Metaphor in youth language

The study of youth language and the linguistic practices of youth in the African continent and in the diaspora is a rich field that has been expanding and deepening in recent years. Linguistic analyses of named 'urban' youth varieties such as Sheng in Kenya, tsotsitaals in South Africa, Camfranglais in Cameroon and Nouchi in Côte d'Ivoire constitute a key area of investigation in relation to not only descriptions of grammatical structure and the relation to different types of languages (e.g. local, official, non-official, etc.), but also the investigation of lexical etymologies and manipulation strategies such as metaphor; alongside the role of youth language and its related strategies in social and peer contexts.

There have been several publications that have focused specifically on metaphor in African Youth Language over recent years. These include research employing cognitive metaphor theory (Ndlovu 2018), numerical metaphors in Zimbabwean Computer Mediated Communication (Ndlovu 2020), contribution of youth languages to base language idiomatic language change (Ndlovu 2019), the use of word, sentence, and social metaphor in Tsotsitaal (Hurst 2016), the role of generational peer groups and contemporary pop culture in the production of metaphors (Hurst-Harosh and Kanana 2020), sexual metaphors amongst Nigerian youth (Mensah and Inyabri 2016), and the construction of masculinity through metaphors associated with alcohol consumption (Mensah 2020).

There are numerous opportunities for researchers to build on this work, for example looking at the uses of metaphor in social media and digital communications throughout the African continent, as well as in music (notably hip hop and related forms), performance poetry, film and other creative endeavours (Hurst-Harosh and Kanana 2018, Williams 2017). Interesting questions also arise regarding the use of African languages by youth in the diaspora (Machetti and Siebetcheu 2013, Nassenstein and Tchokothe 2017); as well as global influences on African youth language practices and vice versa (Tomei and Hollington 2020). Questions relating to metaphor would include the analysis of the reciprocal influence of metaphorical linguistic constructions, interpretation/understanding and whether these can be universal. On the other hand, metaphorical processes, and this often becomes obvious in multilingual or language contact situations, are sometimes very culture-specific and can be based on particular socio-cultural conceptualisations (Hollington 2015). Metaphorical constructions relating to gender and sexual orientation from the perspective of feminist theory and LGBTQ linguistics, and the relation of youth language to gender constructions such as masculinity, could be another important avenue for metaphor research in relation to youth. Additionally, important are considerations of the practices of youth in rural and peri-urban settings (Schmied and Oloruntoba-Oju 2019), the cross-dynamics of metaphor drawing on traditional and urban experiences/knowledges, and in addition studies focusing on youth in rural areas who also have notable metaphorical youth language practices (Blench and Longtau 2016).

While it is certain that youth language studies are enriched by investigations into the role of metaphor in youth languages, one question that arises is: Can metaphor studies in turn benefit from a youth language perspective? Theoretical approaches such as cognitive metaphor theory

may be enriched and expanded by considering the particular strategies employed by youth, their affordances, their interface with the particular psychological and social concerns of youth, and the apparent creativity of youth in dialogue with popular culture and peer group dynamics.

This workshop therefore invites abstracts from researchers working on any of the following aspects of metaphor in youth language:

- Metaphor and contact, borrowing, etc.
- Globalisation and the impact of international youth forms
- Metaphor and lexical shift
- The linguistics of metaphor in youth language relating to African languages
- The social dynamics of metaphor in youth language relating to African languages
- Identity, social and cultural aspects of metaphor use in youth language (including the politics/ideology of metaphorical constructions in youth language interactions)
- Cultural conceptualisations underlying metaphors in African youth language practices
- Linguistic aspects of the use of metaphors in youth language
- The use of metaphors in social media
- Different methodological and theoretical approaches, including Cognitive Metaphor Theory and others, and new approaches in response to metaphor in youth language
- Gestural metaphor in youth language discourse

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