə-n* 'while the heat of your love burned me' in example (a), *fikri-f ak'k'at't'ələ-n* 'your love burned me' in example (b), *lib-e tək'at'ələ* 'My heart was burned' in example (c), and *fik'ri-f jak'at'ələ-n tʃ's-u bə-af-e wət't'a* 'Your love that burn me and the smoke come out with my mouth' in example (d) it is widely acknowledged that an object that has been consumed by fire loses its ability to function properly. By extrapolating this concept to the realm of love, we can establish an ontological correspondence that posits a parallel between the inability of a burned object to function normally and the inability of a person in love to function normally. In other words, just as a burned object is unable to function properly, a person in love is similarly unable to function normally. Additionally, we possess knowledge that fires have the capacity to inflict pain upon us. By extending this analogy to love, we can infer that love also has the potential to cause pain and inflict emotional harm.

4.6 LOVE IS A RAPTURE

The present metaphorical construct characterizes love as rapture, which is defined as a state of intense pleasure. Consequently, this metaphorical expression serves to illustrate that love elicits profound sensations of pleasure. Additionally, rapture is associated with happiness and joy, thus signifying that love engenders a profound sense of happiness in individuals.

- a. *fik'ri-f asəkkərən məlaw-n at't'a-hut*
love-2SGF intoxicate.PFV idea-ACC lost-1SG

I *intoxicated with your* love and lost idea

- b. *jəzərew-s fik'ir anidzət-e-n arasəw*
 today-APS love intestine-1SG-ACC

Today's love hydrate my intestine

- c. *məla səwinət-e bə-dəstta təmola*
 every body-POS by-happiness besot.PFV

Every parts of my body *besotted with* happiness

The present metaphor as Zoltan (1986-93) draws a parallel between an individual under the influence of a drug and an individual experiencing love. The drug is likened to love itself, while the person under its influence is compared to the person in love. The metaphor emphasizes the similarity between the pleasurable sensations associated with drug-induced euphoria and those experienced during the course of a romantic relationship.

In example (a) the speaker become intoxicated with love. He uttered the metaphorically conceptualized term *fik'rif asəkkərən* 'I *intoxicated with your* love'. Furthermore, since he is thrilled by her love he stated that he doesn't has any idea what he is going to next. He stated that *məlawn at't'ahut* 'I don't know what I am going to do'.

In the Amharic language, a person says *anidzət-e-n arasəw* 'Lit: you made me so happy' to express the level of happiness. In example (b), the speaker says that he was too happy with the girl's love and that her love made him goose bump. Consequently, in example (c) the speaker literally stated that *məla səwinətə bədəstta təmola* 'Every parts of my body *besotted with* happiness' and the term is metaphorically conceptualized that love makes him this much happy. All in all, the metaphor also highlights the notion that love entails a loss of control, a concept that is also evident in the RAPTITUDE metaphor. The state of rapture or high, akin to states of insanity and enchantment, is characterized by a lack of cognitive faculties.

4.7 LOVE IS A CONTAINER

The notion of love can be effectively explicated by employing a container metaphor. This figurative framework facilitates a thorough comprehension of the intricate and multifarious essence of love, encompassing its diverse facets and intricacies. By conceiving love as a container, one can delve into its ability to contain and foster emotions, experiences, and interpersonal bonds. Consider the following examples.

- a. *bə-tzətä-f bühir bə-fk'ir-f sət't'm-e*
 by-nostalgia-2SGF sea by-love-2SGF drown.PFV-1SG

I drowned in the nostalgia sea of your love

- b. *bet-e-m bə-fk'ir-f təmollä*
 House-1SG-FOC by-love-2SGF fill.PFV

My house is filled with your love

- c. *Bet-e-m k'əzək'əzə fk'ir-f godälä-nä*
 House-1SG-FOC cold love-2SGF miss.IPV-and

My house is cold because your love is missing

In our conceptual framework, the human body is frequently perceived as a vessel that encapsulates our emotional experiences, wherein emotions are likened to fluid substances residing within this container. The examples showed drowning, filling, and missing with or by love. Moreover, this metaphor highlights the potential for love to encompass both positive and negative aspects, as a container can contain both desirable and undesirable elements. Thus, the container metaphor serves as a valuable tool in analyzing and comprehending the intricate dynamics of love.

5. Conclusion

This study presents and analyzes the data that has been gathered through the utilization of diverse tools, followed by a comprehensive discussion. The main objective of this study was to ascertain and establish conceptual metaphors that are evident in different metaphorical linguistic expressions within language usage. The investigation of the conceptual metaphors that underlie the lyrics of *azimari* songs is guided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Considering that this study falls within the domain of cognitive linguistics, the aim of this study is to investigate metaphorically conceptualize Love as an opponent, a unity, valuable commodity, Captive animal, Fire, Rapture, and Container, along with their corresponding metaphorical linguistic expressions.

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