

The Speaking Fauna, Flora, and Phenomena: Personification in the Oral Literature of the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo

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Abstract

This article discusses personification in oral literature among the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo in Oromia (Oromiyaa). The paper explores the social and natural basis of personifications among the target community in cultural, historical, and environmental contexts. It also analyzes the structures and functions of personification among the target community. The paper employed a qualitative research method for data collection, mainly through interviews. The findings of this study reveal the existence of a range of personified items in the culture of the target group. These include wild beasts, natural and social phenomena, food and drink items, and domestic animals and plants. The findings further indicate that the personification of events and objects heavily relies on specific natural, cultural, and historical contexts. Personification communicates information on the social, historical, political, and economic life of the Liban Oromoo. Accordingly, the items of personification change with the changing social and natural environment. The communication entails expectations, emotions, feelings, complaints, hatred, problems, happiness, criticisms, and pieces of advice. The cultural and moral values and ecological and season-based personal preferences of some objects are also part of the communication. These communications predominantly suggest the values of hard work, attentiveness, and a more considerate life, while they discourage the opposites, such as negligence and extravagance. Finally, we recommend an in-depth

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investigation on the use of Oromoo oral literature in literary works, for local cultural development may serve as a base for the indigenization of literary works.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of whether or not the audience reacts with joy or grief, oral literature reflects the views and values of the target culture (Tucker 2008). It enables the folk group to acquire and communicate the knowledge, attitudes, morals, and behaviors that are vital for the actual political, social, and economic life of society. Long ago, Bukenya (1994, p. 1) wrote that:

Oral literature should make the learners more keenly observant, more sensitively and sensibly responsive towards her or his own self, fellow human beings and the environment. Above all oral literature being a mode of communication should make the learner a more competent, more skillful and more concerned communicator especially through the oral mode.

Oral literature encompasses genres like material culture, performances, proverbs, riddles, jokes, songs, stories, sayings, legends, jokes, prayers, blessings, oaths, cursing, insults, tongue twisters, greetings, physical exercise, oral art, belief, figurative speeches, and the like (Dundes & Bronner, 2007; Sims & Stephens, 2011). Personification, which is the focus of this article, is also part of the oral literature and a type of figurative language (Arp & Johansson, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Lonanda, 2013; Raisa & Rufinus, 2017; Ratna, 2017; Arifiyanto, Nuryatin, & Doyin, 2020).

The collection, compilation, publication, and study of Oromoo oral literature have attracted the attention of many scholars. For example, Sumner (1994) wrote about Oromoo oral literature in different volumes. Ta'a (2002) discusses the Oromoo song of Wallagaa; Shongolo (2002) presents the Borana Oromoo prayers in its cultural context. Bitima (2002) and Gemechu (2014; 2016) focus on riddles in central Ethiopia. Defa (1974) discusses Macha Oromoo's cultural

practices and songs. Shongolo and Schlee (2007) present Borana Oromoo proverbs in their cultural context. Qashu (2009) discusses Arsi Oromoo's wedding music. However, neither of these works have paid attention to personification, nor has it attracted scholarly attention.

Figures of speech, including personification, often reflect social, political, economic, historical, and natural encounters in certain contexts. People use it to communicate a variety of messages, ranging from routine activities to metaphysical and epistemological issues. Through personification, people reflect animosity, appreciation, affection, outlooks, anxiety, reservation, recommendation, blameworthiness, exaggeration, disapproval, thankfulness, and the like. Personification can readily be identified though its cognitive forms such as historical and cultural meanings, verbal communication and identification of these symbolic properties likely demands scholarly attention. Thus, given the contextual variations of the encounters across time and space, this paper intends to present some selected items of personification in oral literature among the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo in central Ethiopia. With all of its potential contributions to literary works that frequently use the former to create cultural contexts, the study adds value to the Oromoo oral literature. This article responds to the question: "How do personifications explain human realities" by using personification of social facts and natural objects in their cultural, historical, and natural contexts of the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo community?

To explicate personification and respond to the above question, the study used the Theory of Lexical Concepts and Cognitive Models (LCCM). Understanding the figure of speech demands metaphorical interpretation of meanings. Conventionally, metaphorical meanings have been considered to be more difficult to understand. The difficulty could be eased using three basic assumptions in the standard pragmatic view of literal versus figurative meaning. The first assumption is that literal language usage is processed more quickly than figurative language. The second says that literal language is processed automatically while figurative language is not, and the third says

that if a literal conception is available, no further processing is required (Evans, 2010).

However, some studies refute a neat distinction between literal and figurative language in language processing (Evans, 2010). Giora (1997) argues that understanding metaphor employs the same kinds of linguistic and pragmatic operations that have been used for drawing conventional meanings. Evans (2010) introduces a new approach termed as the Theory of Lexical Concepts and Cognitive Models (LCCM) for comprehending figurative language. This theoretical approach models the interaction between linguistic knowledge and conceptual knowledge during the process of figurative language understanding. The author says that:

I suggest, a theoretical account that models how language deploys and interfaces with the non-linguistic knowledge structures—the conceptual metaphors—and the conceptual mechanisms of meaning construction—the process of conceptual integration or ‘blending’—during the process of figurative language understanding. That is, we require a theory that addresses front-stage cognition—an account that is concerned with the role of linguistic prompts and linguistic processes of semantic composition in figurative language understanding (Evans, 2010, p. 603).

Hence, the LCCM, which blends linguistic knowledge and conceptual knowledge, guides this paper. This is the case because the understanding of the issue under discussion begs for linguistic knowledge of the target language—*Afaan Oromo*—and the cultural milieu in which it is framed. Mere linguistic knowledge provides what Evans (2010) considers linguistic knowledge as a front-stage cognition, which fails to convey the intended message. The intended figurative meaning or meanings can only be captured through conceptual and cultural knowledge. The LCCM, therefore, suggests the blending of conceptual knowledge and *Afaan Oromoo* for the understanding of personification.

Personification, also called prosopopoeial, is a sub-type of metaphor (Abrams, 1999; Quinn, 2006), which is used in literary devices, literature, movies, and everyday communications (Deguzman, 2021; Khalida, 2013) in an imaginative rather than literal meaning (Al-Azzawi, 2020). It gives something that is not a human being the ability to do something with human characteristics. It is also a clever way of bringing inanimate objects to life and giving them something animate and human (Sudarsono, Samola & Maru, 2016; Al-Azzawi, 2020; Deguzman, 2021). Non-humans can be animals, objects, or concepts (Sudarsono et al., 2016; Ratna, 2017). For instance, according to Tareke et al. (2022), personification, along with similes, metaphors, and hyperbole, is often used to express the nature of anopheles mosquitoes and malaria. As demonstrated by Arsai (2010, p. 2), personification involves treating non-human entities—such as the wind, sea, trees, and earth—as though they were human. “The wind stood up and gave a shout”, ‘The sea was angry’, ‘The trees were dancing in the wind,’ and “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them” are some examples of personification for they show human characters. Sudarsono et al (2016, p. 12) use the example “the economy calls for action” to show how the economy is personified.

The human characteristics that are given to these things can be emotions, speeches, or other actions that bring nonhuman things to life. It can add life, energy, and animation to otherwise lifeless objects or subjects. For instance, “the sun smiled down on us” is a personification for smiling, which is a characteristic of humans and primates only. Quinn (2006) reports that medieval morality plays were allegories in which abstractions such as mankind, good deeds, penance and death were personified. Similarly, Ferber (1999) indicates that in the works of Homer and Hesiod, Death and Sleep are considered brothers, and in Aeneid, Death has an abode from where it can be summoned.

Personification departs from what users of a language apprehend from the very meanings of the words; it rather communicates other meanings (Abrams, 1999). It enhances the description of the subject and infuses emotions in

unexpected ways (Deguzman, 2021). It also helps us to use knowledge about ourselves to understand other non-human objects (Quinn, 2006). It provides a more effective and powerful means of saying something more than it does through ordinary sentences. The language makes the audience feel intensely about the meaning intended. One of the reasons for this effectiveness is that personification affords the user imaginative pleasure, which refers to the situation in which a mind takes delight in a sudden leap in seeing likeness between different things. It entails the high aesthetic values and creativity of the speakers in conveying the intended message (Arp & Johansson, 2012; Khalida, 2013; Lonanda, 2013). In doing so, personification plays an important role in presenting something abstract in a concrete, impressive, clear and short form so that the stated idea becomes more sensuous (Arp & Johansson, 2012; Arifiyanto et al., 2020). Sudarsono et al. (2016) underline that personification serves humans to think about something in a fresh way.

In practice, personification and other figurative speeches are blended. In some cases, two or more types of figures of speeches appear in a particular example (Arp & Johansson, 2012). For instance, when the winds are described as calm, like sleeping flowers, at least simile and personification are included. The wind is compared with flowers and is also considered something that can sleep. To conclude, these basic features of personification are relevant for understanding personification in the folklores or oral literature of Walisoo Liiban Oromoo.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper employed qualitative research method. Primary data were collected through fieldwork from the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo in Dawo District of Oromiyaa Regional State. Originally, the data was collected by the second author of this paper in 2015 for her senior essay in partial fulfillment of her bachelor of art degree in Oromoo Folklore and Literature under the supervision of the third author. Finally, additional data were collected in 2019 by the corresponding author, who also translated the initial text from Afaan

Oromoo into English, write the review of related literature section, and gave shape to it into an article form.

Fifteen key informants were purposively selected for interviews to generate data. The key informant was selected for the simple reason that not all individuals can provide information on the issue under discussion. In identifying key informants, a snowball sampling technique was used. This method was more appropriate to identify potential key informants. Even if the subject of our conversation was not politically or culturally contentious for the target population, we had guaranteed anonymity privacy and confidentiality and confirmed their consent. To this end, we protected the participants' entrusted information and we never mentioned their personal names in this article.

We used a semi-structured guide for the interviews because a semi-structured interview guide allows the respondents to go beyond what is just asked by the interviewer. The interview guide covered a fairly specific theme under discussion. The key informants were interviewed in September and October 2019 items of personification and the meanings attached to each were collected. This method enabled the researchers to gain access to emic perspectives (informants' perception), which is significantly important to grasp and explicate the intended meanings to be conveyed through personification.

Despite the numerous items of personification collected; we selected only some for analysis. The data were analyzed using the conventional thematic method. For this purpose, the data were systematically classified under different themes of the discourses. The items of personification were presented and analyzed based on the similarities of the ideas they are meant to communicate.

The techniques of translating personifications from the source language—*Afaan Oromoo*—into the target language – English - are worth mentioning at

this juncture. Fadaee (2013) says that translating figures of speech is to search for the intended meaning in the source language and identify cultural meaning and fitting equivalence in the second language. Parallel to this, Jp (2013) has set a comprehensive theory of translation that divides translation into source language-oriented and target language-oriented. The first form of translation has four forms: word-for-word, literal, faithful, and semantic translation. The second emphasizes adaptational translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation.

Jp (2013) indicates that word-for-word translation which focuses on the preservation of the most common meanings of the source language in the target language would put out of context. Literal translation searches for equivalent terms in the target language that has a reference to or meaning of the same word or expression in the native language. Faithful translation, on the other hand, attempts to reveal the accurate contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the target language's grammatical structures. The semantic translation seems similar to faithful translation but it differs because it also focuses on the aesthetic value of the sentence, including the attractiveness and natural sounds of the source language text, compromising on meanings. For this particular paper, source language-oriented, particularly faithful translation is employed in favor of conveying as accurately as possible the cultural meaning of the source language. However, some sort of semantic translation is used to maintain the rhythmic structure of the original sentences.

Finally, the structure of this paper follows the AIMRaD (the word form of the abbreviation) writing style, mainly because a single part that combines results and discussion mixed the etic and emic perspectives, information from the fieldwork, and literature. Another issue was that since the categories of our findings have comparable ramifications and interpretations, it makes no sense to discuss one without discussing the others. Therefore, in order to avoid potential concept repetitions and to emphasize the key findings of the study throughout its sections, we decided to provide the results and discussion in different portions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Introduction

This part presents some selected items of personification; each is discussed separately. However, they are categorized under five major themes based on the similarities of the messages they convey. Furthermore, this section presents a discussion to interpret and link the findings with the existing literature for a better and deeper understanding of personification among the Walisoo Liiban Oromoo.

3.2. Result: Items and Themes of Personification

Data from interviews indicated that the items of personification include phenomena, non-living things, and living things alike. Animals both domestic like cattle and wildlife such as monkeys, vegetables like cabbage, potato, and *warqee* (false banana), crops like corn, phenomena like hunger and drought, and diseases like scabies are personified. The specific historical, cultural, and economic circumstances guide the meanings and messages that the users intend to convey figuratively.

Despite their differences, some items of personification convey similar ideas. Accordingly, based on our research questions and methodology, we categorized the themes of personification into five. These were competitions, comparisons, and preferences; resource use and management; prudence and caution; sanitation and nutrition; and food and drink preparations and consumption.

Speech is the specific human attribute that is commonly used for personification of all items among the target population. The words “*jette*” (she said) and “*jedhe*” (he said) are commonly used. Thus, the community also identifies the gender of the items of personification despite the objects being inanimate or regardless of the biological sex of the animate subject.

Through speech nonhuman objects express their feelings of sorrow, happiness, love, success, failure, hope, doubt, complaints, willingness, hatred, criticism, and the like. The flow of ideas usually follows three different lines. The first is between objects of similar nature. In this case, they argue or discuss among themselves mainly about human beings or their relationships with human beings. The second is where an object of personification talks to another different object. In this case, the two mainly compete. The third line of communication is between an object of personification and a human being. The speaker, who is a nonhuman animate or inanimate object, usually criticizes, complains, and advises human beings for their mistreatment, misunderstanding, partiality, etc.

The data also show that personification is commonly pronounced in the form of sayings and proverbs, and metaphorically express a truth in the context of certain cultural values. In some cases, they appear in the form of a poem rhythmically. Below are some figurative vehicles that are personified. In some cases, these personifications are blended with metaphors and similes. The presentation of these vehicles is done under the five major categories that were listed down above. Discussions are made across these categories in terms of the context of personification and its implications, which entail the natural, cultural, historical, political, economic, moral, and emotional life of the society.

3.2.1. Competitions, Comparisons and Preferences

Under these categories, the focus is on competitions, comparisons and preferences between items that serve relatively similar purposes or which have certain common elements to compare. In this part, the speaker attempts to look down on its competitor and praises itself. It seems that the decision is left to the users of these items.

3.2.1.1. *Raafiuufi mosee* ‘Cabbage and Potatoes’

The context of this communication is the availability of a cabbage and the absence of potatoes, basically because of seasonal variation. The communication goes as follows:

(1)

<i>Text</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
<i>'Warri hudduu diidaa deeme, lubbuu natu bonaan eege. Beelaan kan gaggabe danfa tokkoniin qaqqabe' jette raafuun mosee hamachaa</i>	'Those with underground buttocks ⁴ have gone somewhere; I have sustained life through summer (a season of food shortage). Those who fainted with hunger were spared with my quick broil!' Said a cabbage in backbiting potatoes to humans.

Here the communication is a one-way talk by a cabbage that looks down upon potatoes. The sentence '... those with underground buttocks...' refers to the root and edible part of the potato, which is found beneath the surface. Potatoes are widely available in June and July. Cabbage is widely available from June to October, nearly until the main harvesting season. In this personification, a cabbage blames a potato for its relatively shorter time of availability. The phrase "have gone somewhere" refers to the absence of potatoes for consumption while cabbage is available. The cabbage also compares the speed at which the two are cooked and ready for consumption. Here there is no response from a potato, and the communication is a monologue. The communication also implies the food sources of the community across seasons and the need to plant both potatoes and cabbage.

(2)

<i>Text</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
<i>(a) 'Jaartii boossuu, joortu, ganni</i>	<i>'You, weeping and wandering</i>

⁴ It refers to the roots of the potato that go underground.

<i>dabree na duraa hingortuu?’ jedhe boqqoolloon warqeedhaan birraa dhufee.</i>	old women, the winter is over; you must have gone somewhere! A corn said to false banana.
<i>(b) ‘Si, kan areeda dukkanaa, ammaa walargina yeroo suqqannaa. Attam dubbatta yaa abbaa katee, ani akkakeen biyya gatee?’ jedhe warqeen boqqoolloodhaan.</i>	‘You, Mr. thick-bearded in a paddy; I am always there when you are not ready. You, the wearing of dirty stuff, did I abandon my people like you?’ said false banana to the corn.
<i>(a) ‘Yaa warqee abbaa kobortaa, amman ani dhufutti dhaadatta. Akkatti ati namakoo ganna baafte dhaga’ee, deemi amma dabareen nagahee’, jedhe boqqoolloon. Warqeedhaan</i>	‘You, Mr. Warqee, the owner of a ragged coat! You were roaring when I was away. I heard how you poorly treated my people in my absence; now leave the way for me’, said the corn to warqee in September.
<i>(b) ‘Caboo irraan gurra raasa akka arbaa; Dandirraan gurra raasa akka arbaa; Racceerraan gurra raasa akka arbaa; maal naan jetta yaa gurbaa? kan daara keessa gangalatu akka garbaa’, jedhe warqeen boqqoolloodhaan.</i>	‘In Chabo, I waggle my ears like an elephant; in Dandi, I waggle my ears like an elephant. There, over Racce, I waggle my ears like an elephant. You said to me, what? You, crawling in the ash like a servant, said warqee to the corn.
<i>(a) ‘Ani dhufe abbaan wayaa dachaa; dafii deemi imimmaan kee cobsaa’, jedhe boqqoolloon warqeedhaan.</i>	‘Here come I with my layers of dress; go away from here shedding your tears’, said the corn to warqee.
<i>(b) ‘Ati har’a dhufee boru darbaa! Ani mana duuban dhabadha akka arbaa; ijoolleen bara baasa akka abbaa’, jedhe warqeen boqqoolloodh</i>	‘You are the seasonal one who comes and goes soon. I am standing in the backyard of everyone. I have an elephant’s stature. I am taking care of children like a father’, said warqee to the corn.

The conversation between corn and false banana is a typical instance in which items of personification compete with each other. Both interpret the physical character of each other negatively and unwisely. Each peak some features of

the other to look down upon its competitor. The corn calls *warqee* a weeping old lady, referring to the excess liquid flowing out of the dough of *warqee*. It also refers to the general food shortage in the summer, where people are mainly dependent on *warqee* for survival. The season of this communication should be when the corn is ripe. The corn is seasonal, whereas *warqee* is perennial.

The other way around, what is said in the mouth of *warqee* shows some of the attributes of corn that are despoiled. For instance, corn has peel in layers, which is considered like ragged cloth. Corn is roasted over an open fire, which is considered sleeping in the dust as slaves did. Each side brags itself. In this regard, the conversation also indicates where these plants grow. When *warqee* says, ‘I am weaving my ears like an elephant over Caboo, Dandii, and Wancii’, it tells us where it is found abundantly. In this utterance, *warqee* says that it is like an elephant weaving its ears. Its wide leaves are equated with the big ears of an elephant. The word ‘like’ is used to compare leaves with ears, which is a typical simile. Similarly, corn refers to *warqee*, an old lady, which is a typical instance of a metaphor. The datum in general is an example in which different types of figurative speeches are blended. Support for this finding comes from the work of Arp and Johansson, (2012), who stated that different forms of figurative speech can be blended.

These communications were just between people who try to depict the general features of these vegetables. When there is a shortage of food, people in the area are often dependent on *warqee* for survival. However, when there is another option because corn is ready, those who inhabit in the lowland where corn is abundant express their feelings by personifying corn and speaking to *warqee*. People also acknowledge the role of *warqee*, which is perennial, physically elegant, and evergreen and ensures food security in the area. In short, the dialogues between corn and *warqee* are proxy communications designed to show human inner feelings.

Because of the ecological variations, *warqee* is common in the highland and semi-highland, whereas corn grows in the lowland. The highlanders commend *warqee* since it is their reliable source of food and revenue, whereas the lowlanders despise it because they do not grow it and it is not their preference. Even though the lowlanders express a preference for corn over *warqee* as the conversations suggest, they nonetheless purchase *warqee* dough to make ends meet during their brief food shortage. However, this does not imply that all lowlanders must purchase *warqee* in order to survive due to food shortages. *Warqee* is purchased in the summer, primarily from July to September, by the needy and those who are not able to preserve cereals for year-round home usage. As a result, the discussion suggests saving and working hard for the people who are exposed to food shortages due to their negligence. It also suggests the coping mechanisms that the lowlanders use to survive food shortages, which include eating less preferred foods. This does not imply, however, that *warqee* is a less desirable food in and of itself; rather, people's preferences are determined by ecological variances and cultural adaption.

3.2.1.2. *Seekkoofi Diiskoo* 'Seiko and Disco watches'

The communications between the two types of watches happened after the massive production of the Disco watch that was available in the local markets for a very cheap price compared to the very expensive and rarely available Seiko watch.

(3)

Texts	Gloss
(a) <i>Attam jirtu yaa warra ijji irra keessaa; hunduu tuffii keessa odeessaa. jette Seekkoon Diiskoodhaan.</i>	'Good morning to you, popeyed one; everybody speaks of your contempt', said Seiko to Disco watch.
(b) <i>'Takka jaamnee takka ilaalla, yoo hojiimmo nutu caala. Na hintuffatin yaa wallaalaa', jette Diiskoon</i>	'We close and open our eyes sooner. We serve ever better. You ignorant do not look down on us', said a Disco watch to a Seiko

<i>Seekkoodhaan.</i>	watch.
<i>(a) Essaa amma koo geessa? Siin lilmotu udduu si bobeessa', jette Seekkoon diiskoodhaan.</i>	'How can you compete with me? People trigger you by needle', said Seiko to Disco watch.
<i>(b) kan koo lilmoon biyyuma keessa, siin eenyutu baatee magaalaa si geessa? Cabdu ofumanu gad teessa', jette Diiskoon Seekkoodhaan.</i>	'My trigger is in the village. However, if you are broken, nobody takes you to the town; you will be just in the garbage' said Disco to Seiko watch.

The competition between Disco and Seiko watches is an instance in which people capture new technologies and events through personification. According to our informants, this conversation came after the introduction of Disco watch. Formerly, a few people from urban areas were able to afford to buy Seiko watches. Lately, with the alarming development of electronic technology and the mass production of Disco watches, many people have easily accessed them. Thus, this figure of speech is an attempt to compare the new technology with the former one. In this conversation, there is a comparison between the two types of watches. The simplicity of reading, setting, and repairing a Disco watch is compared with a more expensive and complex Seiko watch. The former is appreciated for its services and simplicity. Yet, through this dialogue, the Seiko watch also responds to how a Disco is of low quality.

The conversations between cabbage and potato, corn and *warqee*, as well as the Disco and Seiko watches, are typical examples where two inanimate vehicles of personification are opposing each other. In these examples, the conversations are between the two competing items. These items have some common purposes to serve, but in different seasons, capacities, territories, conditions, and the like. Each item presents how it is better than its competitor, boasts of its superiority, and looks down upon its opponent. However, the conversations are ways through which people attempt to compare and contrast these items of personification. Informants stated that the competitions are proxy conversations between people who are using these items. According to the informants, these and similar competitions between items of

personification are often used for amusement and teasing. In the meantime, they are for conveying a particular event in history artistically. The above examples indicate how personification is responding to the introduction of new ideas, the occurrence of some events, a change in lifestyle, and contact with other cultures. People continuously coin personification to accommodate social and natural environments.

3.2.2. Resource Use and Management

We used cattle and monkeys as items of personifications in the context of resource usage and management. The messages address crop production and animal husbandry, as well as the management criteria for each, because the target population is a mixed agriculturalist. The message either criticizes any kind of poor property management or offers fundamental rules that property owners should adhere to when maintaining their properties.

(4)

(a) *'Bagan kufes bagan ka'es; kan haaduun natti kaatees arge, kan danqaraan natti kaatees arge', jedhe dullachi.*

It is good to fall and regain; I saw those who wanted to slaughter me and those who wanted to save me, said an old cow.

(b) *'Mudde na mudde⁵ Furmatu na furee', jedhe saani.*

We suffer in December; January is our redeemer, said cattle to one another.

(c) *'Yeroo horaa deemnu biyyoo kaafna, yeroo achii gallu okolee gabbifnaa, yoo jiraannee horatti, yooduune mana faaqitti walargina' jedhan horiin waliin*

⁵ *Mudde*, being December rhymes with '*mudde*,' means to challenge. *Furma* is, locally mean, January and rhymes with *furuu*, which , means 'to relieve'

We raise the dust when we travel to mineral water; at home, we are milk providers. If alive, we shall meet each other at the mineral water. If passed away, we shall meet at a workshop of tanner, said cattle to one another.

The above three communications were all made among cattle that have important economic and cultural values. Any mismanagement or unfair treatment is complained about and criticized in the name of cattle. The conversation entails both among themselves and with human beings. In some cases, the speakers talk to human beings either to blame them for their problems or to express their worries. For instance, the conversation by an old cow shows that the cow fell and observed two opposite responses from the people around it. Some were ready to slaughter the cow and approached it with knives. Others were ready to uplift and treat it. The cow complains against those in the first group and thanks those in the second group. This is a conversation people have as if it were with an old cow. Given the two possible options, the idea is in favor of the second one, where people ought to treat a cow to recover and not to be slaughtered quickly. It is said that the cow appreciates those who try to lift it. By default, this is the way owners are expected to treat their cattle. It is a sort of humble advice to cattle owners, criticizing any mismanagement.

The second communication shows the seasonal variations in the availability of water and grass and their effects on the lives of the cattle. December is in the midst of the dry season, with a severe shortage of grass. On the other hand, a short and light rain is expected in January, which lets the grass grow and the cattle graze. That is why cattle say December weakens us and January rescues us.

Similarly, the third conversation indicates that taking cattle to mineral water, called, *hora* is an ideal practice expected of any cattle owner. Data from our key informants show that letting cattle drink mineral water contributes to cattle reproduction and milk productivity. This is part of the indigenous

knowledge of raising cattle. As part of the expectations of cattle management, people use literature to convey information and pass on knowledge across generations. In the same conversation, cattle show their worry that there is a possibility of being killed. If so, their skin is taken to a tannery to make a sleeping mat. The dialogues show that the same item can be personified differently in different contexts and convey different messages.

(5)

'Godoo gama kaa'ee, yoom keessa taa'e? Anarrammoo maqaa ka'e' jedhe boyyeen yookaan jaldeessi nama dabeessaan.

'He set up a hut over there, but wonders here and there,' Whom would he blame if this person fails to gather?' said a monkey or a pig to a lazy man who fails to protect his crop from predators.

In this exchange, a pig or monkey criticizes a slothful man for failing to properly care for and safeguard his harvest from pests and predators. Field evidence indicates that a negligent and indolent individual who mismanages his land produces little or no yield. Such a guy frequently blames pets and predators for his bad crop, even if this may not be the real cause. According to the communication above, the individual failed to fulfill his obligation to keep pigs and monkeys away from the crop. In order to defend himself from predators, he constructed a hut on his farm, but he never used it. Thus, through this communication, the community honors diligence and hard effort while discouraging indolence and lazy behavior.

3.2.3. Prudence and Caution

The following two dialogues focus on the issues of prudence and caution. In this regard, the central target is not only about a particular item of personification but also a proxy message conveying a general idea of prudence and caution in various contexts.

(6)

*'Isa ganama nyaattanii ammas dabalattan kana na dhisaa;
ani hin fagaanne dallaa jalan ciisaa, jedhe beelli bara beelaa.*

'Do not think to eat lunch once you have had your breakfast; I have not gone far, but at your gate, exclaimed hunger.

*'Mandi'ee si dhageessisee, haanga'ee si agarsiisee; haamtuun qabaan mana
sitti kabaa', jedhe roobni nama of dagateen*

'You heard my thunder; you saw my lightning. Me not having a sickle, how can I maintain your shanty hut?', said rain to a negligent person whose roof is not properly thatched.

In these dialogues, hunger and rain are items of personification. The people of the study area use these figuratively coined dialogues to advise individuals to exercise prudence. If we take the speaking-hunger, it alerts people to take care of their lives and resources, advises them on the importance of saving or avoiding being excessive use of resources at hand. It also directly indicates the possibility of grave scarcity when someone is not cautious. The second conversation between rain and humans focuses on advising people to get their hut covered with grass (thatch) in winter so that it does not leak when there is rain. Here, the speaker is the sky and/or the rain. Thundering and lightning are signs of the coming of the rainy season, through which the sky communicates with people to make necessary preparations. Despite this, there is a possibility that neglectful persons fail to cover their hut on time and receive the artistically coined disapproval of their behavior. According to the informants, these dialogues do not simply refer to the issue of hunger and rain but also convey messages pertinent to prudence, caution and hardworking in general, while it disapproves the opposites. Someone can use it as a proverb to advise somebody to be vigilant.

3.2.4. Sanitation and Nutrition

The following dialogue gives attention to diseases and shows some of the causes and ways to protect oneself from them.

(7)

‘Yoo addaan baana jette dhaqna dhiqadhu, tolchii nyaadhu. Yoo na hooqxe na mooqxe; yoo nakarkarsite nabaqsite; yoo namiccirte nadhidhibde’ jette cittoon nama cittaa’een

‘If you wish to leave me, keep your body clean and eat healthy. Otherwise, if you scratch me, you mess me up. If you warm me, you may melt me. If you massage me, you pamper me’, said scabies told its victim.

‘Kophee bitachuu keessan dhagayee; inniin asiin dura sinyadhe nagahe. Ana mujalee hadha Gurmeessaa, anumatu miila namaa qurceessa. Waamaan kophee natti raase, Wamiin komee natti dhaame. Karaa ciraa naaf qopheessaa; dhaqeen kottee isaanii kokotteessa’, jette mujaleen namaan.

‘I heard that you bought shoes; I am okay with what I did so far. I am Gurmessaa’s mother; look at your feet, which I disfigured. Waamaa brags with his shoes; Waami accuses me of my feat. I will continue impairing others’ feet’ if you allow me the route, said chigoes to humans.

We have a conversation about scabies talking to human beings. It provides a sort of advice to depart from it (to fight the disease). Washing oneself regularly and eating well are recommended. Other actions like itching, massaging, rubbing, and warming are not solutions. We have also had a talk by chigoes expressing some of its attributes. The message passes information on the feelings and actions of people who suffer from it and the expected solution. As the personification goes, being barefoot is a favorable situation for chigoes to burrow into skin, while wearing shoes is one way of protecting one's feet from direct attack.

Chigoe warns those without shoes because it understands their importance. Additionally, it declares the "heroic" deeds it has been performing against humanity for ages. In particular, it claims to cause disfiguring or leprous feet. Three climate zones—typical highland, semi-highland, and lowland—roughly characterize the research area. Because of the relatively hot climate in the lowlands, chigoes are a prevalent nuisance.

Both messages explicitly imply that while the wealthy have ways to stay safe, the poor are the ones who suffer from these illnesses. However, the main premise is that the greatest method to prevent these diseases and others is to combat poverty through all possible ways, mainly hard work and saving.

3.2.5. Preparations and Consumptions of Food and Drink

There are two conversations under the category of food and drink preparations and consumptions. One is with local drink and the other is with potatoes. These communications took place under the circumstances of a food shortage and drunkenness.

(8)

a) 'Innaa tokko nafudhatan nanwayyeessa; yoo nadadabalatan nanmacheessa. Tokko dhugdani kanquftan maaliif nahindhiiifan? Kan

nabaase dubartii keessan, maaliif maqaa narrakeessan' jette araqeen macha'aadhan.

'If you drink just a cup of me, I make you better. If you keep gulping me, you become weaker. While you can get satisfied with just one, why do you drink me again and again? They are your wives who distilled me; after all, why do you blame me?' The *Araquee* accused a drunken person.

b) 'Irraan nattiaguugdu, jalaan nattihaafuufu; dafaa nahubadhaa, turraan nangubadha', jedhe dinnichi yeroo affeelan

'They wrap me from above; they blow me from below. Please check me sooner; if not, I will smolder', said a potato to a cook.

'Baddaan kobortaan nabite; gammoojiin mcorraan nafixe' jedhe dinnichi bara beelaa

'The highlanders sold me and bin ought an overcoat; the lowlanders peeled me and ate,' said potato in 1984 (a year of food shortage in the area).

The items of personification above are the local drink, *araquee*, and the vegetable potato. The local alcoholic drink (*araqe*) is personified to speak to people about its nature and blame them for misusing it. It is a strong alcoholic drink and advises drinkers to drink only within their capacity. This local drink redirects the blame to the drinkers themselves for drinking too much as well as for distilling it from the very outset.

Similarly, the dialogue by a potato shows the standard way of cooking potatoes. Potato says one has to take care of the cooking; otherwise, it is easily

burned. The message is conveyed figuratively instead of saying it in ordinary communication. According to the informants, the second verse by the potato was said particularly in 1984, when there was a serious shortage of food in some parts of Ethiopia as a result of a draught. It shows the use of the potatoes in the highland vis-à-vis the lowland at this particular time in history. Over the area, highlanders did not face a serious shortage of food as the lowlanders did due to the availability of other drought-resistant edible fruits and vegetables, like a false banana (*warqee*). Potato is cultivated commonly in the highland and semi-highland. In this dialogue, the term overcoat is not in its literal meaning; rather, it connotes having something valuable that the better off can afford. Despite the prevalence of drought this year, the highlanders were safe. Accordingly, this personification serves to communicate certain events that happened at a particular time and context.

3.3. Discussions

The findings of this paper show that personification provides some pieces of information about economic, social, and environmental issues in different forms than the ordinary way of saying them. Particularly, as Tareke et al. (2022) argues, figurative speeches are context-oriented and commonly serve to convey information in the context of certain belief systems, notions, norms, values, and practices of the target community.

The pieces of information conveyed through figurative speech entail expectations and facts like emotions, feelings, complaints, hatred, problems, happiness, and criticism. Our findings show that through personification, the speakers communicate to the audience general issues, like moral values or the personal preference of a certain object based on ecological and seasonal variations. These findings uphold the views of some scholars, such as Arifiyanto (2020), Abrams (1999), Lonanda (2013), and Arp and Johansson (2012). For instance, Arifiyanto et al. (2020) who contend that figurative speech, including personification, targets conveying the intended meanings that may vary accordingly.

Practical instances from our findings show that in all cases, the items of personification are given the behavior of speaking. Other human behaviors are not explicitly stated. However, in most of the cases where there are dialogues between the non-human items of personified and the behaviors of listening or hearing, thinking, boasting, complaining, downplaying, and understanding are implied. Dialogues entail not only talking but also responding after listening and understanding the discourse of the first speaker. These seem to be the unique characteristics of personification in the culture of the target population.

The findings show that the personification used among the Waliso Liban is dominantly presented rhythmically. Apart from the several purposes it serves, personification entails the aesthetic values of language and the rhyming skills of the users. It has clear relevance to cultivating one's language skills for expressing something in attractive and artistic ways. Poetic expression is not part of day-to-day communication but is achieved in intentionally designed artistic expressions of this kind. Personification, thus, often entails the great beauty of the language, emotional intensity, and deep insight needed to convey information. Each line of the communication is full of symbolic expressions depicted from the perspectives of the value system, belief system, livelihood, economic values, psychological makeup, knowledge, expectations, and assumptions of the speakers. The rhyme effect in which it is depicted also has recreational values. People often use it in their spare time for amusement.

This finding thus corroborates the works of Sudarsono et al. (2016), Arifiyanto et al. (2020), and Al-Azzawi (2022). According to Sudarsono et al. (2016), figurative languages, including personification, make communications more powerful and stronger in meaning. Arifiyanto et al. (2020) also show some of the functions of language, which include the creation of a strong impression of something, the presentation of something in short, and the description of the characters' feelings in a more tangible way. Furthermore, Al-Azzawi (2022) shows that the employment of figurative language has enhanced the language's color, richness, and attractiveness.

The stated functions of personification in this paper support the works of other writers, such as Arp and Johansson (2012) and Lonanda (2013). These scholars stated that figurative speech serves to express the internal feelings of the speaker in attractive and effective ways. It has the power to provide the audience with imaginative pleasure. It also entails high aesthetic values and creativity. In this regard, Al-Azzawi (2022) also says that figurative speech shows the author's aptitude and ingenuity in the use of words.

Finally, the story presented in the paper indicates that the Liban Oromo uses figurative language to communicate certain meanings in a more attractive and catchy way. Understanding this communication is possible in line with the Theory of Lexical Concepts and Cognitive Models advocated by Evans (2010). Mere linguistic or conceptual knowledge does not serve the purpose of comprehending the message conveyed. Whatever item is personified and whichever idea is communicated, it can only be understood in the cultural context as well as with a clear understanding of the meanings of the language.

4. CONCLUSION

The paper indicates that personification is a technique employed in oral literature of the study community in which non-human living things and inanimate objects are given the character of human beings. The meanings and messages conveyed through are highly embedded in the social, psychological and natural environments.

Users artistically convey historical events, cultural values, and environmental knowledge through figures of speech. The central thesis of these communications is the economic life of the target community. This community, in which the study was conducted, is a typical rural and agrarian people, whose survival depends on the ecology and the availability of rain, and who must often adapt itself to seasonal and ecological changes. In this context,

the community encourages the core values of diligence, efficient use of resources, and time management in order to avoid food shortage, financial hardships and health problems. Therefore, these figures of speech severely discourage carelessness, indolence, extravagance, drunkenness, and the resulting poverty.

The study also shows that personification is not static; but rather dynamic and absorbs continuous with innovations and new ideas and technologies along the changing circumstances and can be profitably used to link traditional values with school curricula or the formal education system. They are created and recreated upon contexts. Finally, the authors recognize that the present work is not an exhaustive material on the subject matter; thus, they call for further in-depth investigations.

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