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THE LINGUISTIC AESTHETICS OF EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY,
NAIROBI COUNTY

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS,
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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

Signature:  Date: 08.11.2021
Thomas Nyutu.

I certify that I have read this project and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University of Nairobi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts.

Signed:  Date: 08.11.2021

Dr. Catherine Agoya, project supervisor.

I certify that I have read this project and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standards required by the University of Nairobi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts.

Signed:  Date: 09/11/2021

Dr. Silvano Muriithi, project supervisor.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my all-time friend, Rev. Fr. Joseph Ngure, whose immense dedication to the notion of relevant and clear communication has been a big boost in my linguistic journey.

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts an aesthetic linguistic analysis of epitaphs found at Lang'ata cemetery, Nairobi, Kenya. It uses the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995). The study is based on three research questions: What genres and stylistic devices can be found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery? What kind of explicatures and implicatures are found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery? How do the identified explicatures and implicatures enhance the relevance of the messages on the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery? The data was collected from actual visits to the cemetery and taking the photographs of tombstones. The work is divided into four chapters dealing with: introductory issues, the genres and stylistic devices found on epitaphs, the explicatures and implicatures and how they enhance relevance and finally the conclusive remarks. This research found a small amount of poetic writings and a lot of prose texts on the epitaphs. These genres are presented in about forty different stylistic devices. The data is presented both orthographically and photographically. The study combines research question number two and number three into one chapter thus presenting the explicatures and implicatures and their role in enhancing the relevance of the messages on the epitaphs. The study concludes with a number of issues recommended for further research: there is very scanty poetry on the epitaphs while we have high prevalence of plain texts, biblical quotations and allusions, code mixing and code switching, and the use of indigenous languages; how do the literary genres and devices at Lang'ata cemetery compare with those in other cemeteries in Kenya and other parts of the world?

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The interest in cemeteries, tombstones and epitaphs sounds queer. A person with such interests is referred to as a tapophile, a word from the Greek language which means to ‘love graves.’ This word is often confused with necrophile which denotes a sexual or physical attraction to the dead. My interest in tombstones and epitaphs stems from my pastoral duties through which I often find myself at cemeteries conducting funerals. In the process of the liturgical celebrations my ‘linguistic mind’ drifts away into the choice and arrangement of words used in eulogies, tributes and gravestones. While tapophony may be a hobby for those obsessed with the dead, the current project is an academic endeavor meant to augment linguistic knowledge in this field.

Tapophiles¹ *engage themselves in* recording tombstones using photographs or taking tombstone rubbings. Apart from visiting and exploring cemeteries they also conduct research on epitaphs and create new ones. It is also part of their endeavor to study historically famous deaths and publish their findings.

The word *tombstone* comes from the two Greek words ‘*tymbos*’ meaning ‘burial mound’, and ‘*stia*’ meaning ‘pebble.’ The word was first used in English to describe the lid of a stone coffin but its meaning as a grave marker started in 1711². Many tombstones bear a text known as an epitaph which could be spiritual, humorous or thought-provoking so long as it has a meaningful bearing to the deceased and the bereaved.

Research on epitaphs entails studying and analyzing texts on gravestones that briefly but honorably document the life of a person who has passed on. The word epitaph is from the Greek *epitaphios* meaning “a funeral oration.” It is normally a brief composition in either prose or verse, mostly written in figurative language, in honor of the dead and in remembrance of their lives. Epitaphs may be in the form of a poem, a song, a short story, a biblical verse, a wise saying

or any other formulation found relevant in the particular situation. It may be a creation of the deceased during their lifetime or the work of family and other admirers. Some epitaphs are so loaded with content that people can even reconstruct the story of the deceased from the gravestone. The Macmillan dictionary blog gives the following examples of prominent epitaphs:

Winston Churchill: *“I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter.”*

William Shakespeare’s epitaph partly reads: *“Blessed be the man that spares these stones and cursed be he that moves my bones.”* Shakespeare predicted that somebody would tamper with his grave and stated as much in an epitaph now chiseled on his gravestone.

On an unnamed Scottish tombstone, we find the words:

“Consider, friend, as you pass by:

As you are now, so once was I.

As I am now, you too shall be.

Prepare, therefore, to follow me.”

In a study conducted by Murigu and Mbugua (2020), the following are listed as public cemeteries in the city of Nairobi as established in accordance with the Public Health Act Chapter 242 of the Laws of Kenya (ROK, 2012a): Lang’ata Cemetery, Muslim Cemetery, Shia Imami Ismaili Cemetery, Bora Cemetery, Shia Ithna Ashari Cemetery and Parsee Burial Grounds. The Nyayo Cemetery and City Park Cemetery, both found in Nairobi, are said to be currently out of use. Lang’ata cemetery is reported to be the biggest with an area of approximately 117 acres³. It is on the outskirts of Nairobi city about 15km west of the Central Business District along Lang’ata Road (Murigu and Mbugua 2020:1969).

According to Murigu and Mbugua (2020) a cemetery does not only offer a permanent place to visit and come to terms with grief but provides a headstone on which to display special message(s) to pay tribute to the deceased (Murigu and Mbugua, 2020:1966). The word cemetery, according to Collins (2008) as quoted by Murigu and Mbugua (2020), is from the Greek word

koimeterion; it stands for a place of sleep; it is the place where dead bodies and cremated remains are buried. The study observes that in the silent tranquility of their sleep the dead communicate with the living using epitaphs of both poor and rich alike; some of the rich people have even gone ahead to secure burial sites for themselves and their families (Murigu and Mbugua, 2020:1964).

The study by Murigu and Mbugua (2020) is the only one available concerning Lang'ata cemetery. It focuses on diminishing land in the city and the need to explore other ways of disposing of dead bodies, and therefore has nothing to do with linguistics. A linguistic study of the cemetery is therefore a problem worth delving into and serves as an opening for further research in the area.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The notion of death is beyond our human comprehension. We speak of death in veiled terms to cushion ourselves from the pain it entails. Throughout history humanity has tried to come to terms with death in various ways which include prayers, family gatherings, grieving, eulogies, tributes, psychotherapy and epitaphs. To capture the widest information within the limited space of a tombstone calls for a manipulative use of language, often poetic. This often results in aesthetically appealing texts that capture the attention of people. In the environment of death and the subsequent funeral can we find something of linguistic value?

The linguistic aesthetics hidden in tombstones is the focus of this study. The words found on epitaphs are either a choice by the deceased during their lifetime or by family and friends who knew them well. This choice of lexicon is quite often a purposeful decision meant to pass some message or immortalize some memories. A number of literary genres and stylistic devices are used to embellish the language surrounding death.

The studies so far carried out on gravestones and epitaphs are largely archeological and historical in nature and content. So far the interest generated by Lang'ata cemetery has been of little linguistic significance if any; the main concern has been the dwindling space at the cemetery.

According to Odenyo (2018)⁴ the cemetery got filled up years ago and was declared as such by the defunct Nairobi City Council in 1996. This fact, corroborated by Murigu and Mbugua (2020), is important for this study because it points towards the distinction between the

temporary graves that are being recycled and the permanent ones that have been left intact and covered with tombstones; it is on such tombstones that epitaphs are etched.

This research brings out the aesthetics of language found on tombstones by unveiling what people intend to communicate using epitaphs and how relevant the information is. The Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995) will be used to analyze the problem by answering three pertinent questions.

1.3 Research questions

This is a qualitative research and therefore largely expected to generate narratives. In a bid to address the research problem, this study will answer the following three research questions aligned with the objectives of the study:

1. What genres and stylistic devices can be found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery?
2. What kind of explicatures and implicatures are found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery?
3. How do the identified explicatures and implicatures enhance the relevance of the messages on the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to study the linguistic aesthetics of epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery, Nairobi County. In line with the three research questions stated above, this study has the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and describe the various genres and stylistic devices found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery.
2. To analyze the various explicatures and implicatures found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery.
3. To establish how the identified explicatures and implicatures enhance the relevance of the messages on the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery.

1.5 Justification of the study

This study is a definitive starting point for interest in cemetery research since no linguistic study has so far been undertaken at Lang'ata or any other cemetery in the country. The data to be gathered and analyzed will allow for further research in this area. The texts on gravestones are open for studies on their contents and can "...allow a better comparison across

time and space and give us an enriched understanding of what the past can teach us, of what the dead can teach the living” (Jae, 2012:26).

Archeologists and anthropologists appreciate the fact that cemeteries lack permanence due to the fragility of stone when exposed to elements of nature such as wind, rain and sunshine. In the process of weathering away something important disappears before it is captured by linguists. Studying and recording the information on gravestones while it is still legible ensures its preservation for posterity. The preservation of sources in their original state provides a sure starting point for future research. This research could be built upon by other researchers or be a starting point for different parameters in cemetery research.

The bereaved will benefit from this study by seeing how meaningful and relevant the inscriptions they created for their loved ones are. Future generations will use this research to come up with meaningful and relevant inscriptions for their loved ones. Finally, as earlier mentioned, the lack of a linguistic study on cemeteries is a felt matter that needs to be addressed by linguists; this, it is hoped, is a step in the right direction.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the study

This research identifies six public cemeteries currently in use within the city of Nairobi. Five of them are totally excluded from this study. It was previously intended that Lang’ata Muslim cemetery would be treated as part of the larger Lang’ata cemetery but this dimension was struck off after a reconnaissance revealed that the inscriptions available are all in Arabic. This research does not seek to correlate the details between various cemeteries but solely to focus on Lang’ata cemetery.

Gravestones are known to carry artistic images in terms of pictures and carvings etched on them. These artistic presentations are excluded from this study so as to focus on the texts found on the tombstones. It is not lost on this researcher that a picture may stand for a thousand words and that the images add linguistic and aesthetic value to the epitaphs but that would be a study too broad to undertake due to the constraints of time and the objectives of the study.

1.7 Definition of concepts

Aesthetics is the study of the nature and appreciation of artistic beauty. In the present study the meaning is confined to the nature and beauty of texts on tombstones from a linguistic point of view.

A **cemetery** is a large ground in which are buried dead bodies or the remains of cremation. The targeted cemetery in this study is a large piece of ground covering an area of approximately 117 acres and in which bodies and ashes of cremated bodies are interred.

The Macmillan dictionary defines a **tombstone** as “a large stone with someone’s name and their birth date and death date on it that is put over the place where they are buried.” In this study the term tombstone is used interchangeably with the word gravestone.

An **epitaph** is an inscription on a tombstone in memory of a person who has died. In this study the epitaphs of interest are those whose texts are beyond mere identities and simple dates.

1.8 Literature Review

The marking of graves and commemorating the dead is a practice that has been part of human history for many centuries. While in prehistoric times gravestones prevented graves from being dug up by animals today they are regarded as artifacts that can be subjected to scientific archeological, historical and linguistic studies. A number of scholars have undertaken this endeavor over the ages and presented their findings in a scientific manner.

The studies so far conducted in East Africa on tombs have largely been archeological and limited to Swahili funeral rites. These studies have been undertaken at Gede, Mnarani, and Kaole (Kirkman 1958, 1960, 1963, 1974). Garlake (1966) complemented these studies with his own research on characteristics and stylistic development of tombs along the Swahili coast. Other studies have been undertaken on pillar tombs such as Jumba la Mtwana (Sassoon 1980; Kusimba 1993), Kilwa Kisiwani in Tanzania (Chittick 1974), the Lamu archipelago in Kenya (Chittick 1967) and the most comprehensive survey of Swahili sites along the coast of Kenya by Wilson (1978, 1979, 1980). All these archeological studies have no linguistic bearing whatsoever and this creates a great need to embark on such a study. It is probably out of both fear of death and reverence for the dead that Africans have kept a distance from cemeteries and studies connected to them. The cemeteries are seen from a distance and only visited in times of grave need. In the process we miss out on the wealth of linguistic resources contained therein (Tarlow & Stutz, 2013:382-384).

Lou (1978) studied gravestone art and social change in Story County, Iowa focusing on the social dimensions of cemetery symbolisms. The variables of this study included gender, age,

ethnicity and the accompanying sentiments. According to her, “[e]thnic groups tend to leave definite marks on cemeteries...” (Lou,1978:9). Inscriptions in both English and the ethnic languages of the people of Story County, point towards the literary devices of code mixing and code switching. This factor has a direct bearing on the current study since a mixture of codes appears on the forthcoming data from Lang’ata cemetery.

It is evident that epitaphs are quickly vanishing due to destruction and wearing away caused by the elements of nature. In the process we are losing literary resources before they can be documented for posterity. The documentation of the epitaphs at Story County (Lou, 1978) brought out a variety of messages in the different genres and various stylistic devices. There were many familiar quotations from both sacred and secular literature; a majority of them came from the Bible, such as “The Lord is my Shepherd”.

There was a category of epitaphs that inspired faith and hope while inviting reverence for the dead. In the epitaphs were found descriptions of both this natural world and the world to come; the next world was described in superior and positive terms. The research came up with epitaphs specifically crafted for children, variously depicting them as innocent buds yet to be spoilt by worldly influences around them. A number of tombstones carried messages exalting patriotism and hard work; service to man was equated to service to God and so an eternal reward awaits those faithful servants who worked tirelessly on earth. There were glowing tributes to certain beloved members of the family. There were also epitaphs created for purposes of consolation for both the bereaved and those who visit cemeteries; there is comfort in the words: “*God gave, He took away and He will restore*” or “*We shall meet again.*” The expressions of love, sorrow and other sentiments were also found to be common on Story County epitaphs.

The most common epitaphs employed euphemism depicting death as “*rest after the weariness of this life*”; this softens the pain of the finality that accompanies death. On these epitaphs were also found many analogies and metaphors. The painful emotion of grief in losing a young baby for instance is lessened by transposing the baby from the mother’s lap to “*the bosom of Abraham*” or “*the Savior’s breast*”. Another powerful image is that of a bud cut from the parent stem. Analogically the length of life is likened to a day whereby evening designates death and morning designates life and youth (Lou, 1978:135-154).

In a seven-year-long doctoral study conducted on grave posts of the Aboriginal Tiwi people of Australia by Hoff (1988), focus was put on a different aspect of aesthetics as put in her own words: “[t]his study explores the extent to which they embody Tiwi artistic traditions, illustrate personal identity, describe regional history and exist as a lasting record of the dynamic processes of conformity, invention and adaptation in Tiwi society” (Hoff 1988:12). Her research was purely interested in the art forms on the grave posts. Acknowledging that graves “are markers of stylistic and cultural continuity and change” (Hoff 1988:12) the current study concentrates on the linguistic aesthetics of the texts rather than on the art forms.

Spennemann (2007) observes that cemeteries are rich sources of data seen “...as reflective of the historic environment in which they were created and therefore form a unique interpretive tool” (Spennemann, 2007:4). The study by Spennemann, (2007) however, focused only on “children’s graves as the cemetery that was the subject of his study was part of an orphanage managed by a Catholic church” (Goodwin 2013:5). Leader (1997) studied grave monuments of Ancient Greece and the gender differences in the grave art (Goodwin 2013:5). This study took a sociolinguistic approach which is far from the focus of the current study.

The grave importance of gravestones is aptly acknowledged by Amanda (2012) in her study on gravestone imagery and iconography in the cemeteries of Southwest Virginia, USA:

Cemeteries are not always associated as a form of archive to those outside of the social science realm, but within the field, there is little doubt that cemeteries offer rich, historical data. A primary source of this data is the grave marker, where information about the deceased is recorded for posterity. (Amanda 2012:2)

This study focuses on the wealth of data captured in epitaphs. The grave marker, though made for posterity in mind, offers a source of primary data for research. In agreement with Amanda (2012) the grave markers at Lang’ata Cemetery provide the required information for this study.

Tombstones carry narratives that outlive obituaries, funeral programs, eulogies and tributes written on paper. To arrive at the use of tombstones, Jae (2012) cites Kellehear (2007) who identifies four epochs in tracing the transformation of the understanding of death throughout history: The Stone Age, the Pastoral Age, the Age of the City, and the Cosmopolitan Age. During the Stone Age deaths were sudden and unprepared for; the dead would be buried together with some of their properties that were believed to be needed on their journey to the next life. The settled sedentary life of the Pastoral Age enabled people to prepare for their own deaths by

actually outlining what goods they would wish to be buried with. The strict division between being dead and being alive received a third angle where a person would also be in the state of dying. The Age of the City brought along a certain level of affluence in the urban centers. The causes of death became more complicated and the process of dying became longer and painful necessitating the roles of such professionals as priests, lawyers and doctors to help people come to terms with the grim reality. Finally, we have the Cosmopolitan Age which brought along new ways of dying such as dementia, AIDS, cancer and the current Covid-19. This current age comes along with life-support machines in hospitals and nursing homes. The long process of dying according to Kellehear gives the dying the opportunity to express their own wishes regarding the last rites of death and burial. It is at this point that some people utter words that end up in their epitaphs either as directives or as later reflections by the living (Jae, 2012:7-9, 11).

Jae (2012) continues to observe that grave markers have changed immensely from the pyramids of Ancient Egypt to the mausoleums we see today and that "... [T]hrough eulogies and epitaphs, lives and stories of the dead live on symbolically" (Jae 2012:16). Jae (2012) however, observes that "... [A]lthough there is much literature on cemetery use and even on specific types of epitaphs, much of the former is based in archaeology or anthropology and the latter is based in literature or historical studies" (Jae 2012:17). This goes a long way to necessitate a linguistic analysis of epitaphs that would represent "...the last eloquent fling of the human mind in the face of inevitable death" (Ward 1957:34).

Jae (2012) cites Sárraga and Sárraga (2002) who discuss humorous epitaphs found on Jewish cemeteries. While they found poetry and riddles in epitaphs, Lattimore (1962) found curses in places prone to robbers desecrating graves (Jae 2012:22). Acknowledging that tombstones outlive those who are familiar with their original story it is "important to note how these messages portray meaning even outside of an understood context" (Jae, 2012:24).

Nosowitz (2018) wondered what linguists would learn from a gravestone and his observation was: "plenty, it turns out." He observed that "[T]hey're also a valuable and extremely under-studied corpus of linguistic data, albeit a frequently misleading and opaque one." (Nosowitz, 2018:1). He cites Ciregna (2015), a Religious Studies professor at Harvard and the president of the Association for Gravestone Studies, who observes that gravestone inscriptions have been with us for as long as people could chip letters into stone. He also cites

O'Regan (2009) who constructed a linguistic corpus of inscriptions from a Protestant graveyard in Macao on gravestones dating between 19th and 20th centuries concentrating on content words. He noted a predominant use of the simple present tense and a very frequent use of the definite article "the" without first introducing the noun referred to. The mention of "*the dead*," "*the redeemer*" and so forth indicated that the inscriptions were meant for insiders rather than outsiders, people who shared the values of the composer of the inscription.

Robinson (2018) acknowledges the vast historic information carried in tombstones but decries the insignificant amount of research focused on headstone analysis in the state of Florida, USA. In her research she focuses on stone type, shape, time period and gender of individuals. This archeological study has only a little bearing to linguistics in the realm of sociolinguistics. Perhaps the most important contribution to the current study is in identifying the gap as captured in the following words:

Despite being an exemplary representation of culture, historic cemeteries have received poor documentation and representation throughout literature. Genealogical groups and individuals seeking to make personal family connections mostly focus on headstones without much analysis to offer (Robinson 2018:2).

The lack of documentation, representation and analysis of historical cemeteries as identified by Robinson (2018) is a cause of concern. In listing the significance of headstones the study by Robinson (2018) perceives them as "exemplary artifact assemblage" (Robinson 2018:9) since they are "embellished with epithets and symbology" (Robinson 2018:10). Beyond familial connectivity through visits to cemeteries, the current study proposes an analysis of the contents of epitaphs as a linguistic endeavor.

In her work Velte (2019)⁵ quotes Aries (2009:280) thus,

In the early Middle Ages, nameless tombs had largely been the norm. Then, between the tenth and twelfth centuries, epitaphs began to contain short identifications, primarily the deceased's name, state and date of death. While epitaphs of the high Middle Ages could sometimes also contain a prayer for the soul of the deceased, it was not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that epitaphs increasingly gained scope and eloquence (Velte, 2019:255).

It is certain as pointed out by Aries (2009) that there has been a historical development of tombstones to arrive at what we have today in the cemeteries.

According to Vajta (2021) a gravestone is designed for the public and is a source of meaningful texts and discourses that can be read and interpreted by visitors (Vajta 2021:18). It is therefore both a verbal and nonverbal text full of information, including linguistic data. The discussion around the epitaphs would be enriched by discussing not only what is engraved “but also how it is stated, what the intention might be and what is omitted” (Huebner & Phoocharoensil, 2017:107). Taylor (2015)⁶ *argues that* gravestones supply immense information including identities, locations, dates and other important details (Taylor 2015:1).

This literature review has shown that a lot of studies carried out on gravestones and epitaphs lean toward archeological and historical research. The closest we come to linguistic studies of gravestones is from a sociolinguistic angle as seen in Lou (1978) and O’Regan (2009). The studies carried out in East Africa are limited to archeological research of the coastal Islamic funerary. The study done on Lang’ata cemetery by Murigu and Mbugua (2020) is limited to issues of land scarcity in the city and how to address the matter. This scenario leaves a gap in the linguistic study of gravestones and the epitaphs engraved on them. The current study is an attempt to address the gravestones and epitaphs from a linguistic point of view by bringing out the various genres and stylistic devices employed. This will open up further linguistic endeavors focusing on Lang’ata cemetery and other cemeteries in the city and beyond.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Relevance Theory as proposed by Wilson and Sperber (1995). It is built on the difference between what is explicit and what is implicit in communication. In this theory pragmatics plays a major part in establishing ‘what is said’ by a communicator. The theory builds on the earlier Gricean distinction between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’ to come up with the terms explicature and implicature. The process of deriving explicatures and implicatures begins as soon as the hearer or reader gets into contact with an utterance and goes on as the utterance continues to unfold. With this theory we can adequately differentiate between what is coded and what is inferred in any communication situation. The notion of relevance has a technical definition distinguished from the daily use of the term (Clark 2013:15). The use of written and spoken words is enough evidence that a speaker intends to capture an addressee’s attention in a relevant manner since every speech situation raises expectations of relevance. The

intention to communicate is accompanied by certain expectations created in the addressees. There is a general assumption that the communicator has some interpretation that the addressee will find worth their time to attend to. This tenet is central to the relevance-theoretic idea of intentional communication as expounded within relevance theory. This expectation is linked to how we understand what is indirectly communicated, how we work out direct communication and how we at times misunderstand utterances (Clark 2013:16).

So how does the expectation raised by intentional communication help one person to understand what another person intended by their act of communication? The key idea within relevance theory is that addressees begin by assuming that the communicator has an interpretation in mind which justifies the expenditure of effort involved in arriving at it, i.e. which provides enough cognitive rewards for it to be worth expending the mental effort involved in reaching it...This could be understood as resting on assumptions about what it is rational for communicators to do and for addressees to expect. We might point out, for example, that it would seem less than rational for me to attract your attention and invite you to pay attention to something if I did not think it would be worth your while to do so (Clark 2013:17).

The words used in any speech situation are intentional communications whose meaning and relevance ought to be accessed by the intended and the unintended addressees; words and ideas therefore ought to be meaningful enough to warrant the attention of their recipients. Using relevance theory, we can arrive at the rationale behind an utterance produced by a person at a specific time following a certain order of words (Clark 2013:21). To achieve this, a hearer employs inferences which are sourced beyond the linguistic meaning of the words available (Clark 2013:23).

Words are said to have linguistic meanings and therefore we can readily distinguish *cheese* from *chalk*. The way words are put together also encodes meaning; consequently, the same string of words may end up with a declarative, an interrogative or an imperative force depending on the chosen word order. But on further investigation we find that it is morphemes rather than words that encode meaning as seen when a verb ends with either a present tense (-es) or a past tense marker (-ed). Some words such as *cheese* and *chalk* encode concepts while others such as the deictic *this* and *now* point to concepts. Some words are vague and therefore do not clearly encode concepts; how *heavy* must a thing be so as to be considered *heavy*? (Clark 2013:24-27).

The underdeterminacy thesis fills the gap between what is linguistically encoded and what is actually intended by speakers. Pragmatically then in doing inference we need to distinguish indirect communication from direct communication, establish the referents of pronouns, disambiguate ambiguous expressions and fill up ellipsis.

The spectrum of things we need to infer in understanding one another is explained by two generalizations about human behavior and on which Relevance Theory is built: the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance. The First, or Cognitive, Principle of Relevance states that

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance...Relevance theory is based on a technical notion of 'relevance' as a property of sights, sounds, thoughts, utterances, memories, conclusions of inferences (and, more generally, inputs to cognitive processes) defined in terms of a balance between cognitive effects and processing effort (Clark 2013:34).

In its simplest application in this study, a stimulus on a tombstone that gives more effects justifies the effort expended in processing it. An epitaph that tells us more or tells us more significant matters deserves our time and energy in processing. We would find it more significant or relevant to concentrate on a tombstone that has words in honor of *an only son of so and so* than one that speaks of just *a son of so and so*. The thoughts and memories of an *only son* carry more weight in terms of relevance.

This calls for a definition of an 'effect' which in Relevance theory stands for "adjustments to the way an individual represents the world" (Clark 2013:35). The lion roaming in the city streets changes my view of the world in a more significant manner than the bird flying from one building to another since it gives rise to more cognitive effects. But the amount of effort required to process a stimulus also counts for its relevance; according to Sperber and Wilson (1995) the more the effort the less relevant a stimulus is said to be. The report of the lion roaming in the city streets becomes less relevant when put in the same utterance with the report that a certain mountain is the highest in the world.

The maximization of relevance entails producing the greatest amount of cognitive effects for the least amount of processing effort (Clark 2013: 36). Our perception of the world is actually a seeking after relevance by deriving "as many cognitive effects as possible for as little effort as possible" (Clark 2013:36) and in keeping with the way our minds are wired. The fact that not

every utterance will be maximally relevant leads us to seek for optimal relevance, thus leading us to the second principle of relevance.

The Second, or Communicative, Principle of Relevance states:

“Every utterance conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.” (Clark 2013:36). This requires two things:

- a. The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it.
- b. The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences” (Clark 2013: 36)

We recognize that in communication expectations are created that whatever is uttered is worth our effort and that it carries the highest level of relevance the speaker could offer. The presumption is not that we have the most relevant utterance but that what we have achieves a level of relevance worth our processing efforts. The communication should not put the addressee into unnecessary effort (Clark 2013:36).

The organization within our mind is “to pick what yields the most cognitive effects for the least processing effort” (Clark 2013:37). Speakers are expected to produce the most relevant utterances in accordance with their capabilities and choices. It therefore follows that addressees will choose the common-sense interpretation of utterances unless prompted otherwise by some contextual requirements. This is aptly put by Sperber and Wilson, “either the first interpretation consistent with the [communicative] principle of relevance is communicated . . . or nothing is communicated at all” (Sperber and Wilson 1986:169). It is from these assumptions that we arrive at the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic:

Given that addressees should not stop looking for an interpretation until they find one which provides enough effects to justify the effort involved in interpreting the utterance, and given that the first such interpretation found is the only one which could be intended, then addressees should begin by considering interpretations in order of accessibility (i.e. in the order in which they become accessible) and stop when they find one which meets this expectation. (Clark 2013:39).

Considering that the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic traces the route of minimal efforts to derive optimal and at times maximal cognitive effects, it is incumbent upon any inquirer to stop further struggle when the expectations of relevance are met. What is most readily

accessible on an epitaph is to be taken as the most likely interpretation that the makers of the epitaph had in mind.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) came up with the term ‘explicature’ to replace what Grice had earlier referred to as “what is said”. For them an explicature stands for what is explicitly communicated. In a situation where explicitness is lacking then communication is achieved implicitly and is said to be an implicature (communicated assumptions which are not explicitly communicated).

There are certain inherent elements that characterize texts such that we can easily distinguish between an epitaph and a story for instance. This fact gives epitaphs a niche within discourse analysis. The texts of epitaphs may be in the form of poems, proverbs, biblical verses, quotations from some authors, vivid descriptions of the deceased, tributes by the living and so forth, all with clearly recurring linguistic elements. Garstka (2012) in the abstract to his paper⁷ speaks of discourse as “investigation of text and context” (Garstka, 2012:1). Epitaphs are indeed texts that exist, and should be understood, within contexts. The words on tombstones are written texts which at one time were probably spoken words uttered within contexts that made sense to their speaker and/or addressee. In carrying out this study we seek to establish the meaningfulness of these texts to both the readers and their originators.

Chruszczewski (2002) in his definition of discourse gives a three layered outline of context: situational, social and cultural. Any alteration of these layers issues in different results in discourse (Chruszczewski 2002:5). Applying this to the study of epitaphs it is expected that situations surrounding death, the social standing of the deceased and the cultural leanings of the persons involved will determine the linguistic elements to be found on tombstones. The situational, social and cultural embedding evident in epitaphs will have to be communicative since ‘a non-communicative text is no text at all’ (Beaugrande & Dressler, [1981] 1986:3).

Beaugrande & Dressler ([1981] 1986:3) make a list of elements without which a text is not a text at all: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. In practical situations however, we have come by utterances lacking one or the other of these elements such as cohesion but still communicative enough; for example: *He don’t eat pork*. This overgeneralization of a grammatical rule by a non-native speaker of English issuing an ungrammatical and non-cohesive construction still communicates the intended meaning. The fact that both native and non-native speakers can access the intended meaning

gives enough reason to treat it as a text (Beaugrande & Dressler, [1981] 1986:3). Any such ungrammatical formations to be found on the epitaphs to be studied will be understood in that light.

According to Jordan (1984) texts are written “...for specific readers, and this again is reflected in the information presented and in the way it is presented” Jordan (1984:03). People visit cemeteries to bury their loved ones or even to seek for some tranquility in the silence of the tombs but they are never blind to the writings on tombstones. Some writings will capture the people’s attention for a long time while some will be bypassed within short moments for their lack of relevance. Why a tombstone would capture anybody’s attention will depend on both the person’s interests in life and the content engraved on the tombstone. While an anthropologist will look out for historical details, a linguist will be looking out for patterns of language; same epitaph but two completely different approaches.

Epitaphs are written utterances subjectable to Relevance Theory. They should elicit the greatest amount of cognitive effects for the least amount of processing effort; the effects should be worth the addressee’s effort at processing them. Visitors who visit cemeteries, Lang’ata cemetery for this matter, should find the epitaphs worth their time and effort if they are to serve the intended communicative purpose. Epitaphs do not benefit the people interred in the respective graves and so they are meant for the consumption of those who access them. Except for those rare visitors who visit cemeteries for academic reasons and those who seek the solace of silence most people come to bury their loved ones and then go away. In their moment of grief they would not spend time torturing their troubled minds with epitaphs that are not immediately and relevantly communicative.

For texts to be properly understood the context of utterance is necessary. Take the example of an epitaph with the words: *Here rests a faithful sheep*. In a biological context we are tempted to imagine that a dumb four-legged animal is buried there. In a religious context our minds are taken to the gospel according to John (10:14): “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me.” In a cultural context where women are subjugated it is likely that the deceased is a wife who stuck to an abusive marriage till death did them asunder. We therefore have three kinds of discourses depending on the embedding: educational, religious and cultural discourse.

This study is situated in the Kenyan context with cognizance that there are elements that cannot be understood by people who are foreign to our context. The socio-cultural elements are

at play in the various epitaphs to be studied. This, being a diachronic study, reveals different levels of linguistic exposure over time. For instance, an epitaph may not carry a quotation from President Barrack Obama if it was made in the 1970s but it may quote from an earlier famous American such as Martin Luther King. Socially, Kenyans and non-Kenyans of all walks of life and social status are interred at Lang'ata cemetery; the language in the epitaphs reveals the various strata of society. The cultural embedding brings out a complexity of cultural background from which the deceased hailed. The evidence for these diversities is shown by such aspects as the complexity of grammatical constructions and code mixing in the phraseology. An epitaph that suddenly turns from English to Italian certainly illustrates exposure to the Italian culture.

Based on Relevance Theory this research establishes how the aesthetics of language is manifested in the epitaphs written on tombstones by analyzing selected graves at Lang'ata cemetery, Nairobi. The study identifies and discusses recurring features in the epitaphs in terms of genre and stylistic devices used. The selected epitaphs serve as an example of how language can be manipulated for aesthetic purposes. Some epitaphs are singled out as quite fitting while others are relegated to the periphery for their lack of relevance and communicative value.

1.10 Methodology

The data for this study were gathered through actual visits to the cemetery and taking pictures of the various tombstones that were purposively selected. This being possibly the largest and oldest public cemetery in Kenya (going back to 1958), there are thousands of graves and so the tombstones were purposely selected according to the amount of narratives they contained. A systematic method of sampling would have resulted in missing the tombstones with the required narratives. A total of 536 photos of purposively selected tombstones were taken. The photos were then classed into various strata according to durations of decades from 1958 to the present time since "...the cemetery is constructed not only in synchrony, but also very much in diachrony..." (Vajta, 2021:21) and "must make do with what is left" (Coulmas, 2009:15) after all the weathering over time. This is therefore a diachronic study spanning from the oldest legible epitaphs to the most recent. Some decades supplied excessive data while others supplied very scanty information but the sampled tombstones were representative enough.

In order to analyze the genre and stylistic devices used in epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery this research used a survey sheet on which were captured the contents of inscription, the content type and the content style. Gravestones with similar inscription content, types and styles were

identified and grouped together. The survey sheet running into 22 pages was found too cumbersome to be included as an appendix to this work. By looking directly at the texts inferences were made concerning what the authors of the epitaphs implied about the dead so as to arrive at the relevance of the information. Explicatures and implicatures were identified and analyzed. In the presentation of material photographic evidence, the images (with the exception of one) were appropriately cropped to conceal identities.

1.11 The structure of the study

This research on the linguistic aesthetics of epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery is organized into four chapters with sub sections. The first chapter gives the introduction of to the study by tracing the background, stating the problem and reviewing the relevant literature. It also gives the research questions aligned to the objectives of the study. In this chapter we also have the rationale of the study, its scope and its limitations. Some concepts of particular importance to the study are explained. The chapter gives a lengthy treatment of the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995). At the end we have the methodology of data collection and data analysis.

The second chapter responds to the first research question by delving into the literary genres and stylistic devices identified on the data collected in form of photographs. Samples of the photos are given to illustrate exactly what the epitaphs are all about. The third chapter responds to the second and third research questions. Here we have the identification of explicatures and implicatures found on the epitaphs and tackling the question how they enhance relevance of the messages contained on the epitaphs. The fourth chapter of this study gives the conclusions arrived at and recommendations for further research. It also captures the limitations encountered in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LITERARY GENRES AND STYLISTIC DEVICES FOUND ON EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we answer the first research question of this study: What genres and stylistic devices can be found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery? The objective is to identify and describe the various genres and stylistic devices found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. The data collected using photographs was stratified into segments of time epochs covering a decade each from 1958 to 2021 except for the last epoch which is only three years long so far. The data was then coded appropriately before samples were selected from each stratum using a simple random method. The data analysis revealed two basic literary genres of poetry and prose presented in a myriad of stylistic devices.

The first part of this chapter discusses the literary genres and sub-genres in general and then describes poetry and prose as found in the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. The second part takes a general look at literary devices before discussing how they are manifested in the various epitaphs. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks on what has been observed from the data collected and analyzed.

2.2 Literary Genres

The word genre is of French origin and stands for “kind” or “type”. It may generally stand for a category of artistic work, some type of music or a class of written works. In this study it is used as a literary device and therefore stands for a class of literature. The most acceptable categorization of literary works entails poetry, drama/play, essay, short story and novel. Sometimes the term applies to the many literary sub-classes which include: comedy, tragedy, epic, thriller, science fiction, romance, and many others.

A genre is built on some specific peculiar conventions that bind writers so as to meet the expectations of readers. Although a writer may not abide by all the conventions of a genre, there are organizational traits associated with the various genres for the avoidance of confusion. When

certain tenets are observed there is a feeling of familiarity that helps in the processing of the work by readers.

The ancient Greek scholars divided literature into two main classes: tragedy and comedy. Today scholars have narrowed down the categories into three: poetry, prose and drama and then identified various sub genres under each genre.

Poetry comes out as the most intense category with writers pouring out their deepest emotions and thoughts using figurative language, rhythm, imagery and rhyming verses arranged in metrical patterns. Poetry emerged as oral literature long before the invention of writing whereby oral stories would be committed to memory in poetic recitals. Poetry has evolved from the ancient epic type sourced from the oral recitals such as Homer's *The Illiad*, to the classical Shakespearean type such as the sonnet, and finally to what we have today running from a few lines to a few pages. The common features of poetry are rhythm, sounds emanating from the combination of syllables, words and phrases, use of imagery and metaphoric language, the use of incomplete phrases rather than grammatically correct sentences and a structure using lines and stanzas. Although the basic characteristic of poetry is writing in verse with rhymes and calculated syllables we also have a free category of poetry without rhyme or any commonly expected patterns. There are others that cross from one genre to another such as the category called prose poetry. The main sub categories of poetry include: Songs, Ballads, Lyric, Epic, Dramatic and Narrative. The most well-known players in this genre include E. E. Cummings (*I carry your heart with me*) and Maya Angelou (*And still I rise*) to mention but a few.

Drama is the category written for performance on stage. In this class actors impersonate characters and present themselves through words and actions structured into acts and scenes. Props and imaginative dialogue help in creating visual experiences in the audience. Dramas are also known as plays. The most quoted dramas are the classics of Shakespeare such as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Under this category we have Tragedy, Comedy, Tragicomedy, History, Melodrama and Musicals.

The most common form of writing is the prose. Without limitations of rhythm or dialogue, prose resembles the ordinary everyday speech. In simple terms prose is any kind of

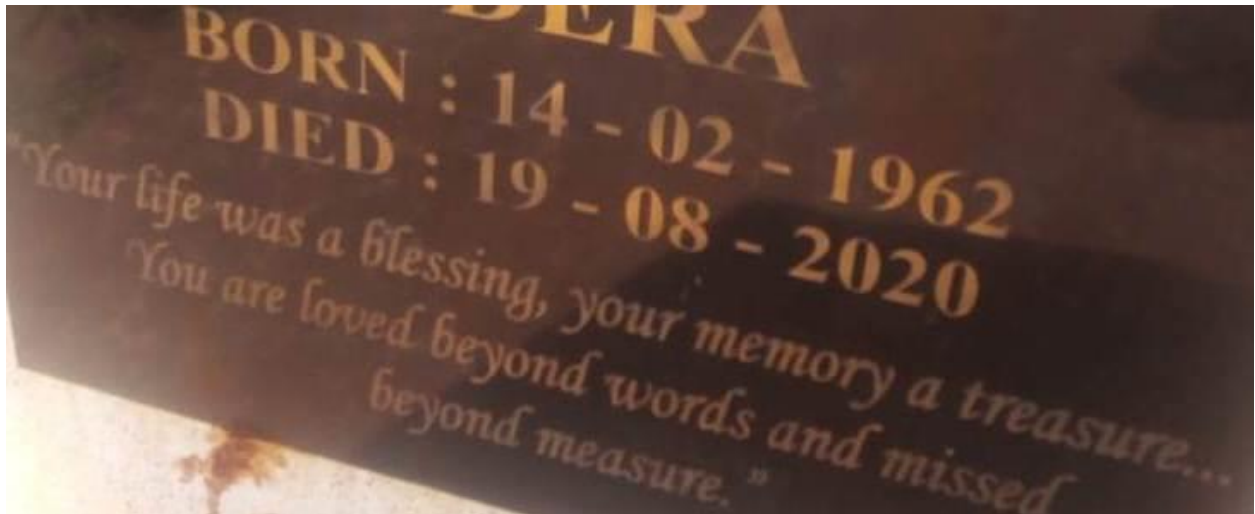
writing that is not poetry; this technically puts drama under prose writing. Although it is largely straightforward in style, it may employ figurative language, dialogue, characters and imagery. Unlike poetry, it uses complete grammatically correct sentences organized in paragraphs that focus on plot and characters rather than sound and rhythm. Prose is divided into two major classes: Fiction and Nonfiction. Fictions are imaginative stories using imaginary characters, scenes and events for the purpose of inspiring, informing or persuading readers. These are found in Novels, Novellas, Short Stories, Myths, Legends and Fables. Nonfiction on the other hand comprises of factual works involving stories of real people, places and events. Designed to inform and sometimes entertain, nonfiction writings may be found as essays, journals, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, or memoirs. There are well known fiction works (such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*) as well as nonfiction (such as Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*).

2.2.1 Literary Genres Found on Epitaphs at Lang'ata Cemetery

This research set the objective of identifying and describing the literary genres found on epitaphs at Lang'ata. The data yielded two of the three basic genres described above: poetry and prose; drama was not found. There were one hundred and twenty-six (126) selected samples out of which 46 fell under the category of poetry while the remaining bulk of 80 were categorized under prose; this accounted for 36.50% and 63.49% respectively.

The poetry found on the epitaphs was written in very simple English and was probably not originally intended to be poetic. The limitation of space on tombstones made some poems appear like prose but they have been reworked to recapture the rhymes that were evident to this researcher. Most of the epitaphs lacked punctuation marks and so this researcher had to decide where one phrase ended and another began. The poems ranged from two rhyming lines to a little bit more lines in single stanzas. Below are reproduced selected poems to represent some varieties both in the photographic and the reworked format:

Image 001 showing sample G033



Sample G033 is on one of the most recent tombstones in the 2018-2021 stratum. It is a simple poem with only two lines. The poetic nuances can be picked from the end rhyme shown by the words *treasure* and *measure*, the rising tension in the first line moving from *life* to a *memory* and the rhyme within line two as captured in the words *loved* and *missed*.

“Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure... (sic)

You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.”

Sample F020 belongs to a boy who died at the age of two and the family wrote the following poem:

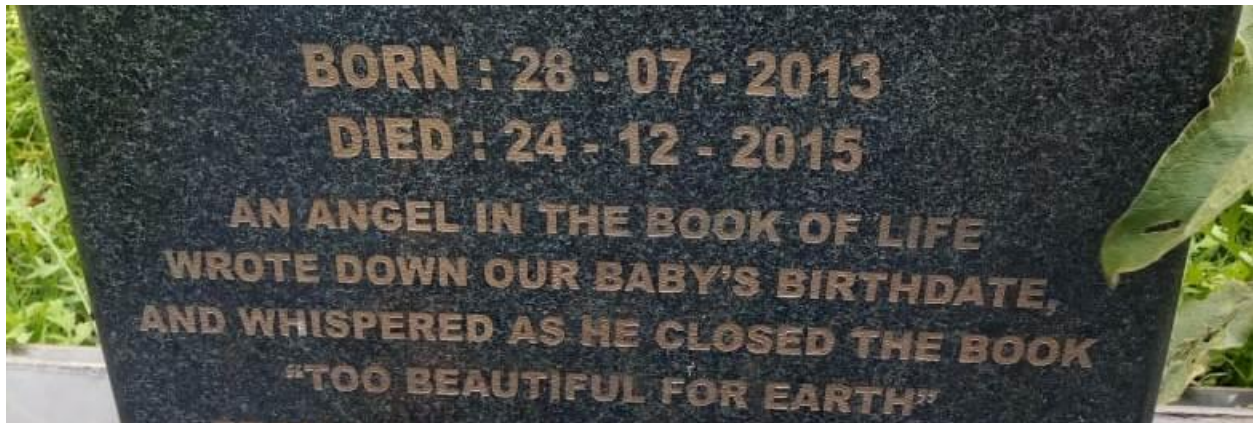
“An angel in the book of life

Wrote down our baby’s birth date

And whispered as he closed the book

“Too beautiful for earth””

Image 002 showing sample F020



This is a short poem loaded with the emotions of parents who lost their child at a tender age. The authors give an exposition of what happened to their child as the working of a caring angel who could not let the beautiful child continue living in what appears a place not befitting him. This choice of word gives the reader the opportunity to see the angel opening the book, writing the birth date and whispering something to no one in particular.

The poem captured as sample E021 belongs to the era 1998-2007.

“No farewell words were spoken

No time to say goodbye

You were gone before we knew it

Only God knows why

We give thanks for your life

May God rest your soul in eternal peace mum”

Image 003 showing sample E021

BORN : 22ND JANUARY 1955
DIED : 9TH JANUARY 2003
NO FAREWELL WORDS WERE SPOKEN
NO TIME TO SAY GOODBYE
YOU WERE GONE BEFORE WE KNEW IT
ONLY GOD KNOWS WHY.
WE GIVE THANKS FOR YOUR LIFE
MAY GOD REST YOUR SOUL IN
ETERNAL PEACE MUM.

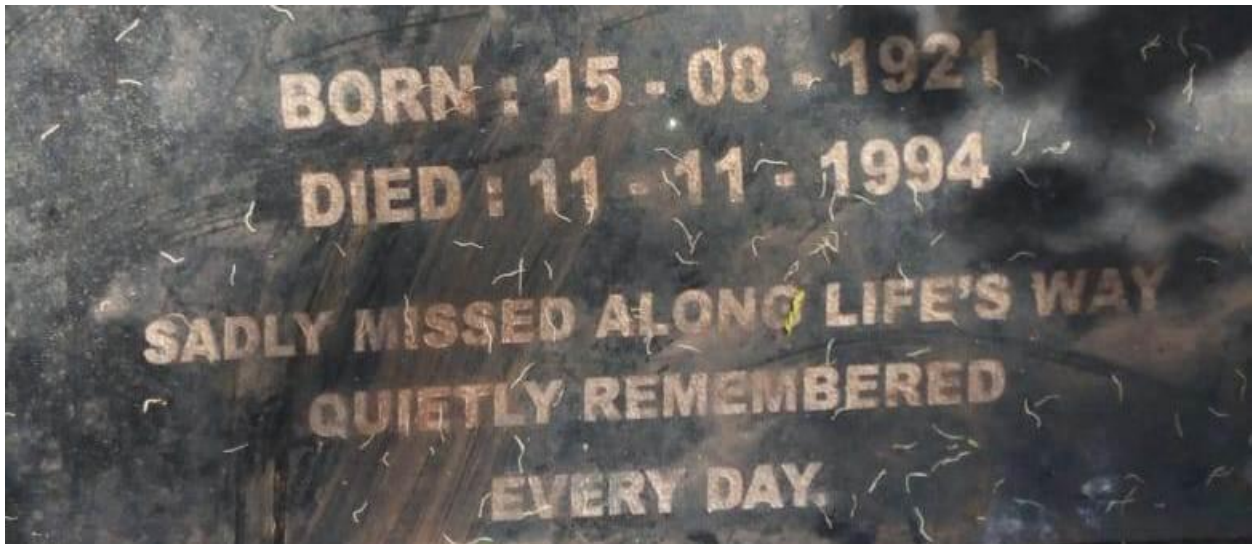
The epitaph is written as a whole stanza in honor of a dear mum. The reducing tension in the poem seems to follow the psychological path of the grieving process⁸ from denial to the acceptance of the will of God with gratitude.

The epitaph captured as sample D010 belongs to a man who died at the ripe age of seventy-three (73) and his loved ones chose poetry to express their emotions.

Sadly missed along life's way

Quietly remembered everyday

Image 004 showing sample D010



The authors craftily chose to start both lines with adverbs and end them with rhyming sounds captured in *way* and *day*. The two lines read rhythmically mirroring one another with the consoling word *remembered* coming to fill in the gap left by the sad word *missed*.

2.3 Stylistic Devices

Literary devices are the tools employed by writers in delivering their message and enhancing the ideas carried in those messages. Crystal (2003: 440) defines style as situationally distinctive uses of language by an author or speaker. This deliberate and unique manipulation of normal patterns of language help in the achievement intended artistic effects that leave the thumb print of the writer in the works. They help to highlight the crucial ideas, fortify the story and create a rapport between the readers and the characters and themes in the narrative. In their usage the communication of a message gets deeper than the visible printed words. They enhance the place of plot and characters and put them in a more visible light to help the reader reflect on the realities being narrated. Literary devices are sometimes used to give a hint at further themes, larger ideas and deeper hidden meanings. The devices may focus on the choice and use of lexicon while others build on how scenes play out in a story; some operate at the level of syntax while others focus on entire pieces of writings. It is a sign of a great writer when multiple devices are harmoniously used in a piece of writing. Literary works would remain plain and shallow without the help of stylistic devices.

The purpose of stylistic devices cannot be underestimated in any written text. They serve the following purposes:

- They intentionally embellish a text to make it better, crafty, more impactful so as to capture the interest of readers.
- They offer guidance to readers in the manner to interpret the message towards a certain direction.
- They elevate the message in a way that is more colorful than the standard presentation.
- They help in the telling of a story in a way that amplifies the tension and curiosity.
- They help in hiding layers of meaning interwoven into a text; the finding of the hidden meanings excites the interpreters of the work.

2.3.1 Stylistic Devices Found on Epitaphs at Lang'ata Cemetery

Stylisticians have established hundreds of stylistic devices in use among writers. While this study found eighty of these devices the data revealed the use of forty of them on the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. Some of the devices are so closely related that they are treated together in the interest of consistency. These devices are presented and described in this section in alphabetical order. At the appendix they will be presented in their frequencies across the decades from 1958 to date but in this section only the most representative images are presented for the purpose of illustration.

2.3.1.1 Alliteration, Assonance and Consonance

These three are closely connected sound devices commonly used in poetry. They all have to do with repetition of certain sounds. In alliteration initial consonant sounds are repeated in multiple words. When this repetition occurs anywhere else in the series of words we achieve consonance. Assonance, also known as vowel rhyme, involves the repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words. It is important to note that the vowels may not be identical but what is required is the vowel sound to be similar.

The use of these three devices creates emphasis, adds to aesthetic value and shapes the mood of the work. They also create rhythm and musical effects in the mind of the reader. The

writer may employ them to target certain words of importance to the overall message, or to target certain imageries or even to raise awareness concerning some crucial features. Here are examples of each device⁹:

Alliteration: *“I slipped slyly into the slow, slippery sled.”*

Consonance: *“The lock stuck quickly, so Mark called a locksmith.”*

Assonance: *“Water falls across the autumn rocks.”*

These three devices are captured in the following sampled epitaphs at Lang’ata cemetery: A030, B006, B014, and D008.

Image 005 showing sample D008



This epitaph coded as D008 captures both consonance and assonance in the Kiswahili words: **“DAIMA TUTAKUKUMBUKA.”** Assonance continues in the name of the deceased person **JULIANA FAYA.** We have assonance in the repetition of the vowel sounds /a/ and /u/ in the entire epitaph while consonance is found in the repetition of the consonant sounds /t/ and /k/ within the word **TUTAKUKUMBUKA.**

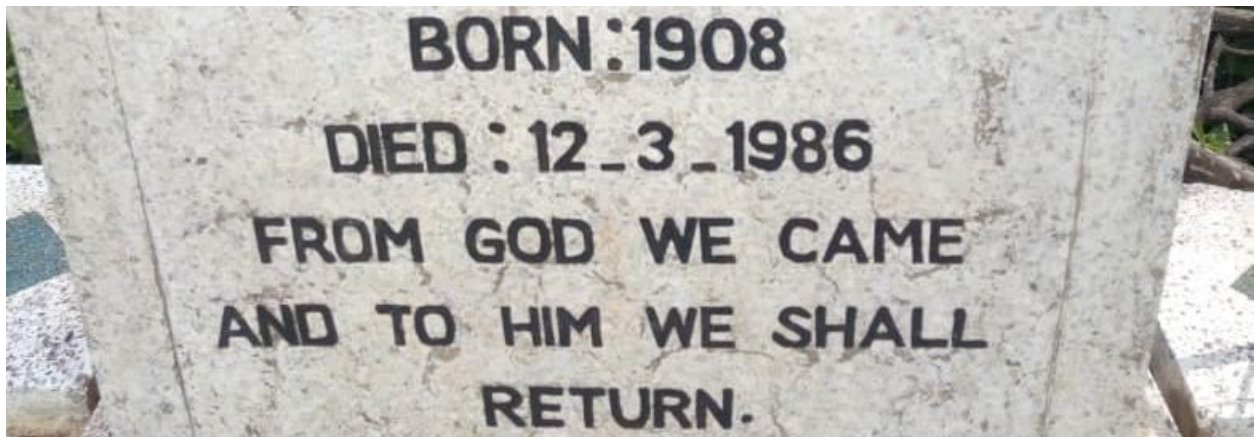
2.3.1.2 Allusion

Allusion is an indirect reference to a figure, place, event, idea, literary work, or a work of art outside the text under consideration in order to develop characters, craft storylines, and create connection to well-known works. When a reference is made to a piece work known to the reader

the interest is heightened. When a writer speaks of a character with the strength of Samson and Solomonic wisdom we get examples of biblical allusions.

This study came up with a number of allusions as captured in the following epitaphs: C008, C016, C018, D002, D014, D018, E006, E009, F130, F140 and G036.

Image 006 showing sample C008



This epitaph coded C008 is a Koranic¹⁰ allusion to *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* used by Muslims at death. Since the name of the deceased does not suggest any leaning to the Islamic faith this is likely to be an accidental allusion to the Koran. Here it is stated in the English as:

“From God we came and to him we shall return.”

The direct translation from the Koranic words states: *“To God we belong and to God we return”*

2.3.2.3 Anaphora/Epiphora

Anaphora is a device that gives emphasis to certain words by repeating them at the beginning of sentences. This device is often used in poetry and speeches with the intended outcome of provoking emotional responses in the audience. It is popular in political rhetoric and the delivery of sermons. One of the best examples of anaphora from history is the famous speech made by Martin Luther King Junior in 1963¹¹ entitled *“I Have A Dream”* whose excerpts are reproduced here with emphasis added:

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed...

“... I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood.

“... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character...”

Closely related to anaphora is the device known as epiphora or epistrophe which is the repetitive use of the same word or phrase at the end of a sentence or clause. While anaphora targets the beginning of a sentence, epiphora focuses on the end to evoke a great emotional impact and response on the reader as shown by the following example taken from President Lyndon B. Johnson’s speech, *The American Promise*¹²:

“There is no negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.”

The data from Lang’ata cemetery shows evidence of anaphora in samples A002, A004, G012 and G051. The epitaph coded as G051 is reproduced below with emphasis on the targeted lexical items:

“In loving memory of...

*We **grief** because we loved you*

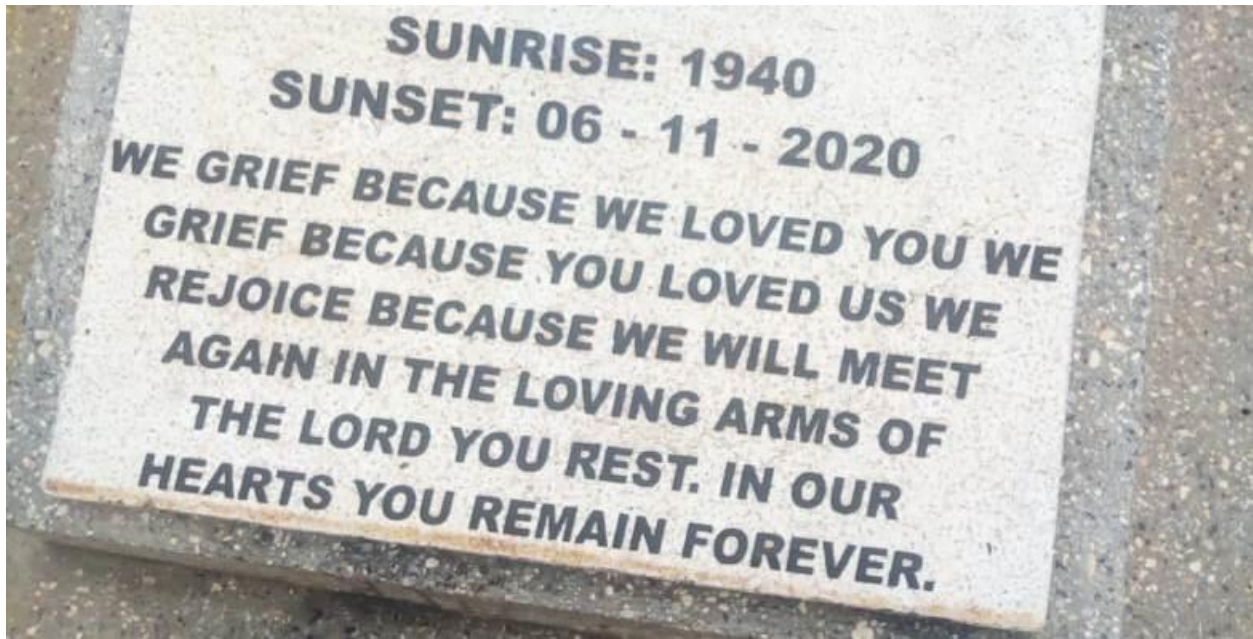
*We **grief** because you loved us*

*We **rejoice** because we will meet again*

In the loving arms of the Lord you rest

In our hearts you remain forever.”

Image 007 showing sample G051.



The epitaph repeats the words *we grief* in the first two lines and then changes the verb in the third line to *rejoice* but with the same pronoun *we*. The preposition *in* is repeated in the fourth and fifth line. This anaphoric repetition not only calls attention to those words and the outpouring of emotions but also creates a poetic rhyme at the very start of phrases.

2.3.1.4 Anthropomorphism/Personification

Anthropomorphism applies human characteristics to realities that are non-human such as the weather, animals and inanimate objects. This is done in a literal rather than figurative manner such that we can have “the sun with a smiling face” or “a cat giving a speech”. Personification on the other hand uses figurative language to describe non-human entities as human-like. We therefore have such statements as “the wind whistled through the trees” yet we know that only humans have the capability of whistling.

Aspects of anthropomorphism were found in epitaph G003, G072 and G075. The poetic writing found in epitaph G072 is reproduced below in an edited format to show aspects of anthropomorphism:

“Our time has come to say good bye.

And though I’m gone I did not die

I'm in your thoughts, I'm in your heart

I'm by your side though we are apart

so when life seems to be unfair

Remember the light and I will be there

Whenever you need to say my name

I'm there inside an eternal flame

And then, when you must come this way alone

I'll greet you with a smile and a "welcome."

"Home sweet home.""

Image 008 showing sample G072



In this text the dead person is anthropomorphically endowed with the power of speech. While the adage goes, dead men tell no tales, here is one on whose mouth words are put by the crafters of the epitaph.

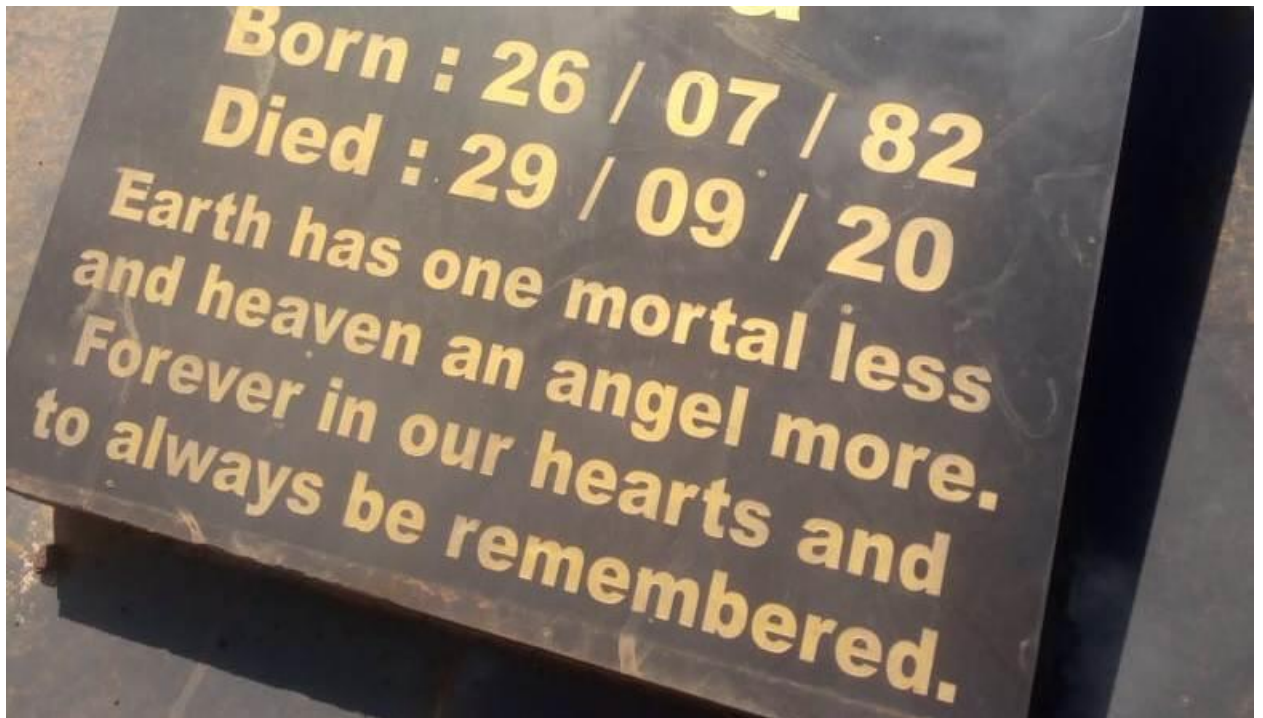
2.3.1.5 Antithesis

Antithesis is achieved when an author puts two contrasting ideas or characters close to each other in a string of words. In this contrast the reader is able to get the intended key message. In *Hamlet* for instance, Shakespeare makes the famous antithetical question: “*to be or not to be?*” The following words attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe¹³ are also an example of antithesis: “*Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.*”

Antithesis is found in epitaphs A004, C002, F090, F110 and G018. Here we reproduce epitaph G018 both in text and in a photographic image:

“Earth has one mortal less and heaven an angel more...”

Image 009 showing sample G018



Here the antithesis is achieved by the contrast between *earth* and *heaven*, *mortal* and *angel*, *less* and *more*; earth is the land of the living while heaven is where the dead supposedly go to dwell; the living humans are faced with imminent mortality while angels are believed to be immortal; the loss of a mortal on earth is counted as a gain in the realm of angels in heaven.

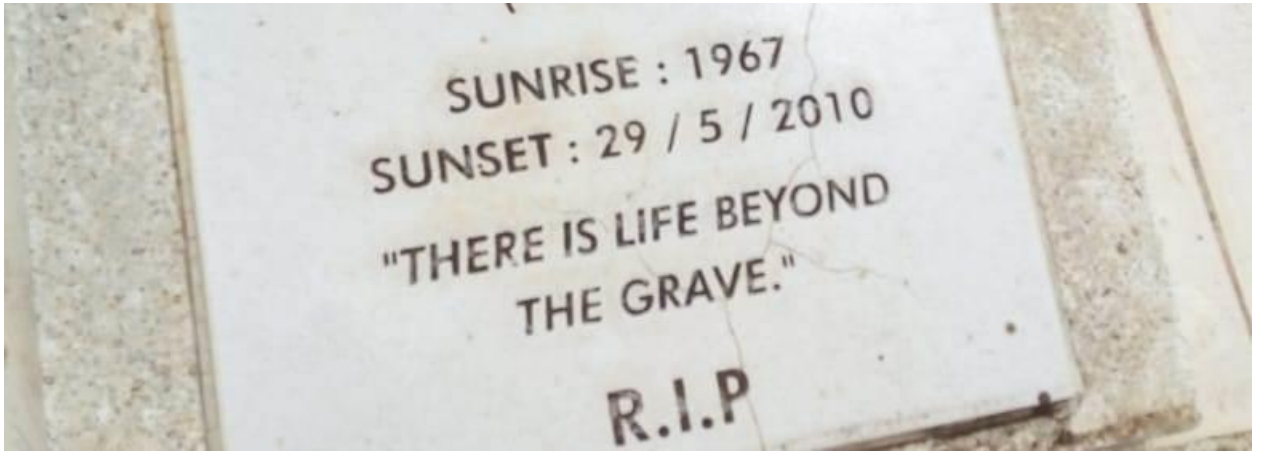
2.3.1.6 Aphorism

Universally accepted truths stated concisely and to the point are called aphorisms. Their language is witty and memorable and get used so many times that they tend to be proverbial. One such truth is *“To err is human, to forgive divine”* attributed to Alexander Pope¹⁴.

There is one instance of aphorism captured in F165:

“There is life beyond the grave.”

Image 010 showing sample F165



People often use these words for consolation in the event of death and mourning. These are some of the most natural and spontaneous words uttered in such scenarios and so the expression qualifies to be an aphorism especially for the vast majority of people who believe in life after death.

2.3.1.7 Apostrophe

An apostrophe is a device in which speech is directed to someone absent or dead, or an inanimate or abstract object as if it were human. Consider the following words attributed to Shakespeare¹⁵: *“Work on, my medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught ...”*

Occasions of apostrophe in the present study include: F155, F185, G045 and G063. In epitaph F155 we have the following text:

“Dear son, the day you took your last breath was the day our world went dark ...the hardest part wasn't losing you, it was living without you. We love and miss you dearly...you'll forever remain in our hearts. You were our hardest goodbye...”

Image 011 showing sample F155



The bereaved address their departed son in an epistolary style as though he went on a journey to another place where they can only reach him through a letter. Just like dead men tell no tales, they can hear none either but here we find this boy addressed as if he can perceive the words and emotions of the grieving family.

2.3.1.8 Archaism

Archaism is the use of old fashioned style of language or old fashioned words. Such words as 'thou', 'thy', 'shalt', 'doth', 'maketh' or 'thine' are considered outdated by today's standards. Some languages such as Latin are considered dead by virtue of having no native speakers anymore; such a language found in use today would be considered an example of archaism.

Archaism is found in epitaphs A006, E012, F030 and G039. In sample A006 we find the use of the word *thy* while the other three use the Latin words *in pace*, translated to "in peace."

Image 012 showing sample G039



The Latin language is considered archaic and dead¹⁶ since it has no native speakers at the moment. It is mostly used today only in scholarly and legal jargon. To find it on an epitaph is therefore considered an aspect of archaism.

2.3.1.9 Cacophony/Euphony

When explosive consonants such as B, D, T, K, P, G, C, CH, Q, and X are placed close to one another the resultant punch is a cacophony. This crash of sounds brings the reader to life by demanding extra emphasis on particular sounds or combination of sounds. This is commonly used when targeting certain key words or phrases of interest as seen in the following slogan for Kit Kat candy bar: *“Have a Break, Have a Kit Kat.”* Euphony on the other hand brings together easy-to-pronounce sounds such as those created by letters L, M, N, F, soft C, and R. These soft, flowing sounds transmit a message of elegance and fluidity creating a mood of beauty in the text as shown by the following quotation from Homer’s *Illiad*¹⁷: *“When Zeus...stills the winds asleep in the solid drift.”*

Cacophony and euphony can be found in C018, D006 and E036. Sample E036 aptly captures both cacophony and euphony:

*“In our heart your **memory** lingers*

*Sweetly, **tender, fond and true.***

God bless you and keep you till we meet again. Rest in peace.”

Image 013 showing sample E036

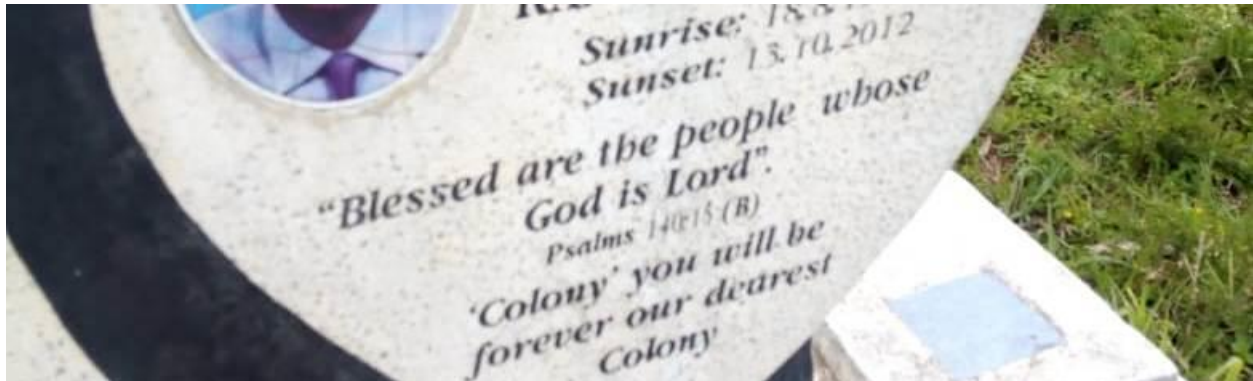


The orthographic reproduction of this epitaph has been done with added emphasis to point out the contrast between the explosive and soft consonants, and therefore indicate cacophony and euphony respectively.

2.3.1.10 Charactonymy

Charactonymy is achieved when a fictional character bears a name with a symbolic meaning that describes him or her. In Dickens' *Great Expectations*¹⁸, for instance, Miss Havisham is known to have a sham in her life of pretense.

Image 014 showing sample F150



The above epitaph coded as F150 belongs to a man known as Cornelius but whose family nicknamed “Colony” probably on account of the closeness of the sounds in the two lexical items. He who was “Colony” to them is then described in the epitaph as *“forever our dearest Colony.”* This description moves the reader from the reality of a dead person to the reality of a character that bears “*Colony*” as both name and nickname.

2.3.1.11 Chiasmus

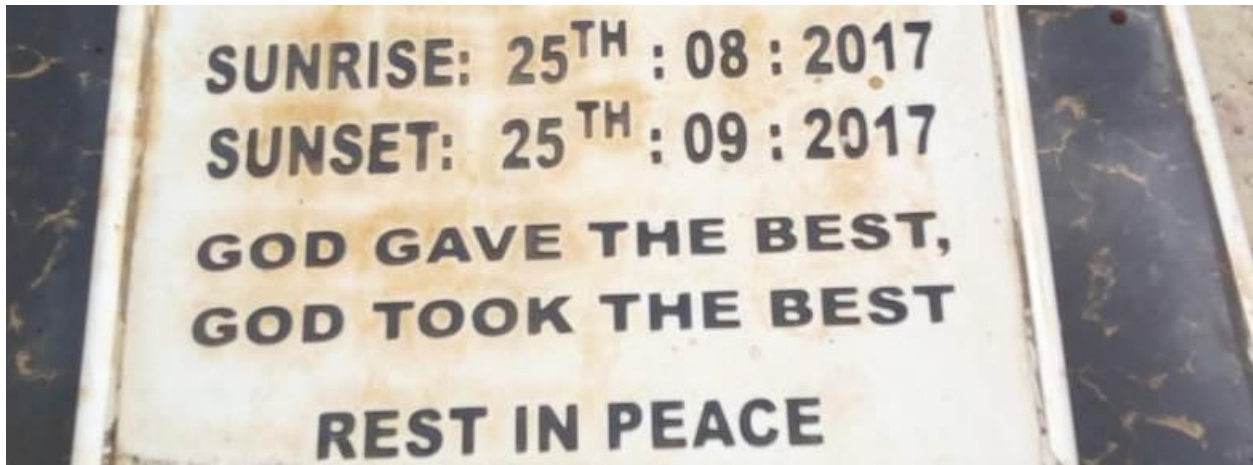
Chiasmus is a device in which are inverted two or more parallel clauses. The phrases in question must be similar and dealing with the same concept; then they are given inverse grammatical structures. This device greatly creates symmetry and balance in a sentence, phrase, or slogan. Here is an example of chiasmus attributed to the US president John F. Kennedy¹⁹: *“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”*

A chiasmus can be found in epitaph F090 crafted for a baby who only lived for one month as the best thing that ever happened to his parents:

“God gave the best,

God took the best”

Image 015 showing sample F090



The inversion is achieved through the opposing meanings of the verbs *give* and *take*. The phrases are about God doing something but the things he does are diametrically opposed to one another.

2.3.1.12 Climax/Anticlimax

A text can be arranged in such a manner that tension either builds upwards or downwards. When tension gradually ascends, we achieve a climax in the text; when tension dwindles down towards a halt, we have an anticlimax. The biblical passage of 2 Timothy 4: 7 is an example of tension building up to a climax: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, I wait the crown of glory."* The reader can almost feel the climb up a ladder. Here is an example of going down the ladder of tension: *"In spite of his wealth and influence he fell into bad company and ended up rotting in jail."*

Climax and anticlimax can be found in epitaph B004, B010, C004, D004, E021, F100, F185 and F190. Climax and anticlimax are depicted in epitaph C004 below:

"In loving memory of...

Lonely is the home without you

Life to us is not the same

All the world would be like heaven

If we could have you back again

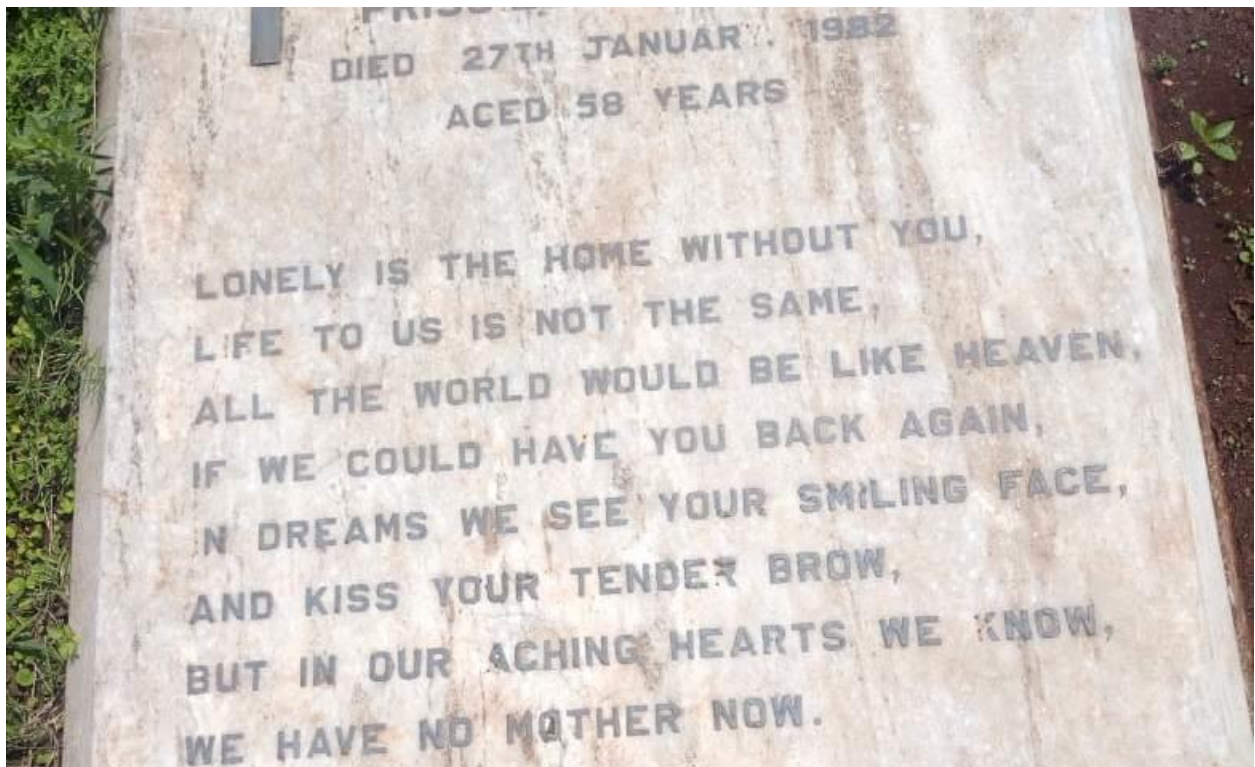
In dreams we see your smiling face

And kiss your tender brow

But in our aching hearts we know

That we have no mother now”

Image 016 showing sample C004



There is an initial build-up of upward tension which turns to an abrupt anticlimax in the last two lines of the poem; this radiates the grief of the bereaved family ultimately leading to the helplessness captured in the last word: *now*. The reader can almost hear the children of this mother utter that last word with a falling tone thus capturing the depth of tension.

2.3.1.13 Code mixing/ Code switching

Code mixing and code switching are often used in speech but also find their way in written works. When a writer throws into a discourse words or phrases from a language other

than the basic one in use we end up in code mixing. When the writer veers off completely from one language to another we have code switching. In Hoffman's theory, one of the reasons for using these devices is to emphasize something; they are also used to express affection and to impress a certain audience.

We find code mixing and code switching in epitaphs in B008, D006, E015, E027, E033, E048, F005, F160 and F185.

Image 017 showing sample B008



The epitaph B008 (*LOVING FATHER AND GUKA IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER*) is mainly written in English and then a single word in Gikūyū is thrown in. The word *guka* is an affectionate translation of, and a better choice than, the English word *grandfather*.

2.3.1.14 Colloquialism

Colloquialism employs casual and informal language in writing so as to provide context to characters and plots; it makes writing appear more authentic. It would sound unreal for a novel with modern American youth addressing one another as formally as: “*Good morning, Jane. How was your night?*” It would be a more realistic approach to find: “*Hey what’s up man? How’z ya night?*”

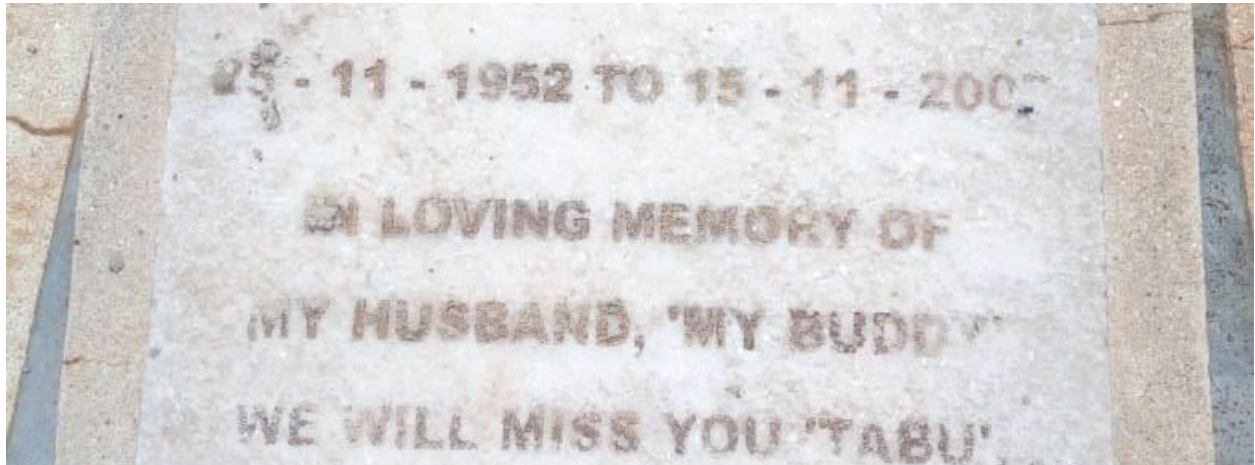
Colloquialism can be found in E039 where a wife chooses to address her departed husband as her “*buddy*” thus:

“In loving memory of

my husband, “my buddy.”

We will miss you “Tabu.””

Image 018 showing sample E039



This indicates a genuine friendship in marriage. It is not an everyday use of language for spouses to address each other as *buddies*. The colloquialism is therefore purposely used to indicate the closeness the couple enjoyed in life.

2.3.1.15 Diction

Diction entails a particular choice of words meant to communicate both meaning and emotions of the writer. This takes care of both denotative and connotative meanings of words. The words *stubborn* and *tenacious*, for example, carry the same basic denotative meaning but are opposites in terms of their emotional backgrounds; the first one is an insult while the second is a compliment. Similarly, a person who bargains for everything at the market may be considered either *thrifty* (compliment) or *stingy* (insult). It is by examining diction that we arrive at the author’s tone or attitude.

Diction is said to be formal when high class words are chosen to target people with higher education. It is informal when it employs everyday conversational style. When language addresses the youth using newly coined words and phrases it is considered slang. Diction is said

to be colloquial when words used in daily life are put down in writing as shown below by epitaph coded B012.

Image 019 showing sample B012

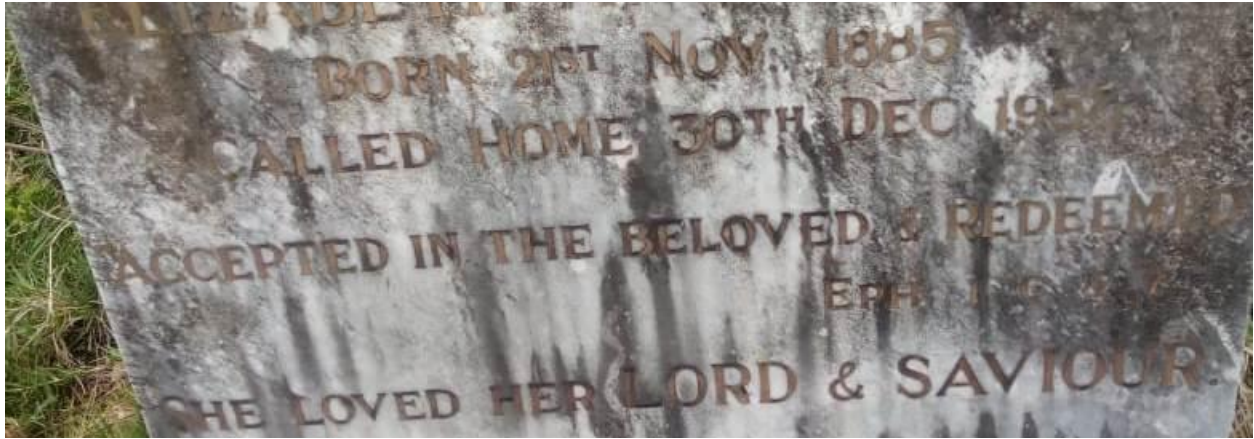


The sample coded as B012 is an epitaph to “*our beloved mother and granny.*” The word *granny* employs the colloquial diction to address a departed grandmother with affection. The writers of this epitaph would as well have chosen the formal *grandmother*, the informal *grandma* or even the Kenyan slang from sheng, *shosh*.

2.3.1.16 Euphemism

The term *Euphemism* is derived from the Greek word *euphēmos*, meaning "good speech." This is a polite way of putting in words what would ordinarily be unpleasant to the audience. It allows a speaker to say things indirectly rather than literally so as to soften the impact of information in the interest of politeness, discretion and courtesy in such matters as death, aging, sex, bodily functions and many others. It offers inoffensive and agreeable substitutes where bluntness would be considered inappropriate. It is often loaded with humor. For example, mental disability is referred to as *a loose screw*; a bald head is *a thin top* while to be short is to be *vertically challenged*.

Image 021 showing sample A028.



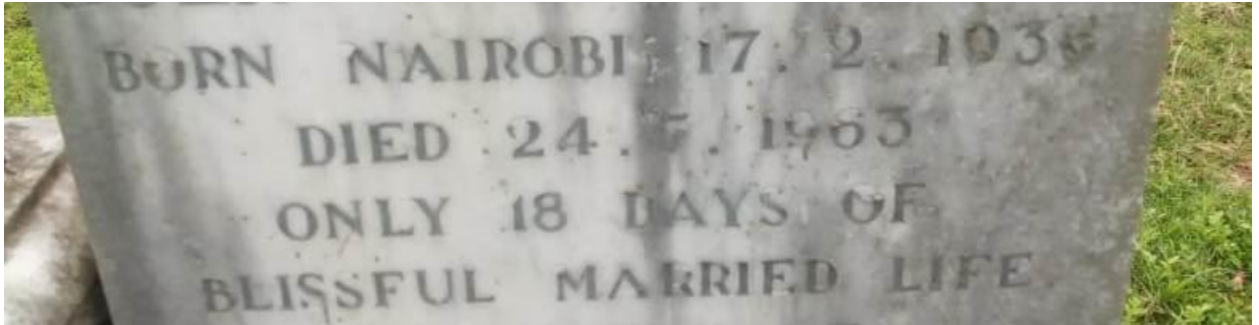
Death is an eventuality too harsh and blunt to address directly; people therefore seek for expressions that would be inoffensive while addressing it as shown in samples A028, A030, D014, F070 and F155. In epitaph A028, whose image is shown above, death is regarded as being “*called home*” while the intensity of the loss the bereaved should feel on earth is reduced to “*accepted in the beloved and the redeemed*.”

2.3.1.17 Exposition

When the narrative provides background information in order to help the reader understand what is going on we call it exposition. A richer understanding of the characters, setting, and events is achieved when this device is used together with description and dialogue. It should be used in a controlled way lest the work turns out boring and missing the intended emotional impact. A good example can be found in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*²⁰: “*The Dursley’s had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it.*”

Exposition can be found in A010, D012 and F020. Sample A010 from the first decade of the cemetery serves as an illustration for this device.

Image 022 showing sample A010



This epitaph depicts the sad story of a woman who died after *only 18 days of blissful married life*. This appears to be an extra piece of information not necessary on an epitaph but that is what hit most at the heart of the authors of this epitaph; with this exposition they invite the readers to the world of sorrow in the midst of a short span of blissful marriage.

2.3.1.18 Flashback

Flashback intentionally interrupts a narrative to recapture past events. This is an interesting angle of exposition that gradually reveals to the reader events outside the current timeline. This device renders the plot clearer by offering background to contexts, events, and characters. For instance, one chapter may depict the present life of a character, and then the next chapter presents the character's life years past; by shedding some light on past events, the second chapter makes the first one clearer.

The epitaph coded F155 (cf. image 011 under section 2.2.1.7, apostrophe) reads as follows:

“Dear son, the day you took your last breath was the day our world went dark...the hardest part wasn't losing you, it was living without you. We love and miss you dearly...you'll forever remain in our hearts. You were our hardest goodbye...”

The text gives us a flashback to the day the son of this family passed on and enables the reader to understand the pain of that farewell; that past event brought to the fore by these words made their world go dark.

2.3.1.19 Imagery

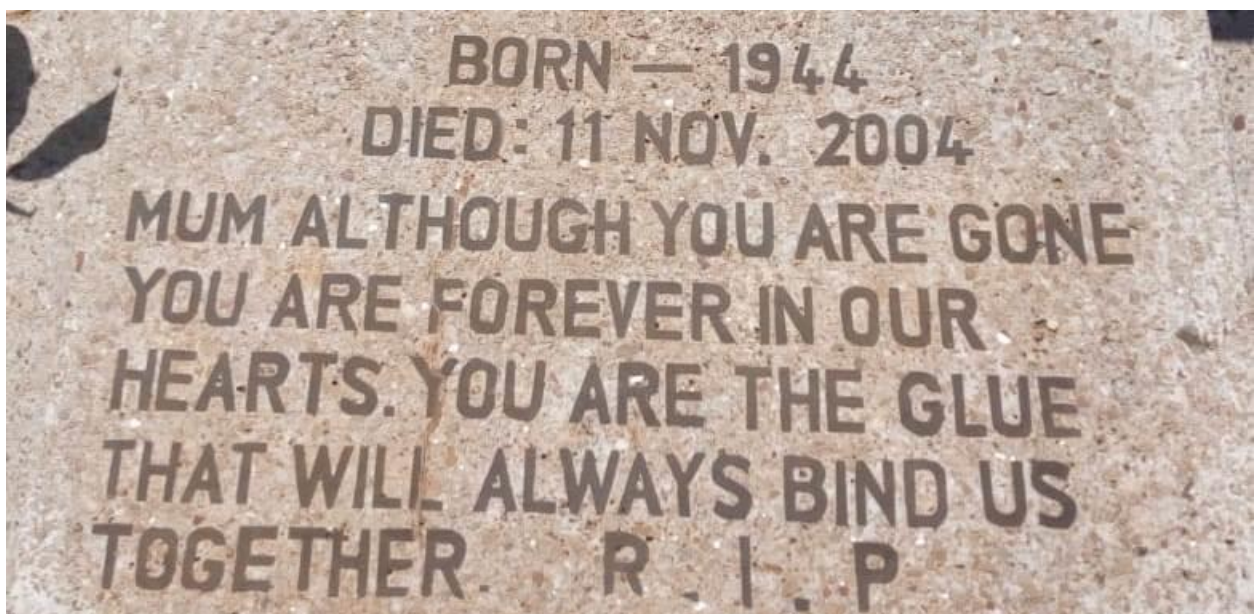
Imagery employs visually descriptive or figurative language in writing so as to appeal to the senses of the reader; it is equivalent to painting a picture using words. Works of art are brought to life when figures and descriptions manage to provide sights, tastes, smells, sounds, feelings, and deep emotion to the reader. For example, E. B. White gives a vivid description of a scene we can almost see and touch in *Charlotte's Web*²¹:

“In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds, popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones and wooden sticks of lollipops.”

In the present study imagery is found in E024, E030, F005 and F075. This device can be illustrated using sample E030.

*“Mum although you are gone you are forever in our hearts. You are the **glue** that will always bind us together.”*

Image 024 showing sample E030



Anyone coming by this epitaph can't help but see the cohesive family held together by some substance called *glue* that is the powerful image of the matriarch of this bereaved family; even in death the matriarch metaphorically continues to be their binding force.

2.3.1.20 Irony

Irony presents a situation whereby things as presented on the surface are opposite of what they actually are. Irony is said to be verbal (antiphrasis) when words express something other than what they literally mean. This is often employed in euphemism, sarcasm, humor and litotes for artistic purposes. For instance, it is verbal irony when someone claims to have worked so hard to complete their thesis in a decade. Situational irony is achieved by creating a gap between the readers' expectations and the reality. Dramatic irony happens when the audience is privy to some facts hidden to the characters in a story. The tragic ending of *Romeo and Juliet*²² for instance presents us with dramatic irony whereby the audience is aware that Romeo and Juliet are both alive but neither knows that the other is still living; the characters separately partake of their poison with no idea of what the audience is privy to.

Epitaph B002 is hereby presented as an example of irony.

In loving memory of my beloved husband...

He who believes in me will live even when he dies. John 11:25

Image 025 showing sample B002



This epitaph presents a biblical quotation that gives the irony in one of the paradoxes of the Christian faith: *life in death*. In the eyes of a Christian this is just a plain statement but in the eyes of the wider world in death there can only be death and nothing more.

2.3.1.21 Juxtaposition

When two or more dissimilar characters, themes, or ideas are put side by side in a bid to emphasize one or all of them through contrast, we achieve juxtaposition. This plays on the idea of reaching the understanding of something through what it is not. The opening paragraph of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*²³, conjures up the societal disparities captured in these juxtaposed words: “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness...*”

Juxtaposition is captured in samples: A004, A026, B002 and F040. The epitaph coded F040 is reproduced here to illustrate juxtaposition.

“In loving memory of...

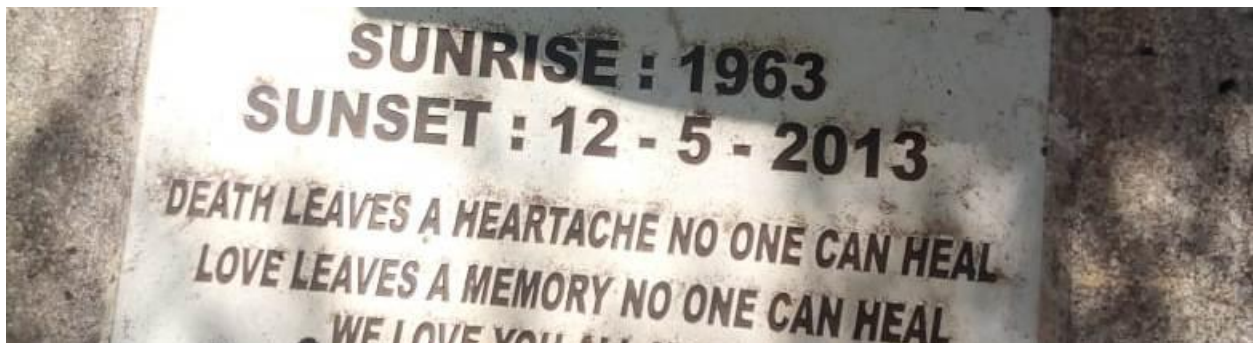
*Death leaves a **heartache** no one can heal*

*Love leaves a **memory** no one can heal*

We love you all mama C

By husband & children. R.I.P”

Image 026 showing sample F040



This epitaph captures both the pains and the hopes of a bereaved family by juxtaposing *heartache* and *memory* as two realities no one can heal. The realities of death and love, heartache and memory are antagonistically made to mirror one another in this epitaph.

2.3.1.22 Metonymy

Metonymy is a device in which an attribute substitutes another thing that is closely associated with it, or a part substitutes a whole entity. Sometimes metonyms serve as synonyms. We use metonyms for example when we claim that the government has spoken by saying: *state house has spoken*; when Kenya sends a message of territorial threat to Uganda, it is reported as: *Nairobi threatens Kampala*.

The data collected for the current study has one instance of metonymy as part of sample C014 in the words of Edward Bulwer-Lytton²⁴ highlighted below:

“In loving memory of...

A loving son, brother and uncle

Will be remembered for his honorable service for the liberation of Uganda

“The pen is mightier than the sword.”

Death where is your victory? Where is your sting? 1Cor 15:55.”

Image 027 showing sample C014



Edward Bulwer-Lytton coined the words: “*The pen is mightier than the sword*” with double metonymy: “*the pen*” stands for “*the written word*” and “*the sword*” stands for “*violence*.” The person honored in this epitaph is likely to have been a freedom fighter who diplomatically used his pen rather than take up arms during the liberation of Uganda from colonial rule.

2.3.1.23 Parallelism

Parallelism creates a parallel form by intentionally placing side by side two or more parts of a sentence or sentences whose grammatical structure is similar. There is a powerful example attributed to Benjamin Franklin²⁵: “*Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn.*”

Parallelism can be found in sample F090 whose image was used elsewhere (cf. image 009 under section 2.2.1.5, antithesis). The text of the epitaph is reproduced below in an edited form to show the parallels:

“In loving memory of...

God gave the best

God took the best

Rest in peace”

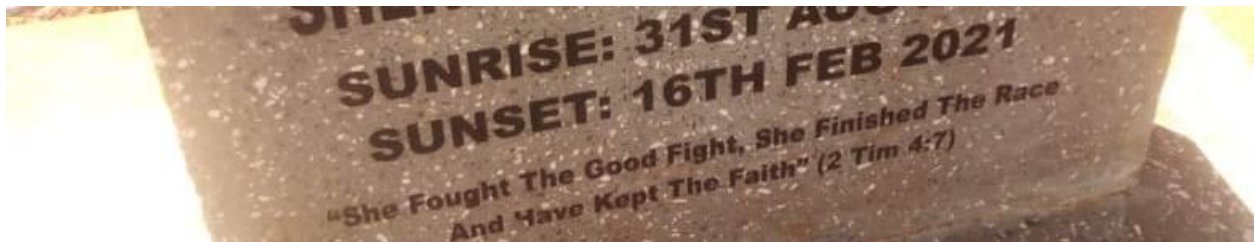
A focus on the verbs in the highlighted phrases shows not only chiasmus and antithesis but also parallelism. The verbal items (*give* and *take*) are the only different categories in the phrases and in their parallel contrast the authors of the epitaph abruptly turn the world upside down in the mind of the reader.

2.3.1.24 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing entails rewriting or rewording an original text in different words without altering the meaning intended. This device indicates that a person has understood the original idea and can reproduce it in his or her own words while keeping the original meaning.

This stylistic device can be found in sample D020, D022 and G009. In sample G009 the crafters of the epitaph purport to quote the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7 thus: *“She Fought The Good Fight. She Finished The Race. And Have Kept The Faith. (2 Tim 4:7)”*

Image 028 showing sample G009



Paul’s words are taken verbatim and applied to a beloved daughter represented by the third person pronoun “she.” In the original text Paul uses the first person pronoun “I”. This change of pronoun indicates that this is an instance of paraphrasing rather than quoting from the original.

2.3.1.25 Pun

A pun is kind of wordplay for dramatic effect. There are various types of puns. Antanaclasses repeats the same word or phrase but with a different meaning each time. For example, *cats like Felix like Felix* translates to cats that are similar to the cat called Felix like the brand of cat food

known as Felix²⁶. Malapropism plays on the sound of words to replace a correct word or phrase with an incorrect one as seen in “*optical delusion*” instead of “*optical illusion*”. Paradox uses words in self-contradiction. For example, the Bible in Mathew 5 in the beatitudes teaches: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit...*”The device known as paraprosookian is a kind of pun in which words are arranged in a manner that gives an unexpected ending to a sentence. For example, *don’t miss any course, eat them all*. The most expected ending has nothing to do with courses of a meal. Finally, in polyptoton, words with same root are repeated in a sentence with different meanings but for comic effect. For instance, in a situation of poor eating habits it may be stated: *what he ate was gradually eating him up*.

In the sample code-named A018 we find an epitaph ending in a way least expected.

“Sacred to the memory of...

A pioneer who devoted his life to Kenya

The people owe him much”

Image 029 showing sample A018



We do not expect people to use an epitaph to make claims of how much a nation owed them for their patriotism. One of the expected endings would have been “*the people will always cherish his memory.*” The unexpected last line places this epitaph at the level of a pun of the paraprosookian type.

2.3.1.26 Plain text

Plain text is not a stylistic device but rather the lack of it. This is a situation where a text is written without any embellishment, in a plain language. To write without any stylistic device can be viewed as the style of some writers and so it finds its place in this study. There are 25 instances (at more than 15% this is the greatest number of epitaphs) written without any stylistic devices: B016, B020, C006, C012, E003, E042, E045, F015, F025, F035, F045, F055, F095, F105, F115, F125, G015, G021, G027, G030, G042, G048, G057, G060 and G069.

The best example is the following plain prose text containing a biblical quotation as found in sample F025.

Image 030 showing sample F025



“2nd Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight

I have finished the race

I have kept the faith.

We lost our hero but we are happy that you went to rest with the angels. Tony we loved you so much we can't forget your laughter and happiness, always smiling. We miss you so much. Missed by mum, sisters, brothers, family and friends. Rest in peace till we meet again."

A reader who encounters these words will immediately discover the simplicity of the language and that no attempt was made to twist the string of words. There is no hidden meaning in the words. The closest the epitaph comes to a literary device is the apparent euphemism in the notions of *sunrise*, *sunset* and *rest* which nevertheless fades away due to the commonness of these ideas in situations of bereavement.

2.3.1.27 Point of view

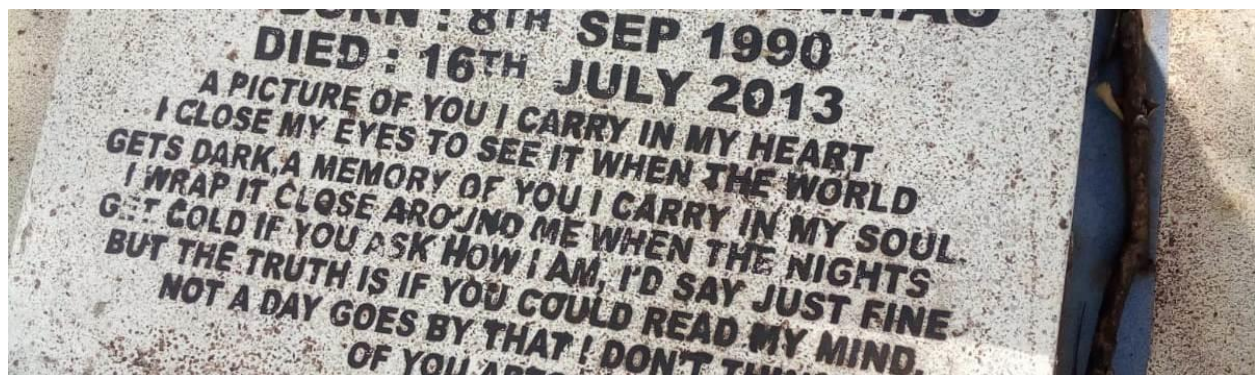
Every story has a mode in which it is narrated to issue in different impacts on the experience of the reader. This is called the point of view. Most narratives are made in either first person or third person perspective. The second person is rarely used because it makes a direct address to the reader, *you*.

The different points of view can be found in samples B002, E006 and F050. We illustrate this using the sample coded F050 with emphasis added:

"In loving memory of...

A picture of you I carry in my heart. I close my eyes to see it when the world gets dark. A memory of you I carry in my soul. I wrap it close around me when the nights get cold. If you ask how I am I'd say just fine. But the truth is if you could read my mind not a day goes by that I don't think of you...."

Image 031 showing sample F050



In this sample the author pours out his or her heart using the first person point of view to show the deep sense of loss; the pronouns “I”, “me” and “my” are used repeatedly. Then there is some use of the second person pronoun “you” and finally the deceased is addressed in person as *Apton*. This is meant to be an address between the speaking bereaved and the silent deceased, “I-you” kind of conversation.

2.3.1.28 Rhyme and Rhythm

To cleverly create memorable lines, writers repeat identical or similar sounds at the end of words and at the end of lines. This technique usually used in poetry, and to a small extent in prose, is referred to as rhyme. Similar sounds are easy to recall and make the message to easily stick in the mind of readers. Here is a simple rhyme from part of A.E Housman’s poem *Loveliest of Trees*²⁷:

“Loveliest of trees, the cherry now

Is hung with bloom along the bough

And stands about the woodland ride

Wearing white for Eastertide”

Rhythm works with a measured flow of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllables in both prose and poetry. Rhythm strengthens the presentation of the meaning of words and ideas in a piece of work. Hilaire Belloc²⁸ for example put together the rhythmic poem *Henry King* partly reproduced below:

“The chief defect of Henry king

Was chewing little bits of string

At last he swallowed some which tied

Itself in ugly notes inside”

Rhyme is variously found in A002, A006, D010, F010, F040, F060, F080, F180, G033 and G072 while rhythm was identified in samples A006, A026, F065, F160 and G054. For our illustration we use the sample A006 and G072. Sample A006 reads thus:

“In ever loving and cherished memory of our darling mother...

Who left this life on...

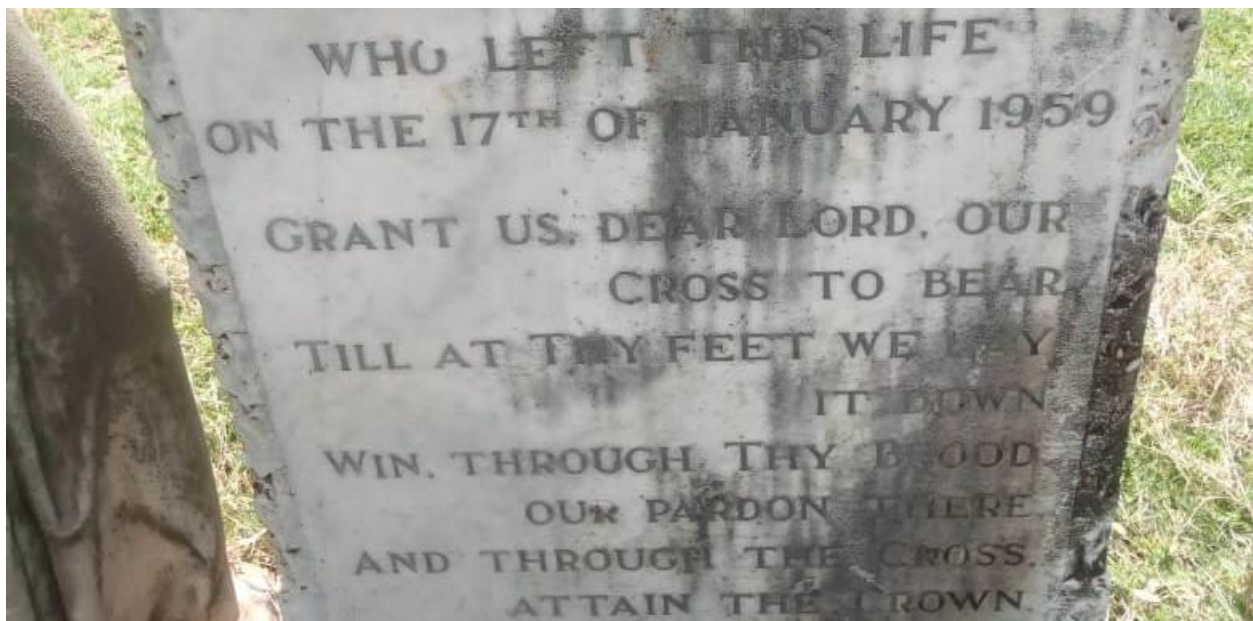
*Grant us oh Lord our cross to **bear***

*Till at thy feet we lay it **down***

*win through thy blood our pardon **there***

*And through the cross attain the **crown**”*

Image 032 showing sample A006



Sample G072 reads as follows:

“Our time has come to say good bye.

And though I'm gone I did not die

I'm in your thoughts, I'm in your heart

*I'm by your side though we are **apart***

*so when life seems to be **unfair***

*Remember the light and I will be **there***

*Whenever you need to say my **name***

*I'm there inside an **eternal flame***

And then, when you must come this way alone

I'll greet you with a smile and a "welcome."

"Home sweet home.""

The sample coded A006 has one of the oldest tombstones dating back to 1959 and aptly exemplifies both rhyme and rhythm. Rhyme can be seen in alternate lines while rhythm is in the flow of long and short syllables within lines. Similarly, we have both rhyme and rhythm in one of the most recent tombstones coded as G072 (cf. 2.2.1.4, anthropomorphism for the photographic data).

2.3.1.29 Symbolism

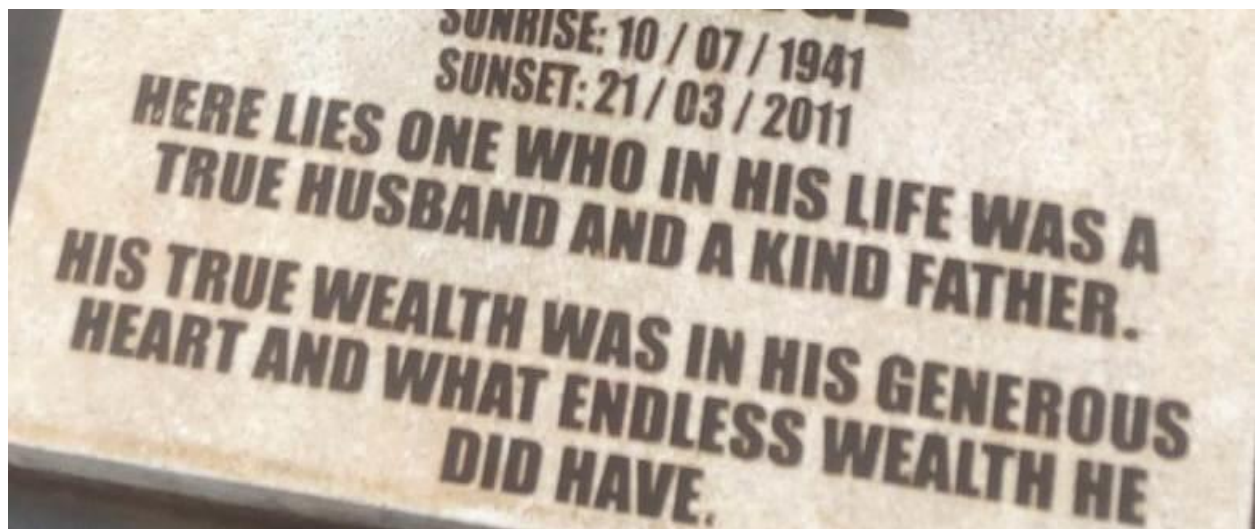
Authors sometimes use objects and non-human entities to stand for abstract ideas in their stories. A symbol is any object, person, situation, action, word, or idea that presents a literal meaning in the story as well as an alternative identity standing for something else. The resultant emotional response is much deeper than what is dictated by the word, idea, or image in use. For instance, there is depth of emotions when someone says, "*you broke my heart*" instead of "*you really upset me.*" Here the heart is used to symbolize the seat of emotions in a person. The heart is used as a symbol in epitaph coded F085:

"In loving memory of...

Here lies one who in his life was a true husband and a kind father.

His true wealth was in his generous heart and what endless wealth he did have."

Image 033 showing sample F085



In this sample the heart is used symbolically as a reservoir of goodness. We know that only human beings can own wealth but here is a heart symbolically depicted as wealthy in generosity. The owner of that generous heart must have shared his wealth without reservation.

2.3.1.30 Syntax

Writers are known to use different kinds of sentences: long or short; written in the active voice or passive voice; simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex; declarative, interrogative or imperative. All these are used towards certain literary and stylistic purposes. Here is a crafty sentence structure in Elie Wiesel's *Night*²⁹:

"The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew; it was ruled by delusion."

With two parallel independent clauses in the passive voice the author starts by creating suspense and then sets up the mind of the reader to expect an answer about the matter left in suspense; the answer is an unexpected metaphorical one.

In our treatment of plain text as a style we mentioned that it bears the bulk of the data sampled. The use of sentences in a crafty manner ranks second in terms of frequency as found in the following samples: A008, A012, A014, A016, A020, A022, A028, B004, B008, B022, C016, D018, E018, E051, F120, F145, F170, G006 and G066. In D018 we have an epitaph in honor of one Patrick David Shaw that reads as follows:

“To the helpless, compassion

Against evil, valour”

Image 034 showing sample D018



This is the only epitaph reproduced with the full identity of the deceased displayed. Patrick David Shaw³⁰ was a well known senior police resevist in Kenya and especially in the streets of the capital city Nairobi. He patrolled the city by night and day in his infamous white volvo in the 1970s and 1980s. He was feared and revered in equal measure by the residents of the city. It is alleged that he would warn suspects to vacate the city or face extrajudicial execution. The epitaph makes a calculated choice of words to describe one who stepped into scenes of crimes to help the helpless and faced criminal gangs with resilience. The author technically chose to make it short and loaded with a bare-knuckled description of the deceased. The epitaph uses two prepositional phrases made to appear like declarative sentences even though they lack verbal items. The author therefore finds it unnecessarily wordy to use the unmarked structures-*to the helpless he showed compassion and valour against evil-* and instead opts for the marked ellipsis which is more impacting.

2.3.1.31 Use of Indigenous Languages

A vernacular language is one spoken as a mother language but not learned or imposed as a second language. English has been learned or imposed on many parts of the world as a second language and happens to be the most widely embraced medium of communication and learning in society. In this respect, any other language that is not English is treated as an indigenous language.

In the current study 93.71% of the samples are in English with a few instances of code mixing with vernaculars. Only 6.29% of the samples are purely in indigenous languages:

Italian-A014 and B022

Kirundi-C010

Kiswahili-D006, D008 and G024

Kikuyu-D014 and F175

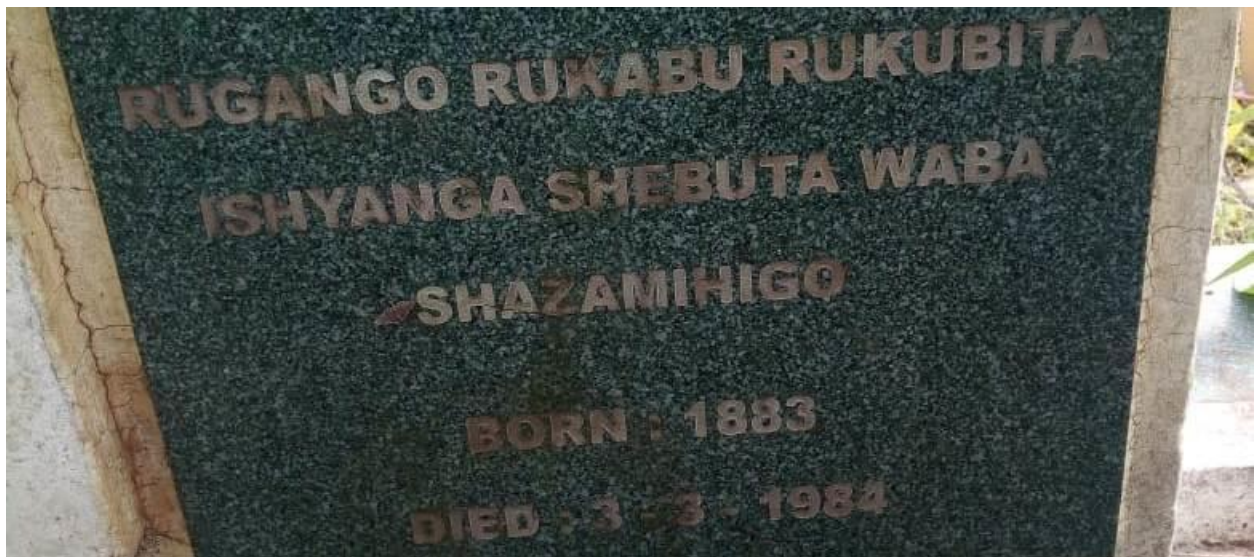
Kinyarwanda-D016

Latin-E012 and G039

French-F135

Here is sample D016 in Kinyarwanda: *“Rugango rukabu rukubita ishyanga shebuja waba shazamihigo”*

Image 035 showing sample D016



The East African³¹ reports that the first group of Rwandan nationals arrived in Kenya in 1930, the second in 1945 and the final group in 1957. To date we have camps in Kericho and Kisii counties known as “Kambi Nyarwanda.” These people are seeking to be recognized and

registered as Kenya's 44th tribe. The epitaph which translates to "*the strongman, the horrifying one, the one beating the foreign nation, the chief of worthy people*" must have had a ready audience in 1984 when it was crafted. It was written in purely a non-Kenyan vernacular to target a certain group of people.

2.4 Conclusion

In this second chapter of the study we have identified and described the various literary genres and stylistic devices that can be found at Lang'ata cemetery. The genres and styles have been illustrated through photographic data whose texts were rewritten purposely for this study. In the limited space of a tombstone poetic writings were forced to appear like prose but by reformulating the text we can now clearly see the lines and the stanzas rather than the sentences and paragraphs where need be.

In the process of data analysis, we delved into other writings to illustrate the meaning and usage of the identified genres and stylistic devices in the literary world. The samples were described in the categories where they fit best. The samples used cut across the entire period that the cemetery has been in use. Some epitaphs yielded a multiplicity of stylistic devices. What appears to be no style at all was elevated to a style we called here *plain text* while everything not presented in English was treated as written in *indigenous languages*. Some devices were so closely related that they were treated together.

In the next chapter we shall tackle the second and third research questions together. We shall select a number of samples purposively so as to pick out the explicatures and implicatures contained in the epitaphs. Following the Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995) we shall establish how these explicatures and implicatures enhance relevance of the messages contained on the epitaphs.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLICATURES AND IMPLICATURES FOUND ON EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY

3.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the linguistic aesthetics of epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. The data collected and sampled for the study revealed both poetic and prose texts as captured on the tombstones. These texts presented a number of literary stylistic devices that the authors used either intentionally or accidentally stumbled upon to express their message. Some of the epitaphs capture the attention of readers for quite some time while others are easily bypassed as of little linguistic relevance. The relevance of a text is expressed through both what is explicitly said and what is implicitly expressed. This brings us to the explicatures and implicatures that are found in the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. In this chapter we shall identify and explain the various explicatures and implicatures using selected epitaphs from the sampled data. The second section of this chapter will show how these explicatures and implicatures enhance the relevance of epitaphs. The data for this section will be presented using both photographs and the reformulated texts of the epitaphs.

3.2 Explicatures and Implicatures Found on Epitaphs at Lang'ata Cemetery

The words put on epitaphs are intentional communications whose meaning and relevance has to be achieved by those who come by them. The authors of epitaphs must come up with words and ideas that are meaningful enough to warrant the attention of the intended audience as well as other unintended recipients who will visit a cemetery. In this section, we apply the explicit-implicit differentiation to epitaphs found at Lang'ata cemetery. Ideally, we shall point out what propositions the creators of epitaphs made and what propositions they possibly implicated in the process. This will be done through disambiguation of ambiguous situations, making reference assignment, recovering of ellipsed material, deciphering the intended meaning of vague terms, and deciding whether thoughts represented are being entertained by the speaker or attributed to someone else.

The sample coded as A018 carries the following words:

“A pioneer who devoted his life to Kenya. The people owe him much.”

The author of this epitaph, whose image appears earlier as image 029 in section 2.2.1.26, is explicitly stating that a pioneer whose name, date of birth and date of death are given had a devotion to the country known as Kenya and that the people of Kenya are indebted to him as a result. That explicature brings along the following implicatures:

- a. the deceased was among the founders of the nation
- b. the deceased was well known
- c. the deceased served the nation devotedly
- d. the deceased was a patriot
- e. the nation never gave recognition to his efforts
- f. he gave things to people
- g. the people never paid him back

The implicatures numbered f and g are possible interpretations of the epitaph but they evidently require a lot of processing efforts to arrive at. In the first sense the reader is made to believe the nation known as Kenya did not recognize the patriotism of this pioneer; in the second instance the reader gets the sense that before the pioneer died he had given things, most likely in monetary form, but died before he was repaid. The second sense takes the reader through a lot of processing effort with no commensurate cognitive rewards. The reader will therefore resort to the first sense given the context of patriotism highlighted in the first clause.

The case of ellipsis is illustrated by the sample coded as B004 which partly reads as follows:

“Eternally missed. Forever loved by her children and grandchildren.”

Image 036 showing sample B004



In this case we need to infer the missing subject and auxiliary verbs through pragmatic inferential processes. In relevance-theoretic terms the reader of this epitaph will look for an interpretation consistent with pragmatic principles till “he satisfies his expectation of relevance and stop when he has found one” (Clark 2013:139). It immediately appears to the reader that the first clause has ellipsed the second person singular pronoun *you* and the auxiliary verb *are*. Moving on to the second clause we encounter the cataphoric use of the third person singular pronoun *her*. This makes it necessary to revise the first clause in agreement with the second so as to read:

She is eternally missed.

This agreement in turn necessitates the recovery of the ellipsis in the second clause which should now read:

She is forever loved by her children and grandchildren.

The ellipsing of the subject pronoun is something unusual in English which “is usually considered a ‘non-pro-drop’ language, i.e. a language where subject pronouns need to be explicitly pronounced, unlike ‘pro-drop’ languages, such as Italian or Spanish, where it is common not to pronounce pronouns explicitly” (Clark 2013:140). These are declarative statements lacking a subject yet still appropriate owing to the fact that the subject was mentioned earlier in the epitaph as a proper noun.

The process of recovering ellipses and interpreting the epitaph requires extra processing effort which ought to be rewarded with commensurate cognitive effects. If this does not happen then the creator of the epitaph did not use the most relevant stimulus to satisfy the readers’ expectation of relevance. Since in English having an explicit pronoun is the default or unmarked grammatical structure the unusual structure is quickly noticed by readers and they begin to

wonder why this was used. It would be natural to explain that the creator of the epitaph was so irritated and focused on the death of a loved one that there was no room for the pronoun. Such a formulation directly invites the readers into the thoughts and feelings of the author; in this case the reader has to think what the writer thinks. The mental movement from the second person point of view (you) to the third person point of view (she) reduces the intensity of the reader's focus on the departed family member as a person addressed directly to a person absently addressed. The personal touch of the epitaph is lost and its relevance is minimized in the process of recovering the ellipses.

The text of the epitaph code-named C016 has a number of implicatures. The text is here reformulated from the photographic image:

“Adored beloved husband of...father of...and a cherished much loved grandpa.

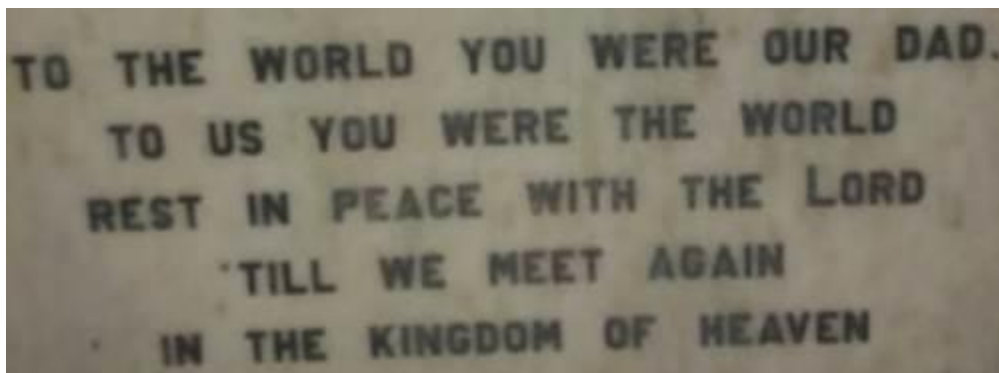
To the world you were our dad

To us you were the world

Rest in peace with the Lord

Till we meet again”

Image 037 showing sample C016



Here is an explicit statement in honor of a husband, father and grandfather who meant a lot to his family; all they can now do is to wish him a place of rest in the Lord till they meet again. The following implicatures emerge:

- a. the man had a wife

- b. the man had children
- c. he lived long enough to see his children's children
- d. he was very much loved by the family
- e. the world knew him as a father figure
- f. he stood for the world in his family
- g. there is peace after death
- h. there is rest in the Lord after death
- i. there is hope of meeting our loved ones in some unknown future
- j. heaven is real
- k. heaven is both a place and a kingdom

The implicatures numbered a-c seem clear enough from “what is said” in the explication. The rest (d-k) are derived via a longer mental process and more processing effort. The cognitive effects are equally rewarding and so it is worth the readers’ efforts to go through the process of recovering the implicatures.

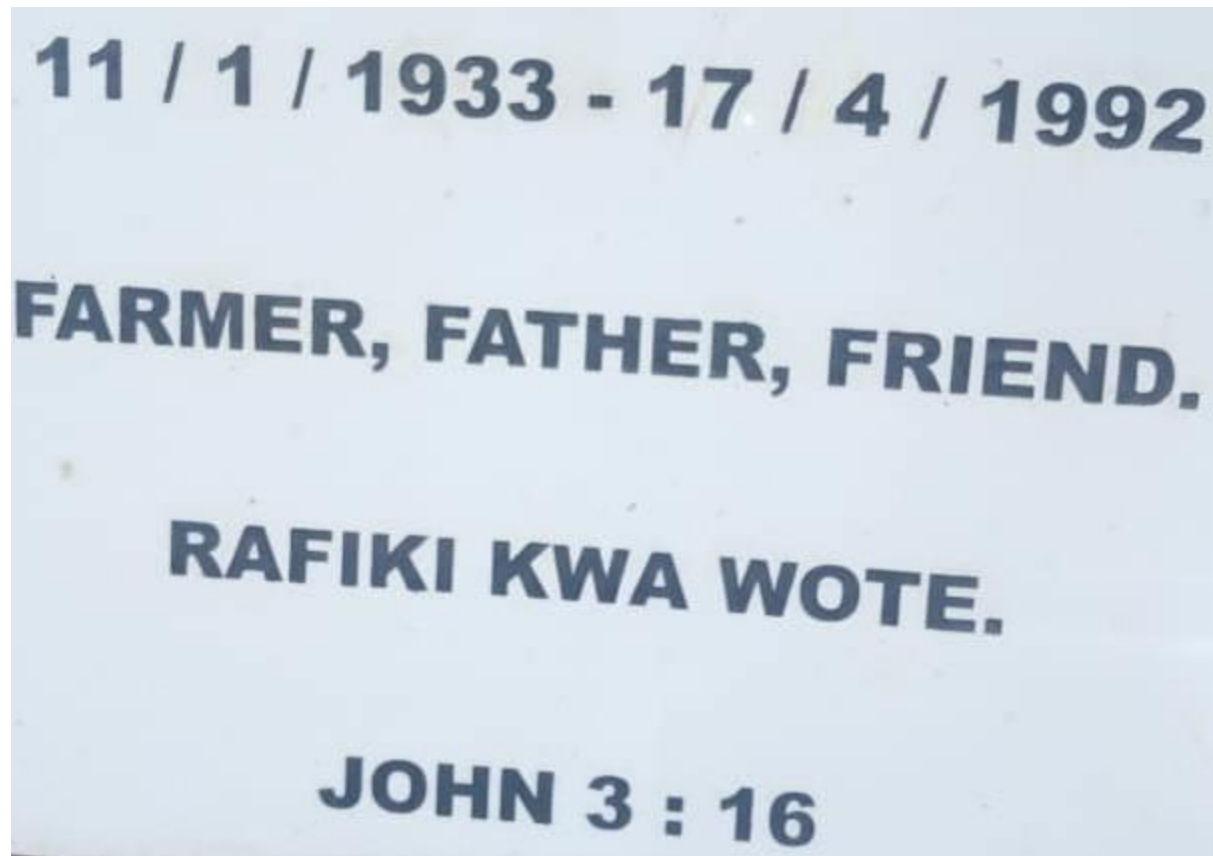
The notion of scalar implicatures was introduced by Horn (1972). One of the best known illustrations involves the word *some* in contradistinction to ‘*not all*’. Here are examples of scales as given by Clark (2013:150):

- a. some, many, all
- b. possibly, probably, definitely
- c. tepid, warm, hot
- d. one, two, three, . . .

In these scales “an item on the scale entails items on that item's left” whereby ‘all’ will entail ‘many’, ‘many’ will entail ‘some’, ‘definitely’ will entail ‘probably’, ‘probably’ will entail ‘possibly’ and so on. In a code-switching epitaph code-named D006 we find the following words:

“Farmer, father, friend. Rafiki kwa wote. John 3:16”

Image 038 showing sample D006



The second phrase written in Kiswahili is of interest here and is translated as “*friend to all.*” The explicature here is that the deceased who was engaged in farming activities was a father to some children and a friend of all people. We then have the following implicatures:

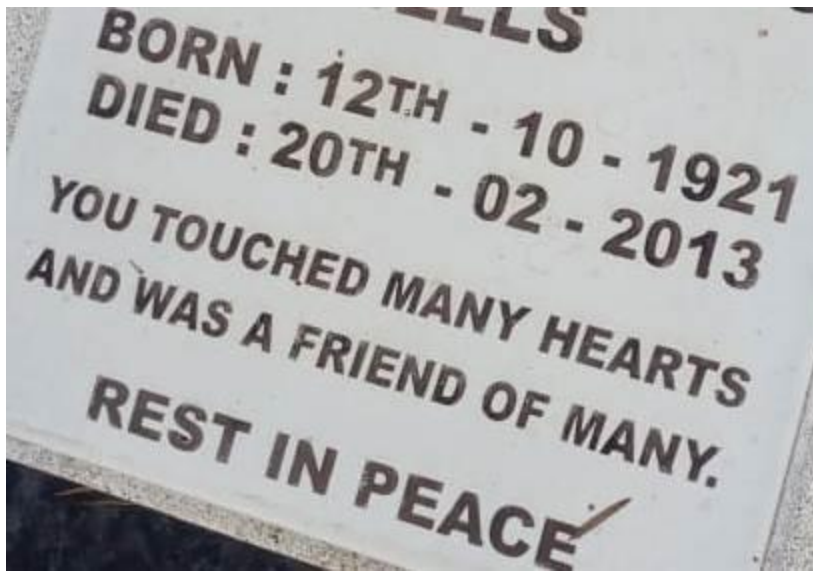
- a. he had a farm
- b. he grew crops
- c. he kept animals
- d. he had children
- e. he had no wife
- f. he was friendly
- g. he was a Christian

The aspect of his friendliness (implicature f) is overemphasized by a double mention. The part in Kiswahili speaks of him as a “*friend to all.*” By scalar implication he may not have literally been a ‘*friend to all*’ but definitely a ‘*friend to many*’ and a ‘*friend to some.*’ The reason why he would be described as a father but not as a husband is either because he did not have a wife or this description would interfere with the euphony depicted in the consonance of repeated sound /f/.

The biblical citation of John chapter 3 carries a well-known quotation of the love of God to the world. This scales down friendship from all to many and finally to one who is God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. The scalar implicature can also be applied to sample F045 which states directly that the person was a friend to many:

*“You touched many hearts and was a friend of **many**. Rest in peace.”*

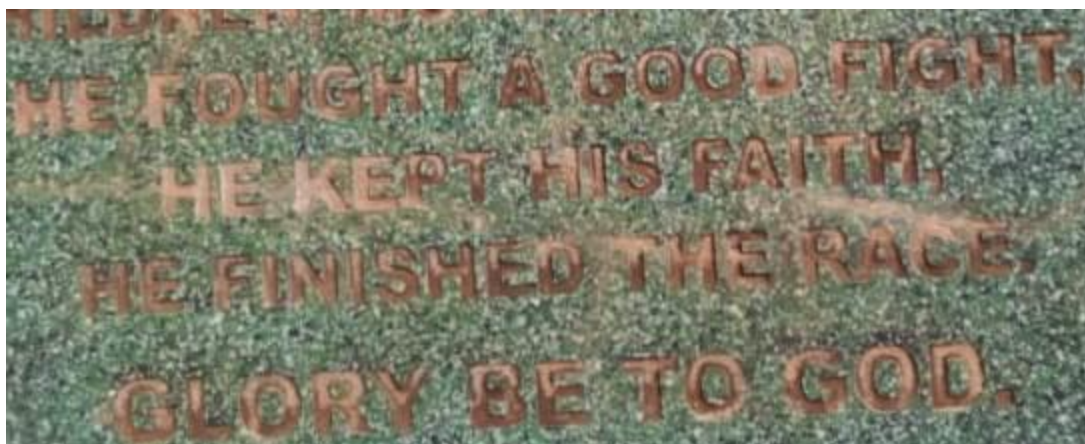
Image 039 showing sample F045



The principles of relevance theory are sometimes applied in establishing whether certain thoughts emanate from the speaker/writer or are from someone else. A number of epitaphs at Lang’ata cemetery quote the biblical passage contained in 2 Timothy 4:7. Quite a number paraphrase it by altering the subject of the utterance. In sample E006 we find the following paraphrased version:

*“**He** fought a good fight, **he** kept **his** faith, **he** finished the race.”*

Image 040 showing sample E006



A similar paraphrasing is found in sample G009 (image presented earlier as image 028 under section 2.2.1.25) where the subject changes to the feminine pronoun *she*:

“She Fought The Good Fight. She Finished The Race. And Have Kept The Faith.”

The original biblical words by Paul use the first person singular pronoun:

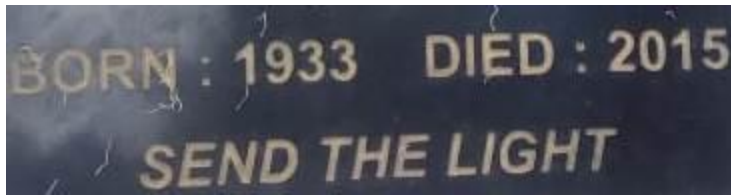
“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the faith.”

The creators of these epitaphs have taken the words of Paul and given them a new relevance by making the readers draw pictures of the deceased persons and how they traveled their faith journey. The last phrase on sample G009 shows a shift of perspective from “*she*” to an ellipsed pronoun “*you*.” The effort involved in processing the newly introduced pronouns is reconcilable with the effects achieved since pronouns are frequently used lexical items. “This is likely to be backed up by evidence from word frequency, which is often used by psycholinguists as an indicator of processing effort (other things being equal, words used more frequently require less processing effort)” (Clark 2013:141).

A case of vagueness is presented in epitaph sampled as F075:

“Send the light.”

Image 041 showing sample F075



The reader is left with a myriad of questions in connection to this text:

- a. Send the light to who?
- b. Send the light from where?
- c. Send the light for what purpose?

With the too many unanswered questions from a simple three-letter-phrase comes the expenditure of a lot of processing effort with very little cognitive effects. Some of the ideas that must be involved in the mental processing are the following implicatures in forms of questions:

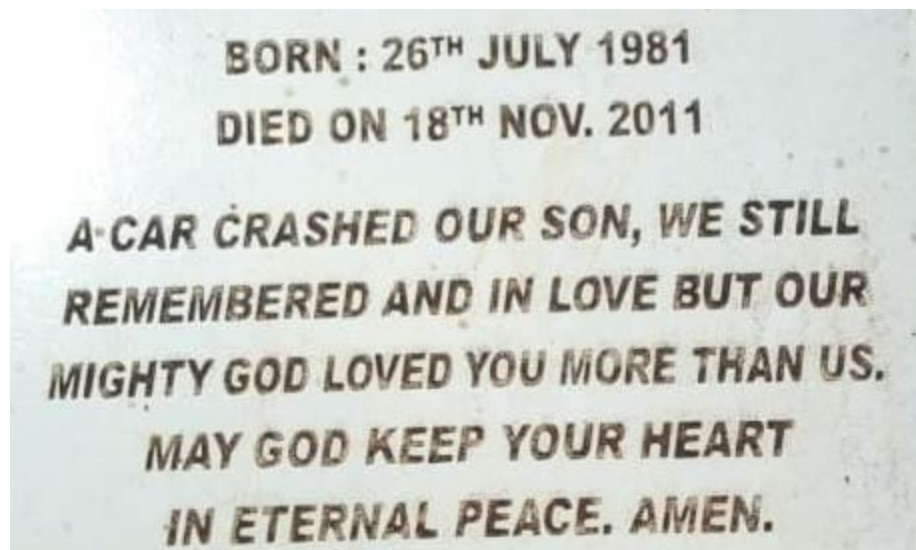
- a. Was the death shrouded in darkness so that we need some light in the matter?
- b. Did the deceased leave behind a family ruled by the powers of darkness?
- c. Did this person radiate so much light in life that the bereaved wish to continue enjoying the same?
- d. Why 'the light' and not just 'a light'?

An epitaph of this sort leaves the readers in a situation of uncertainty because there is no clarity and no one to answer the unanswered questions.

The sample code-named F170 presents us with a situation of syntactic ambiguity in the words highlighted in bold:

*"A car crashed our son, we still remembered and in love but our mighty **God loved you more than us**. May God keep your heart in eternal peace. Amen."*

Image 042 showing sample F170



There are two senses to understand this text as captured in the following bracketed structures:

a. NP [God] V[loved] NP [NP [PRN you]AdvP[more than us]]

God loved you more than he loved us and so he took you instead of taking us.

b. NP [God] V[loved] NP [you]AdvP[more than us]

God loved you more than we loved you and so he took you from us.

Clark posits that “[T]here is consistent evidence across a number of studies to suggest that we access all senses of ambiguous words when processing utterances, even though we then reject all but the one we use in understanding the utterance. For syntactically ambiguous utterances, we seem much less able to choose between different structures, so it seems plausible to suggest that we go for one structure and that reanalysis involves considerable processing effort” (Clark 2013:138).

The first sense presents a competition for God’s love between us and the one who died. The second scenario presents a competition for our beloved’s love between us and God and the winner is God. The two implicatures pose equal challenges to process but using a relevance theoretic comprehension heuristic we seek for the presumption of optimal relevance and stop when we find the one that provides enough cognitive effects to satisfy our expectations of relevance. In similar contexts with unambiguous texts we have come by similar words in eulogies and epitaphs proclaiming: *we loved you but God loved you more*. This would lead us to

the common sense interpretation of the utterance so that we prefer the second option to the first. There is no need to go any further after arriving at this interpretation because the expectations of relevance are already satisfied.

3.3 How Explicatures and Implicatures Enhance the Relevance of Epitaphs

In this section we shall deal with how explicatures and implicatures enhance the relevance of the epitaphs found at Lang'ata cemetery. In keeping with the first principle of relevance we discuss how maximization of relevance is realized in the epitaphs by balancing the cognitive effects accrued and the processing effort expended; the goal is to satisfy the seeking mind with as many cognitive effects as possible for as little effort as possible. The seeking mind, as per the second or the Communicative Principle of Relevance, presumes optimal relevance worth the effort employed to process it; the ostensive stimulus should be in tandem with the abilities and preferences of the communicator. The person accessing the epitaphs at Lang'ata should stop seeking for more interpretation once optimal relevance is achieved to avoid spending unnecessary effort. To illustrate these theoretical tenets, we shall use a number of epitaphs.

The words on tombstones provide a number of stimuli that can be used to make comparisons and arrive at the ones with enough effects to justify the processing efforts. Compare sample A012 and sample A018 (cf. image 029 under section 2.2.1.26):

(A012)

“In memory of...

Assistant commissioner of Police”

(A018)

“Sacred to the memory of...

A pioneer who devoted his life to Kenya

The people owe him much”

Image 043 showing sample A012



The two texts carry the explicit ideas of service to a nation. The first sample (A012) is limited in terms of information and therefore leaves many questions unanswered. To answer these questions will require some effort to dig up such implicatures as the following:

- a. The country is likely to be Kenya
- b. Kenya has a police service
- c. In the service there are several ranks
- d. The assistant commissioner ranks below the commissioner
- e. He worked hard to attain that rank
- f. He corrupted his way to the rank
- g. He died in office

The second sample (A018) is relatively more informative and yields the following implicatures:

- a. He was a pioneer
- b. He had a devotion to the country
- c. Most of his energies went to patriotism
- d. He loved the citizens
- e. He gave away some of his properties to Kenyans in debt
- f. The country did not reciprocate his kind gestures
- g. The people failed to pay back their debts to him
- h. His family expected too much from the country

The additional information that yields implicatures d-h requires extra processing effort whose reward to the reader is not commensurate. The sample coded A012 is therefore found to be more relevant in spite of its limited information; the extra information in A018 does not add enough value to warrant the reader's effort to process it. This epitaph A018 would have yielded more effects for a little effort were it to be stated as follows: *A pioneer who devoted his life to*

thankless Kenya. The simpler utterance enables us to derive a considerable range of cognitive effects but with much less effort.

The human mind seeks for maximal relevance from the stimuli availed to it. But not every stimulus is maximally relevant; that is why the mind settles for optimal relevance ordinarily conveyed in any act of intentional communication. Epitaphs are on public display in cemeteries as acts of intentional communication. They should therefore accord the readers with optimal, if not maximally relevant stimuli. The human mind is so wired as to recognize and automatically pick stimuli that yield the most cognitive effects for the least processing effort. The epitaphs written in English are more relevant to a majority of people who access Lang'ata cemetery. This study came by a number of tombstones bearing texts in languages other than English:

- a. **Latin:** (E012) *In pace* which translates to “In peace.”
- b. **Italian:** (A014) *La moglie ed i figli posero* which translates to “The wife and children placed it.”
- c. **French:** (F135) *Que la terre lui soit légerè* which translates to “That the earth may be light upon him.”
- d. **Kirundi:** (C010) *Igikaka igikwiye igikwerere bada koma imbere uwi ingoma ebyeri* which translates to “The true man, the worthy one, the outstanding man who no one can resist, the man of two kingdoms.”
- e. **Kinyarwanda:** (D016) *Rugango rukabu rukubita ishyanga shebuja waba shazamihigo* which translates to “The strongman, the horrifying one, the one fighting the foreign nation, the chief of worthy people.”
- f. **Kiswahili:** (D008) *Daima tutakumbuka* which translates to “We shall forever remember you.”
- g. **Kikuyu:** (D014) *Gũkena nĩ arĩa mahurũkaga me thũnĩ wa Mwathani* which translates to “Happy are those who rest in the Lord.”

Lang'ata cemetery being in Kenya, where English is the official language and the medium of instruction in schools, makes it necessary that epitaphs made in English be considered the unmarked. Epitaphs in any other language are marked and targeted to a certain specific audience. The population of people living in Kenya who understand Latin, Italian, French, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda is negligible. Kiswahili being the national language is vastly understood in Kenya

while Kikuyu is spoken by the largest ethnic group in the country (a population of 8, 148, 668³²). Many visitors would find it a waste of processing effort to decipher the epitaphs written in non-Kenyan languages. On the other hand, the Burundians and Rwandese residing in Kenya will derive enough cognitive effects from the few epitaphs written in their mother languages; the vast majority of epitaphs written in English are designed for the masses but the utterances in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda were designed with them in mind.

The realization of the enhancement of relevance varies with different persons, situations and cultures which define the various contexts. Epitaphs communicate different explicatures and elicit diverse implicatures in different persons; this features in what different readers of epitaphs would consider relevant and worth their time and effort. A reader who is in a situation of grieving the loss of a loved one would find an epitaph relevant if it is worded in a way that reminds him or her of their loved one. In cultures where burials take place within a short time and no proper closure is achieved individuals would find epitaphs more communicative than those in cultures that grieve at length and achieve a closure.

The authors of epitaphs have in mind an interpretation which they hope is justifiable in expending efforts to access. Those who access the epitaphs (intended and unintended addressees) will seek an interpretation rewarding enough to justify their expenditure of effort and will only settle for one that agrees with this criterion. For example, the author of sample D002 “*God gives and God has taken*” has a clear allusion to the biblical story of Job. The mind of the author has a clear orientation that will not tire the mind of the reader to arrive at the great loss of Job that was followed by a total surrender to the God who gives everything. The author hopes that it will be worth the reader’s effort to mentally recognize that the deceased was a gift given by God to the community and that the giver of the gift came later to pick what belonged to him; these implicatures are readily available and rewarding enough for the effort used. When an epitaph simply states “*At rest*” (A028) or even the Latin “*In pace*” (F030) the idea of the author is not to communicate the obvious truth of inactivity or the freedom from disturbance in death; these simple phrases carry the implicatures of a change from this troubled world to a better place. Such implicatures make these simple epitaphs relevant in their own right.

An everyday example illustrates this further: “*Mary has fallen asleep.*” To fall asleep carries the ambiguity of resting in bed as well as resting in death. Relevance theory predicts that a hearer in an everyday situation will choose the common-sense interpretation of resting in bed, which is

more accessible and therefore easier to process, unless there is a particular context that brings to realization that Mary has been in hospital unwell. To presume “*resting in bed*” makes the speaker produce the most relevant utterance consistent with her abilities and preferences. If Mary had indeed “*passed away*” it would be more relevant for the speaker to use the way of communication that is more accessible and easier for the hearer to process; the speaker could simply have said: “*Mary has passed away.*” In a nutshell as Sperber and Wilson (1986) put it there is at most one interpretation of an utterance which will satisfy the hearer’s expectation of relevance. Following the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic and given that one should not stop looking for interpretation until they arrive at one with enough rewards to justify their efforts, and given that the first interpretation found should be the intended one, readers of epitaphs should follow the path of accessibility and stop further interpretation once they arrive at one that meets their expectations of relevance. However, communicators may not always be able to or willing to produce the most relevant utterance possible.

The epitaph sampled as A022 (presented earlier as image 034 under section 2.2.1.31) presents an example of an ellipsis: “*In a car accident.*” This is a prepositional phrase which in correct grammar should not stand alone as a sentence because it lacks both subject and verb. Anyone who accesses the epitaph is expected to fill in the missing lexical items by anaphorically referring back to the previously provided information: the subject is a male and this being a gravestone means that *he died*. If these words were to appear anywhere else without a clear context the reader can fill in the missing items with any other items he or she deems fit; the subject may be given as feminine or even neuter; any other verbal item may be used. In this particular case the reader can quickly come up with the right assumptions and derive enough cognitive effects to justify the effort involved in interpreting the utterance as “*He died in a road accident.*” Any other interpretation would involve extra effort without cognitive reward.

The epitaph sampled as D006 (cf. image 038 under section 3.1) reads as follows: “*Farmer, father, friend. Rafiki kwa wote. John 3:16.*” We use it here once more to illustrate the recovery of implicatures. This suggests that the deceased had a farm, children and a number of friends; this yields enough effects with least processing effort. If the author of this epitaph intends anything other than this, he will fail to communicate it because readers cannot be expected to access an alternative interpretation because this would involve extra unjustifiable processing effort. These implicatures are so strongly communicated that it is hard for anyone not

to conclude that the author intended them. With such clear implicatures the relevance of the epitaph is definitely enhanced.

Context plays an important role in arriving at implicatures and ultimately the intended meaning of an utterance. According to Wilson and Sperber (1981: 156–8) it would be hard to decipher the meaning of an utterance such as the following without knowing the context:

Send the light (Sample F075 cf. image under section 3.1)

Anyone hearing or reading this verb phrase will wonder what the speaker or writer intends to communicate. All the implicatures emanating from it will still give no cognitive reward to the addressee. The meaning of these words remains vague even after situating them in a cemetery. The addressee needs to be in touch with the author so as to understand who is expected to send the light, from where, to whom and for what purpose. This is one of the most unclear and consequently irrelevant epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery because no amount of implicatures will lead to the author's intended meaning; only appropriate contextual information would guide us to the intended communication. Following the standard relevance-theoretic account the meaning that comes first to the interpreter is that the deceased should shed some light on his death which was shrouded in darkness. On arriving at this optimally relevant interpretation that satisfies the expectations of relevance, no other efforts should be put into seeking for an alternative interpretation.

We conclude this section by citing situations where misunderstanding arises. This occurs when the first sense that an addressee arrives at is not actually what the author intended. Going back to sample A075 (*Send the light*) there is a likelihood that the author of the epitaph was actually addressing God and asking him to send the light on the matter of this person's death. It is also probable that the author was addressing the dead who is now in eternal light to send back some light to the bereaved. Sometimes misunderstanding arises from cultural conventions where a mismatch exists between the author's assumptions about which assumptions will be accessible to the reader and what the reader actually manages to access.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has responded to the second and third research questions by delving into the explicatures and implicatures adduced from the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. To achieve this, in the first section we have given a number of tombstones presented in photographs and the

reformulated forms of the epitaphs. The explicatures and implicatures were cited and analyzed for their impact on the overall communication intended by the crafters of epitaphs. This was achieved through disambiguation and reference assignment, recovering of ellipsed material, deciphering vague texts, and deciding to whom certain thoughts found in epitaphs should be attributed. The second section of this chapter examined how various explicatures and implicatures enhanced the relevance of epitaphs. It occurred that the information carried in a text is not enough to make it relevant; there is need to strike a balance between the efforts and the effects accruing from any utterance. The language of the utterance was also cited as a factor that influences relevance whereby English was regarded as the default unmarked language at Lang'ata cemetery. Personal, situational and cultural factors were also found to determine how relevant a text ends up. The relevance-guided comprehension heuristic was used to ensure that no more than the required interpretations were sought any given situation, the baseline being always to derive the highest amount of cognitive effects for the least effort. Context was highlighted as an important factor in arriving at optimally relevant interpretation of utterances. Finally, there is the realization of the possibility of misunderstanding whereby the addressee arrives and settles at an interpretation that is far from the intended communication.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focused on the linguistic aesthetics of epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery, Nairobi. It recognized the graveyard as a solemn place which nevertheless could provide linguistic data for scholars. Using three research questions the researcher endeavored to address three objectives of the study tackling the literary genres and stylistic devices that could be adduced from the epitaphs, the explicatures and implicatures they carried and how they enhanced relevance. The data for the study were collected through actual visits to the study location and taking photographs of the tombstones with special focus on the texts they carried. The data was stratified into categories of epochs of ten years each except the last one that ran for less than four years. The strata were codified from A to G with A carrying the oldest epitaphs ranging from 1958 when the cemetery was opened. The codified photos were then given numbers to make a sampling frame. It is from this frame that samples were variously randomly picked from each epoch. Then the samples were analyzed for their linguistic content in order to answer the research questions.

The literature review done for this study shows that very little linguistic interest has been given to the study of cemeteries. Most of the studies conducted on gravesides have to do with historical and archeological enterprises. The only study conducted at Lang'ata cemetery by Murigu and Mbugua (2020) concerned the scarcity of land for burial and the need to explore other ways of disposing of the dead. This study therefore identified a gap in the literature and endeavored to fill it.

This study applied the Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995). The theory was especially critical in picking the explicatures and implicatures contained in epitaphs. It is from these that the enhancement of relevance was evaluated. Crucial issues of processing efforts and cognitive effects were addressed; every utterance should give the addressee enough cognitive effects to justify their expenditure of efforts in processing it. At all times the mind seeks to attain optimal, if not maximal relevance from any stimulus supplied to it and stops any further interpretation when this is attained.

The first research question concerned the literary genres and stylistic devices that can be found on epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. The sampled data came up with the two literary genres of poetry and prose. The prose genre was mostly used and accounted for 63.49% of the data. On those two genres were found thirty-nine (39) stylistic devices. In the discussion of the devices those that were closely related were treated together in the interest of clarity and consistency. The plain text was treated as a stylistic device in this study although in the real sense it is the lack of style; this accounted for 15.72% of the data and therefore it became a factor of interest. The choice of items in syntactic constructions also elicited considerable interest because it accounted for 11.32% of the data that was sampled. There was a remarkably low usage of some devices that registered less than 1%. These include aphorism, charactonym, chiasmus, colloquialism, diction, epigram, epiphora, flashback, irony, metonymy, parallelism, paraprosdokian and symbolism. The low frequency of commonly used devices such as irony, parallelism and symbolism is a cause of linguistic concern. Devices whose frequency ranged between 1 and 2% include anthropomorphism, cacophony/euphony, exposition, paraphrasing, and point of view. The devices that appeared between 2 and 5 per cent include alliteration/assonance/consonance, anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, archaism, euphemism, imagery, juxtaposition, and rhythm/rhyme. There was a remarkable use of allusion (6.92%), climax/anticlimax (5.03%), code mixing/code switching (5.66%) and the use of various non English languages here treated as indigenous languages (6.29%).

The second research questions concerned the explicatures and implicatures that could be found on the epitaphs at Lang'ata cemetery. A number of samples were subjected to relevance theory and lists of explicatures and implicatures were made and analyzed. This second question could only be adequately responded to by combining it with the third research question which sought to establish how these explicatures and implicatures enhanced the relevance of epitaphs. Most of the samples met the threshold of relevance as per the efforts that were spent to arrive at enough cognitive effects from the implicatures deduced. At least one sample was identified as vague since no amount of effort would help decipher what the author intended.

This study encountered a number of limitations:

- a. A number of the epitaphs that would have yielded crucial data were faded and of no use. This explains why we have fewer samples coded A, B, C and D while the

- number is higher under E, F and G. the category named G is less than four years old yet gives us 78 images from which 26 were randomly selected.
- b. There were very scanty sources on which to build a linguistic enterprise on cemeteries as we have already seen from the literature review.
 - c. Some epitaphs were inaccessible due to flood waters during the time of data collection. This suggests that some important data failed to be part of this study.

This research identifies the following possible areas for further research:

- a. Why does poetry as a literary genre feature so scantily on the epitaphs?
- b. Why is there so much lack of style (plain text) on the epitaphs?
- c. Why are biblical quotations and allusions so prevalent on the epitaphs?
- d. How would we explain the high occurrence of code mixing and code switching on the epitaphs?
- e. Why are indigenous languages so often used on the epitaphs?
- f. How would the literary genres and literary devices found at Lang'ata cemetery compare with those found in other cemeteries in Kenya and other parts of the world?

Endnotes

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Appendix 1: Frequency of Various Stylistic Devices on Epitaphs at Lang'ata Cemetery

No	STYLISTIC DEVICE	FREQUENCY OF USE OF STLISTIC DEVICE							TOT ALS	PERC ENT
		A: 1958 - 1967	B: 1968 - 1977	C: 1978 - 1987	D: 1988 - 1997	E: 1998 - 2007	F: 2008 - 2017	G: 2018 - 2021		
1	Alliteration/assonance/ consonance	030	006 014		008				4	2.52
2	Allusion			008 016 018	002 014 018	006 009	130 140	036	11	6.92
3	Anaphora	002 004						012 051	4	2.52
4	Anthropomorphism							003 072 075	3	1.89
5	Antithesis	004		002			090 110	018	5	3.14
6	Aphorism						165		1	0.63
7	Apostrophe						155 185	045 063	4	2.52
8	Archaism	006				012	030	039	4	2.52
9	Cacophony/euphony			018	006	036			3	1.89
10	Climax/anticlimax		004 010	004	004	021	100 185 190		8	5.03
11	Charactonym						150		1	0.63
12	Chiasmus						090		1	0.63
13	Code mixing/switching		008		006	015 027 033 048	005 160 175 185	024	11	6.92
14	Colloquialism					039			1	0.63
15	Diction		012						1	0.63
16	Ellipsis	022	018						2	1.26
17	Epigram	024							1	0.63
18	Epiphora			018					1	0.63
19	Euphemism	028 030			014		070 155		5	3.14
20	Exposition	010			012		020		3	1.89
21	Flashback						155		1	0.63
22	Imagery					024 030	005 075		4	2.52
23	Irony		002						1	0.63
24	Juxtaposition	004 026	002				040		4	2.52

25	Metonymy			014					1	0.63
26	Parallelism						090		1	0.63
27	Paraphrasing				020 022			009	3	1.89
28	Paraprosdokian	018							1	0.63
29	Plain text		016 020	006 012		003 042 045	015 025 035 045 055 095 105 115 125	015 021 027 030 042 048 057 060 069	25	15.72
30	Point of view		002			006	050		3	1.89
31	Rhyme and Rhythm	002 006 026			010		010 040 060 065 080 160 180	033 054	13	8.18
32	Symbolism						085		1	0.63
33	Syntax	008 012 014 016 020 022 028	004 008 022	016		018 051	120 145 170	006 066	18	11.32
34	Indigenous languages	014	022	010	008 014 016	012	030 135	039	10	6.29
									159	100.0 4
TOTALS		24	16	12	16	19	47	25	159	
PERCENT		15.09	10.06	7.55	10.0 6	11.95	29.56	15.72	99.9 9	

Appendix 2: Research Budget

**THE LINGUISTIC AESTHETICS OF EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY,
NAIROBI COUNTY**

**THE LINGUISTIC AESTHETICS OF EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY,
NAIROBI COUNTY**

THOMAS NYUTU C50/34672/2019

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES

RESEARCH PROJECT BUDGET

ITEM/ACTIVITY	COST (KSH)
Stationery (1 ream of papers)	500
Printing (300 pages @ 10)	3,000
Binding (3 copies @ 1,500)	4,500
Internet and phone calls	4,000
Meals	2,000
Traveling	2,000
NACOSTI permit fee	1,000
Public health permit fees	5,000
Miscellaneous	1,000
TOTAL COSTS	<u>23,000</u>

Appendix 3: Research Work Plan

**THE LINGUISTIC AESTHETICS OF EPITAPHS AT LANG'ATA CEMETERY,
NAIROBI COUNTY**

THOMAS NYUTU C50/34672/2019

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES

SIX MONTHS' PROJECT WORK PLAN

	ACTIVITY	DURATION	COMMENT
1	Topic/concept paper	February 2021	Completed
2	Assignment of supervisors	February 2021	Completed
3	Proposal writing	February/March 2021	Completed
4	Presentation of Proposal at Department level	March 2021	Completed
5	Corrections	March/April 2021	Completed
6	Data collection	May 2021	Completed
7	Data analysis	May/June 2021	Completed
8	Project presentation and defense	July 2021	Completed
9	Corrections	July 2021	Completed
10	Submission of soft copy for printing and binding	July 2021	Pending