

## Riddling, Word-Play and Language Growth

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## Riddling, Word-Play and Language Growth

Word-play and/or riddling are sometimes castigated as a diversionary use of language. While some are fascinated by it and would go miles to appreciate such entertainment, others feel it is insincere and nonsensical. This paper posits that riddling and / or word-play creates additional meaning with words in order to entertain or make a comment. Riddling and word-play are genres where the language is seen to overfly its boundaries (rules). In this way, it finds fertile grounds to grow, especially when it comes to using certain words considered as taboo in society. It is also used in coded communication used by the forces like the army and police. By examining the street comedy shows of *Diikuula* and selected radio shows, songs and riddling events in targeted locations, we have come to the conclusion that through word-play and riddling, the actors are able to coin words and euphemisms that bear double or sometimes triple meanings relevant to a cause. By so doing, they help the language users to realize another side of words and phrases in common use and to reconsider their statements, before making them. In this way, language acquires new semantic and morphological dimensions.

Keywords: performance; riddles; Busoga; Uganda; social capital

Subject classification codes: include these here if the journal requires them

### **Introduction**

This paper will explore the performance of riddles in the Lusoga language of Busoga in Uganda, with a view of analyzing their use and contribution to the growth of the Lusoga language in particular. My motivation for this study has been the daunting and tormenting fact that although Lusoga is used by over two million people in and outside of the vast

Kingdom of Busoga, it is nonetheless one of the least developed languages in Uganda as evidenced by UWEZO reports... (UBOS, 2006). One of the likely reasons for this have been earlier suggested by the author and Jeffrey Sachs (2005), as poor communication and lack of investment in riddling as a tool for language growth.

A performance centred approach is used (Bauman, 1975) during the study of Lusoga riddles and riddling through observation of the riddle art in performance as activity and recreation during performance events, acts and occasions. The purpose is to map out the linkages between the words and word use (diction), occasion and meaning in selected discourses or performances. By so doing, we intend to draw attention to Lusoga riddle discourse and riddle art as quality language use in terms of economics of diction and beauty of style that gives high aesthetic appeal. Such quality, it is argued, may further be translated into real life skills of economic productivity and high per capita output through inspirational language use e.g. in negotiation, bargaining, campaigning, social marketing, and the day-to-day conversation.

The analysis of Lusoga riddle art and discourse is a key aspect of language, pedagogy and artistic growth among the Lusoga speakers. This view is informed by the fact that indigenous knowledge is as vital a part of child upbringing and normal discourse (Bauman, 1969; Green & Pepicello, 1979; Harvilahti, 2003) as nutritious food. Little wonder therefore that many riddles in Lusoga are depicted through the food and eating imagery. For example, “*suntumala nkulye ebilengeedha* - - squat and I eat off the dangling things” uses the eating imagery to depict the harvesting of bean pods in one sense and soliciting for sexual intercourse on a deeper level.

In Busoga, as perhaps elsewhere, folklore in general and riddling in particular is highly regarded (Ajibade, 2005) as the purveyor of culture. The analysis of Lusoga riddle art and discourse helps in understanding and appreciating the language and the way it is spoken,

learned and taught. Pedagogic and artistic growth of a language is informed by the fact that indigenous knowledge is quite often an involving, exciting and stimulating activity. In addition to being used with and by children through stories, songs and lullabies in early social life, riddling remains a part of the orientation and culture of the individual.

The general aim is to enhance learners' comprehension and critical thinking abilities, power of observation, building relationships, interaction with nature and above all, setting them to face the challenges of the world as groups or as individuals. In that case, the most skilled participants and performers acquires "wealth" so to say, in the form of real creative knowledge and virtual gifts, tokens and objects of reward that are offered for them to solve the riddle. As long as there is no one to "topple" the protagonist in the riddling contest, the contender remains on top of the others hence developing the agility to negotiate, haggle, and press hard as opposed to giving up quickly. Such resilience is formalised through life's struggles. The struggle is between the 'King' or 'Queen' who stands unchallenged and the subjects or respondent who must use their wits to gain the enviable yet fluid status of 'King' or 'Queen' in the game. This position is considered 'fluid' mainly because it is assumed not by inheritance but prowess in the word. The power of the word creates a virtual prestigious position of the skilled riddle performer in much the same was as that of the successful mother or father, leader, diviner, politician and teacher.

We theorize that riddle discourse is a rich and purposeful performance that significantly influences human nature in terms of attitude as it enhances communication competence, promotes knowledge exchange and sharpens a participants' power of observation. This nature of discourse promotes the acquisition of practical knowledge, life skills; and the development of interpersonal qualities that may directly impact on the individual's creative abilities and necessary to ensnare or break the poverty trap. Hodges, et. al (1999) explain that

victimization or peer rejection, as indeed evidenced in riddling, has a positive correlation with negative personal and interpersonal qualities. Children who grow up riddling are accustomed or conditioned to internalize their “problems, physical weakness, and peer rejection” and this contributes to their feelings of being either victimized or accepted which in turn increases their self-esteem or the lack of it in later life. It is a violent set of events like the two sides of the coin or a double edged sword that nurture “peer victimization”<sup>1</sup> on one hand and character development of the other. A participant who is unable to unravel any riddle would suffer from an injured ego not so much because they are unable to think through fast enough but mostly because of the words used to disparage the group for failing to get the answer right. For one to benefit from riddling there must be a spirit of rapport that is embedded in the tactful manner in which the protagonist ravel and unravel the riddle.

Eventually, over time, riddles become means and sites of people challenging and encouraging each other’s verbal, artistic and social dexterity. This seems to suggest that riddling stimulates the participants’ abilities to think, plan and execute bigger dreams in practical or in real terms in their family and community (McDowell, 1980) contrary to the relegation of riddles as children play forms without much value (Dalfovo, 1983; Finnegan, 1970). Whatever the case though, the need is for a performance centered approach to the study of riddling as event, oral text and genre in order to better appreciate how it contributes to language growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodges, E. V. E., & Perry, D. G. (1999). Personal and interpersonal antecedents and consequences of victimization by peers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76(4), 677-685.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.4.677>

Riddles also contribute to correct language use since they are framed according to a precise and concise linguistic model (Dalfovo, 1983). Through the use of words or elements that belong to two or more frames of references at once (Ajibade, 2005), for example, the precedent: “*toola pinini ote ku pinini ofune pinini* – take *pinini* put on *pinini* to get *pinini*” enriches the language in which it is used (Abrahams, 1985). *Pinini* is neither a term in Lusoga nor English; but through riddling it comes up prominently as a reference to commonality in character, purpose and nature. This precedent has been used variously as *toola dingi ote ku dingi ofune dingi* – take *dingi* put on *dingi* to get *dingi*, meaning that *pinini* and *dingi* have a common arbitrary value. However, the answers provided, namely, man, woman child for *pinini* and leaves, mound, potato for *dingi* means that the sound effects and the way the riddle is told or performed provides the ultimate meaning. Word-play in this case is the main motive to create the new words and the performer checks the performance ground to choose the appropriate tone and diction in such riddles. Hofmann et. al. (2016) name four essential factors in interpersonal emotion regulation processes: “enhancing positive affect; perspective taking; soothing; and social modeling”.<sup>2</sup> All these are evident in riddling though from a two way perspective in that some participants might go the negative ways if not psychologically prepared. In most cases, it is **confidence and authenticity** that the audience participants are looking for in the interactions.

Who are the Basoga and Lusoga?

The Basoga belong to the Bantu ethnic group. They comprise about 2.8 million members (10% of Uganda’s population), and constitute the fourth largest single ethnic group in Uganda. They speak a language known as Lusoga with two major dialects:

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<sup>2</sup> Hofmann, S.G., Carpenter, J.K. & Curtiss, J. Cogn Ther Res (2016) 40: 341.

Lupakoyo spoken in the northern parts in Bulamoogi, Busiki and Bukono; and Lutenga in the southern parts. This linguistic diversity and population provides challenges within and outside formal, non-formal and informal spheres of language use. Ugandans who are estimated to be between 24 and 26 million (UBOS, 2006) with an annual GDP growth rate of 3.2% will have to come to term with this multiplicity of languages and cultures.

### Language Policy

Until recently, 2000 English has been for many years the official language for government business and curricular instruction at all the levels of education, it is a fact that local languages are widely and extensively used including for primary school instruction. This points how important oral literature continues to serve many roles and functions in the life of the vast majority of Ugandans hence one of the bases of this study. In Busoga for instance, children aged below 18 years comprise 52% of the entire population and are enrolled in close to a thousand Primary or Secondary schools that exist in the Kingdom. Around 900 of these schools are rural-based and have basic facilities with limited access to qualified teachers, library services and printed instruction materials. The school children rely heavily on what they observe of their peers, parents, teacher and the community as the major sources of information and knowledge.

Moreover, modern forms of communication services like the telephone, Internet and print media are almost non-existent in the rural communities of Busoga. Even then these modern forms of communication draw substantially from oral tradition. That is why even though the success of pupils in such rural environments largely depends on

modern modes of communication, this will be ineffective unless they are able to harness the already existing and well grounded forms of local knowledge in the oral literatures for the benefit of the learners and community members. Notwithstanding the limited facilities, which present major obstacles to the school and educational system, it is also the case that quite often they fail to take advantage of existing forms of indigenous knowledge like the riddles in oral literature.

Uganda government's education sector recognizes the importance of the improvement in the literacy levels of the people in their Mother Tongue and has regarded Mother Tongue Literacy (MTL) as the best stimulant for the enhancement of human development (Kajubi, 1990). By providing access to indigenous knowledge tailored by the location specific needs and aspirations of the people in the community, it is believed that appropriate knowledge and skills would come into play (Gulere, 1998). The aim is to promote the growth of a people with high quality of knowledge, innovation or creation and sharing skills that are necessary in the promotion of human communication competence and development. Uganda's low levels of education attainment have been attributed to the low investment in appropriate information and communication technologies that are conducive to improved learning in schools. Suffice it to say that riddle discourse which is inherent in the Busoga community is the beginning point for the growth of its language. But the Education Standards Agency (ESA) of the Ministry of Education has been mandated to ensure that the quality of education under UPE is not compromised by the existing problems of overcrowding, under staffing and under facilitation. Accordingly, the Primary schools education Syllabus Volume Two (2000-2005), which taps the knowledge potential from the community through language, performing and martial arts, agriculture, fine art and crafts was launched in 2001 and



implemented in 2003. Our hope is that this positive trend is not derailed by lose of this good operational focus.

The two years allowed to the District Local Language Boards (DLLB) to develop appropriate instruction materials expired with little progress. The materials that were to be recommended to the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) for vetting and adoption as Lusoga language instruction materials had not been written by the end of 2004. The pupils from primary one to three who are to be taught and examined in their mother tongue started in 2007 while the rest of the classes are expected to follow suit progressively until Ugandan local languages including Kiswahili will be examinable at the highest level of primary education. At secondary level, the pilot started last year with senior one and in 2008 all schools are expected to follow. Busoga which was one of the pilot languages recorded the lowest compliance.

Although the Lusoga language is widely used in daily life, the progress of this policy will depend on the rate at which instructional materials in Lusoga are developed and availed for use in the schools. Even then, these materials will need to be complemented with the use of oral literature of the different speech communities for curricular and extra-curricular instruction.

The goal of this paper therefore is to draw the attention of all stakeholders in the affairs of Busoga to consider Lusoga riddle art in discourse as a resource for the mastery of the Lusoga language and enhancement of business and social skills. This in itself would guarantee negotiation, bargaining, dialogue and other extended discourses on matters economic, political and social. The “Big Five” personality dimensions of extraversion,

emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness or attention to detail, and openness to experience as key to job performance. In particular, attention to detail has a lot of influence on job proficiency, training expertise, and personnel data among professionals, police, managers, sales, and skilled/semi-skilled.<sup>3</sup>

We specifically analyse the street comedy of *Diikuula*, who many people look at as “a useless clown who is after money”<sup>4</sup>. Considering that his language and style (dress code, message, acts and diction) (Ajibade, 2005) have the power to attract large audiences of all age groups and the topics of his addressees are contemporary and thematic in nature, we consider him a classical riddle riddler. We relate his artistic and socialization function to the context of his performances to analyze the value of his activity not only for personal economic gains but capital marketing, social instruction, enlightenment and delight of the audience participants (Lieber, 1976).

In looking at *Diikuula*'s performances, we are also being critical of those who claim that, " the riddle form is based on the question and answer format" (Green & Pepicello, 1979) and conquer with the point that acknowledges the riddle in context as speech act, rather than text in isolation. This principal is critical when attempting to determine the riddle in its "natural state" (Green & Pepicello, 1979). The discernment of the witty devices in any of *Diikuula*'s shows is a complexity and one can but only come to terms with his message / word / address / code / acts (Ajibade, 2005) through keen

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<sup>3</sup> MURRAY R. BARRICK, MICHAEL K. MOUNT (1991, 2001)  
THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND JOB PERFORMANCE: A  
META-ANALYSIS

<sup>4</sup> Group of people interviewed at Iganga market, 2009.

observation and regular participation. In one of his shows at Iganga bus part, I was able to make out that riddles are not isolated statements but a combination of witty words presented in a witty manner by a witty actor or speaker. The wit does not only lie in the words and the performer but in the entire performance from which he draws his lessons and messages. The performance is highly contextualized and very much dependent on the audience. It is formulaic in a way in that the performer wears costumes and he carries with him certain objects that guide his performance. His interaction with the audience to meaningfully bring out the desired message without fleecing the audience is of interest to this research.

As argued elsewhere in (Green & Pepicello, 1979) the riddle act must, like all folklore, have a conventional locus within a particular tradition and within a performance context. Diikuula's performances involve not only 'wits' (cleverness), but wit (artful devices for the creation of confusion). Although in my view, wit in riddle discourse is not intended to confuse but to teach, entertain and instruct those for whom it is intended without physically excluding those who are not intended beneficiaries, Diikuula use of the proverb, *ekili okumpi, osonkesa munhwa*, (what is close to you, indicate with your mouth) serves to underscore the complexity of riddle art as language discourse. This proverb on one hand could mean the use of your physical 'mouth' to indicate or pointing at the object near you, and on the other the use of words in a figurative or concealed manner so that the object in question is not made aware.

This same trick is used in espionage where objects and symbols are used to represent names, actions, locations and intended motives. Similarly, the target may not read the

meaning of the witticism or symbolism used and if they do, then they have “killed the riddle” (*akiise*) so to say and failure would mean lose of status quo.

The creation of confusion as conceived by (Green & Pepicello, 1979) presupposes that knowledge can be used to blind fool which is not the intention of riddling. In fact, the riddlees, unlike the traditional wrestler, have the motive to share the secrets of their own wit and address because it is only through sharing that they can themselves achieve the goal of their speech acts which includes among other things, winning favours like in politics, betrothal, friendship conversation, passing time, sharing laughter and joy among others. We therefore consider riddling beyond the conventional locus of question and answer by noting that many riddles in Lusoga are statements or discourses, intended to generate debate and not to terminate it. Characterizing the riddle as discourse therefore enhances its role as generator of language and as literature in its own right.

The riddle discourse engages words in playful manner to give an audience a message in a language with enhanced aesthetic appeal (Maranda, 1971a; Pepicello, 1980) and semantic fit (Hamnett, 1967; Harries, 1976). Riddling as an artistic performance has significant qualities of innovation, creation and creativity that make it a tool for language growth. Scholars have over the generations of riddle research defined the riddle based on their function, structure, and content (Bascom, 1949; Burns, 1976; Finnegan, 1970; Green & Pepicello, 1979; James, 1971). Educational, structural and cognitive functions of the riddle have been given much prominence too in (Dalfovo, 1983; Maranda, 1971a, , 1971b, , 1976; Maranda & Buchler, 1974) highlighting the psychological, sociological and intellectual capacities of riddle discourse. Dalfovo for one contends that riddles stimulate the intelligence in combining various possible

allegorical allusions. During the riddle discourse, the process of finding a correct answer is riddled with intellectual agility and competitiveness.

During any riddle performance, life skills of patience, artistry, socialization, communication proficiency, charm, laughter, thought, creativity, coping with loss, self-responsibility are exercised. Riddle discourse considers viability, competitiveness, fair standard, interest of consumers or audience participants, environment and social conditions, balanced against interests, relativism and compliance with norms.

In Busoga, the formal opening formulae, “Riddler: *Kikoiko?* Riddlee: *Kiidhe!*” is sometimes followed during the formal riddling sessions, but in most riddle performances like Diikuula’s, it is implied. A spontaneous connected communication of thought, expression and exchange of ideas in familiar conversation or talk (Miruka, 1994; Preble, 1960) is what Diikuula uses to hook his patrons. Like any good riddle, his discourse is renewable, sustainable and profitable and when performed, it remains original and rewarding to both himself and his customers - audience. His riddling is an act of powerful observation when he uses current affairs like the death of Hon. *Kamana Wesonga of Manaafa* district and the post-elections turmoil in Kenya at the time to make his introductory message about the “death of true love in Busoga” and the value of good neighbourliness or cooperation in business and trade relations respectively. The absorption capacity, critical looks, material flow, life cycle and organic integrity of the riddle act or discourse allows for a free interaction between the audience - participants and the initiator of the performance.

The riddle above draws its imagery from word-play or pun between Lusoga and Lumasaaba where *Kamana*, *Wesonga* and *Manaafa* are taboo word when spoken. The nature and concepts within the immediate environment, historical and social context immediately brings in handy, his popular topic of teaching the Basoga how to love and love properly instead of “eating goats and yet goats are for eating as meat not eating for silly” he says. But we know from tradition that the goat is the symbol of chastity and when a woman is found chaste during her first marriage night, a she or he goat is given to the aunt or uncle in respect of female or male chastity. Playing with the word “eat” also reinforces his underlying sexual undertones thus keeping the discourse on course without much concealment or being over explicit. The use of animal and plant images when referring to human beings puts the life and experiences of the people listening in equal or comparative context as the community under attack. Their levels of interdependence and co-existence are presented as a lesson to emulate so that peace and harmony may occur in either’s colony.

The desire for this to become reality among human beings is contained in his appeal through self made commercial breaks during the performance. His show may well translate into enhanced social progress, competitive social market economy, quality of the environment, innovativeness, commitment to the audience - customers, shareholding and employee – employer relationships if taken seriously. Diikuula and his audience-customers are compelled to assume a responsibility towards their society. Like during structured riddling where the riddler is symbolically awarded a kingdom, title or article of very high value in compensation for their prowess, this particular discourse is based on collective sponsorship where by the audience contribute in cash or kind before, during and after the performance. In the process, there are rewards of actual powers to the lead performer to ideologically lead the community politically by making political

statements, customarily by making kingly pronouncements and in many other ways which satirize or ridicule an undesirable situation. People like these are indeed, the actual legislators of society and language development notwithstanding. A word from such a witty person would very quickly get into the public domain as fact even when it is not entirely so.

Known for his social-political commentary and entertainment, *Diikuula*, has transformed the name *bidiko* to mean plastic shoes that are widely used in Busoga and elsewhere. This is perhaps originated from the oil company *BIDCO* whose refinery is located in Jinja town. Instead of producing oil for consumption as their terms of reference were believed to be, BIDCO began by producing empty jerry cans for sale and later, low quality plastic sandals which in the mind of this comedian had nothing to do with their main trade. What is more, the shoes coming at the time when polythene bags are banned from use. The dilemma for the people should be whether they are to embrace cheap plastic shoes because they expect cooking oil or they shun the shoes and lose the oil. In his riddle drama at Iganga, *Diikuula* castigates the people wearing *bidiko* as destined for death and exclusion. “*Gasia*” he calls it and to prove his point, he wears the same kinds of shoes in a very dirty and ramshackle way and comments that, “those who wanted to see the queen where stopped at Namanve and told to return to Iganga. How do you expect to wear *bidiko* and you meet the queen?” he asks the audience – customers. So the word *bidiko*, like *naro* have been added to Lusoga language to mean cheap plastic shoes and friend respectively.

A persistence of economy and society at the cost of over-exploitation is shown in the above example reflected in the use of very few words in short statements to explain vast underlying concepts. In its neutrality and generalized nature, riddle discourse in Lusoga

is a combination of style including but not limited to proverbs, word-play, allegory, pun, jokes, euphemism and extended imagery. In depth is the search for long term orientations of the participants to not only memorize the play but also becoming what is desired and refraining from what is undesirable.

*Diikuula* addresses himself to three major topics: road accidents, political impropriety and moral degeneration or said differently, he satirizes the death of *Kamana Wesonga*, MP Manaafa, the political confusion in Kenya after the December 2007 General elections and love and love making in Busoga. What is obvious is the centrality of the environment in which the riddle discourse is derived and performed. It is not strange to talk about death, health, development, growth, economy, recreation and relationships directly and indirectly. The following riddle discourse is recorded to illustrate this point:

*Obutamanha kubala kikwayisa embiidhi, kuba ole akukobela kuzala aye takukobela bwerya. Akoba ati ezaala ikumi na buno (sex signals with thumb between two fingers) aye bwogaita dheyalya ni dhewagula onhwa butwa, edhisigaileyo dhayabya amagombe. Ndi kwewuunia budget kuba omusolo gwa buli mutwe gwaize buli mugezi akube ku taaya (guliweera, engaito), bana tugya mum biro dha short relay, muna obuveela baabutoilewo ni kondom buveela, dhoona dha viilewo. Kale abenzi kuluno mugya kwelabilila oba munakola ndagala ,oba pakiti oba mawulile ni imwe beene omuna manha aye nga ebya booyi ono ba maama mugya kulya musuule waawo.... [Okuseka kungi]*

*Translated as:*



Ignorance / not knowing how to count / plan leads one to rear pigs, because one only tells you producing but does not tell you eating. Saying it produces ten and ... (two) but when you add what it eats and what you spent to buy it, you just commit suicide by poisoning and the balance you spend on last funeral rites. I am wondering about the budget because graduated taxi has been returned, every wise person should prepare their tyres, my friends we are going to run short relay, my friend, the polythene bags have been abolished and the condom is a polythene / plastic that has also been abolished. So the promiscuous; this time you have to look after yourselves, whether you are going to use banana leaves, or packets or newspapers you are the one who knows but matters of this boy [swings his crooked stick] the women you are going to eat a rough and ready one ...[prolonged and loud laughter]

The riddle aspects are many but I will point out the way he goes around the point of reproductive health by beginning with the pig, costs of production, death as a result of debts being linked to consequences of the abolition and re-introduction of different “head taxes” which though intended to help the people end up by injuring them. By abolishing the plastics and continuing to import condoms and “BIDCO” products, *Diikuula* is making a vast political and economic statement. By spicing it up with his fingering symbolic of sexual intercourse, he is in a way saying our state is engaged politically in orgies that are not helpful to the people.

Another of such riddles in context is: *Baagula empeta aye obufumbo bwelema!* (They bought a ring but marriage has failed itself) - a bicycle, whose many rings have nothing

to do with marriage as conceived today. Anybody can use or ride the same bicycle without minding these rings. In the same way, not every married man or woman is an exclusive preserve of the man or woman to whom they are betrothed. Immediately, we see a health dimension to this related to the mechanical condition of the bicycle. If many people use the bicycle, it may wear out or break down quickly because of misuse or overuse. Similarly the spouse engaged with multiple partners may contract disease or wear out their love thus leading to divorce (*bwelema*). This then becomes a development dilemma and retrogression of the family because of reduction on productivity due the breakdown of family and the negative energies so created between the couple and relatives. Even with the bicycle, work is paralyzed. The goal of joy and recreation or procreation is thus reversed and total failure assumes center stage. It is not rare to find male spouses referring to their hubbies as bicycles (*eigaali*) as in the song of one veteran singer “*Njagala eggaali ekozeko ebeela ngumu*” ( I love a used bicycle its usually strong)

We see that a riddle produces more with less. In this way, the participants learn to use quality language in economy of diction, and economy in the other aspects like using precise statement adds respect to the speaker and the language in use. This should translate into life skills like less water use, less food consumption, less money expenditure, less energy use and less of other resources per unit of output to make man more economic and competitive. This is perhaps the reason why some critics think that riddles are questions and answers (Dalfovo, 1983; Maranda, 1976) when in actual fact, they are compact statements that either rhetorically or directly impose a thought pattern within the audience – consumer to understand what is apparent in their own situation compared to that of the originator.

Moreover, as (Sachs, 2005) argues, lack of saving is one of the six reasons why countries fail to get out of the poverty trap. My assumption would be that any culture of saving in words and consequently time would be profitable. Once a people deepen their knowledge and have the right attitude towards saving and the natural resources around them, it is more than likely that the desired goal of well being would be attained. The wide gap that exists between knowledge and communication eloquence notwithstanding, the generational and experiential gap between haves and have-nots, the young and the old can be steadily overcome through purposeful riddle discourse. Riddles are critical of habits of consumerism without investment, living on the environment more as parasites than mutual organisms. Whereas all this may be true and important, policy makers and practitioners of development sometimes pay more attention to technocratic aspects of development at the expense of communication, especially development communication in which, say, riddling and other folklore forms as aspects of child development are expended with (Ngulube, 2002; Sachs, 2005).

Immediately a riddle statement is made, there is a feeling of questioning or self examination which, in the issuing discourse comes as an answer to a virtual question paused. Take for example “*bungutu talya bwangata*” (*bungutu* does not eat *bwangata*) is in itself a statement but in the mind some audience members a question as to what *bungutu* and *bwangata* could mean? By identifying *bungutu* with soil or termite and *bwangata* with fired clay does not necessarily turn the statement into a question. Rather, it proves the riddle statement effective by the way it stimulates reason, observation and thoughtfulness. A performance of this nature adds new words to the language. *Bungutu* and *bwangata* are not formal words in the Lusoga language. They are onomatopoeia from the sound made by the termites when eating up organic matter and soil to make or build their hills, and *bwangata* could mean something made and put there (*bwanga ta*).

Although the answer to this riddle has been fixed over time, it can be extended in thought by those who may not be aware of the traditional fixed answer above. In one performance, answers like *amaadhi tigalya sumiti* (water does not eat cement), *ente telya nte yiinaayo* (cow does not eat another cow) were given.

In spite of the termites' skilfulness to transform raw earth into a marvellous ant hill, they cannot transform an already transformed and fired piece of a broken pot into an ant hill. This in comparison puts the man above the ant. However, there is the riddle, "*ekyalema omuzungu?*" (What defeated a white person?") This riddle question seeks an answer what the skilled European failed to do, and not the entire human race is here subject to critical review. The *muzungu*, like the ant is known for great works of creation but is so far incapable of "creating a person or the sun." The riddle needs not be generalist because the others races have not been known to excel in anything. The riddle gives credit where it is due in a rather diplomatic attack that may not cause offence.

Riddle discourse conforms to the notion that "perceived needs are socially and culturally determined, and sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecologically possible and to which all can reasonably aspire." (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002) The common riddle statement beginning phrase, "*Ndi ni mukazi wange ...oba Ndi noomuntu wange ....* (I have my wife or I have my person ...)" puts the discourse into the social cultural realm. In Busoga, it is the women who are the main subject of riddling. The woman is an enigmatic figure attracting an array of thoughts and feelings unlike the man. It is the norm for everyone to aspire to own "a woman," whether that person is male or female. On the contrary, very few riddles talk about owning a man or husband

even if they are proposed by a female except in cases where socially the object in question is considered masculine and to suggest otherwise would be offensive or derogatory. In most of such cases, the general term *omuntu* (person) or title like *Kyabazinga* (king) or animal name will be used. Such a construct frames the gender inclination of the language. A deviation from this traditional construct would happen only if the creation of modern fixed riddle forms takes the dynamic structure of riddle discourse as shown in *Diikuula's* street comedy performances.

Sometimes it comes as literal word-play while in most cases it is metaphorical representation of objects known and seen with completely unrelated objects also in the same environment. With continuous reference, such an object may come to be known as such since it would be so closely associated that people no longer can differentiate between the object and the implied meaning. Take for example, *kapinini kapiso* which refers to *akaina akeenunga* (a hole of a black ant). It is not uncommon for a Musoga to refer to a hole as *pinini* as in the riddle *toola pinini ote ku pinini ofune pinini* (take *pinini* put on *pinini* to get *pinini*) which means *tola mukazi ote ku bulili ofune mwana* (take a wife put on bed get a child). This riddle is only in keeping with the concept 'hole' for *pinini* and extending it to all the other objects involved in the riddle. The underlying concept of stinging as derived from the black ant in the hole is extrapolated to the 'sting' on the bed on which a child is made. One might even further argue that *omukazi* (wife or woman) like the black ant, is not the 'hole' as such, but the object that relates to 'the hole' through which the 'sting' is administered. They are all accomplices or products of the 'hole' concept as explained by the Bagishu tradition that human beings were got from a hole in Mt. Masaaba. So it is not uncommon to refer to a woman

as *oli kiso* (you are a knife, you are sharp) and child *oli mwogi* (you are sharp) because of that sharp sting imagery.

While most people are fascinated by riddling in its different forms and would go miles to appreciate such entertainment, others feel it is insincere and nonsensical. Finnegan in her earlier studies (Finnegan, 1970) called it a childish form intended mainly for children, and as word play, it is sometimes looked at as diversionary use of language. But from what we have seen, riddling creates additional meaning with words in order to entertain or make a comment. Riddle discourse is where the language used is seen to over-fly its boundaries (rules). In this way, ideas and concepts find fertile grounds to grow, especially when it comes to using certain words considered as political or social taboo in that society.

Riddle discourse is also used in coded communication used by the forces like the army and police. The representation of an entire sentence with an object or symbol is what constitutes espionage language. A statement like, “we will deliver the mangoes at ten” could mean we will come to the house ten of us. The words to harp on are man-goes-ten. An ordinary listener would pay more attention to the mangoes and the time of the delivery rather than the ten man force or tenth battalion involved in the attack.

Riddling according to (Green & Pepicello, 1979:7) may indeed be a kind of epistemological dialectic... but not peripheral to the phenomenological concerns of many contemporary riddle scholars (p.7). By examining the street comedy shows of *Diikuula* we have come to conquer with (Ajibade, 2005) that through word-play and riddle discourse, the actors are able to coin words and euphemisms that bear double or

sometimes triple meanings relevant to a given situation. By so doing, they help the language users to realize another side of the words and phrases in use and to reconsider their own statements, before making them. In this way, language acquires new semantic and morphological qualities.

## Conclusions

Attention to detail

Truth and consistency

Introduction of new words

Knowledge creation

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