

TIME RELATERS AND CONTEXTUAL MEANING AS EXEMPLIFIED BY
KEZILAHABI IN KICHWA MAJI

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Introduction:

Euphrase Kazilahabi is one of the most famous novelists in Kiswahili literature. His works have been widely used in schools and universities not only because of their contextual significance but also because of the language used. It is through language that he generates the large meanings of his works and manipulates his underlying theme of cultural conflict. It is also in it that the aesthetic quality of his works lies. Kazilahabi's use of certain grammatical devices needs attention since they seem to play a great role in describing, interpreting and evaluating the meaning and effect of his works. In this paper I shall concentrate on the least frequently repeated but most fundamental device in extracting meaning from what is stated in the text. One of his novels; Kichwa Maji, will be used here. For the sake of brevity and to give a clear picture of how this device works, I shall discuss time relaters of precedence and concentrate on the element Zamani.

Conjunctive Elements.

The study of Kazilahabi's novels shows that there is a conspicuous use and repetition of certain grammatical devices, notably time relaters. With the help of time relaters it seems quite possible for the reader to keep in view the connections and relationships of passages and the chapters that could possibly be seen as spatially separate. While this can be seen as an achievement in creating coherence and clarity in his works, a study of these elements further shows that they also play a great role in the understanding of the underlying theme. On top of the fact that they locate time in a sentence and even 'Locate the scene of action' (Romaine: 1985:92) these elements seem to indicate the writer's habits of thought and thus have a considerable bearing on meaning. Scholars like Bennett: 1975, Nash: 1980; Van Dijk: 1977.

Halliday and Hassan:1976 have worked on time relaters in texts. In this paper I shall look at them as a stylistic device from the point of view of what Halliday (1976) and Berry (1977) call the 'contextual meaning', I shall show how Kezilahabi has tried to bind his text together and make it into a unified and coherent text with the help of the time relaters. The time relaters of precedence will be used as further evidence of realizing the extended meaning of the text. It is by looking at the elements from this perspective that I found out two things. The first was that time relaters, if seen as a group, could be divided into sub-groups. The second was that each of these sub-groups was independent and could play a significant role in the understanding of the novel. Each of these sub-groups was also dependent on the other subgroups. In which case, the sub-groups were creating an interdependence and interrelationship that has helped to reveal the underlying theme as will be seen below.

It is worth while mentioning that some of the elements were found to fall into other groups or sub-groups as well rather than being strictly under one group, say time relaters. This problem was also identified by Van Dijk (1977:58) when looking at the semantics of natural connectives. He notes that one of the problems is that:

The same connectives may express different types of connection, and one type of connection may be expressed by various connectives.

In the Swahili language this problem goes beyond any one of the groups under discussion. For example the element mpaka (until/ as far as) can be used as a place definer or time relater. The sentence Tunza alitaka kuchukua maiti mpaka ukerewe p. 213 (Tunza wanted to take the dead body as far as Ukerewe) is a place definer showing direction as well as position. It shows direction in that Tunza wants to take Kazimoto's child from Mwanza to Ukerewe. It can show position when Ukerewe is seen as the point of destination. The same element, used in the sentence Tuliendelea kunywa mpaka saa nne p.66 (We continued to drink until 10,00pm - literally the

fourth hour (of the night)) is a time indicator which suggests that Kazimoto and Kamata were drinking for a long period of time. This problem was solved by looking at an element in its sentence in relation to other possible groups in order to find out if the element will relay the same or other meanings as compared to that of the sentence in which it appeared. For example, the conjunction element karibu (near/'welcome'/'soon) could fall into the groups of place definers and time relaters. In the sentence ilikuwa usiku tunakula na wadogo zangu karibu na moto p. 35 (it was at night when we were eating with my young brothers and sisters near the fire) the element karibu has the meaning of 'near' (place).

In another sentence, madam aneanza kunywa uji karibu atakula chakula cha kawaida p.43 (as long as she has started drinking gruel she will 'soon' eat ordinary food) it has another time meaning. While in the first sentence it is used as a place definer showing the place where Kazimoto and his brothers and sisters were sitting, in the the second sentence it is used as a time relater.

It shows that the time between Rukia's beginning to drink gruel and her recovery (portrayed through 'eating ordinary food') is not going to be too long. This shows that although both sentences have the element karibu, the element karibu takes its specific meaning from the context, that is from the sentence in which it occurs.

Time Relaters

One of Kezilahabi's conjunctive strategies is the use of time relaters. In this section I shall show how he uses this type of conjunctive to indicate and even 'express' certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in his stories. I shall also show how time relaters can be looked at as a way of conceiving the underlying theme. In this I will not only have agreed with Nash (1980:35:6) that time relaters (which he calls definers) are essential agents of continuity and cohesion, but will also have gone beyond his statement that;

in histories and biographies the dimension of time is so obviously important that the frequent temporal references become a major element in the textual organization.

The analysis will show that Kezilahabi uses time relaters in his fictional work in such a way that they play a part not only in the 'textual organization' of his works, but also in his style. Furthermore, I shall show that time relaters can be looked upon metaphorically as interpretations of the novels in which they appear; my interpretation of time follows that of Bennett (1975:95) who elaborates time as 'perpetually moving and moving always in the same direction'. The way time relaters are used in the novels of Kezilahabi seems to suggest that the author portrays through them a particular direction which is of great importance in the understanding of his works. In the figure below are shown the conjunctive elements of time and the sub-groups into which they fall, with their frequency of occurrence and sequence in the key texts. The time relaters of precedence seem to be the least frequently used and yet have a fundamental role to play in the understanding of the novel as will be seen below. In this paper more attention will be paid to the time relaters of precedence and in particular the element zamani (in the past/long ago/formely).

Conjunctive Elements of Time

Sub-Group		S E Q U E N C Y				
		Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 3	Frequency
Time Relaters of Precedence	Zamani (in the past)	0	3	1	3	7
	Tangu (since)	2	0	0	4	6
	Kabla ya (before)	0	1	1	3	5
Time Relaters of Subsequence	Baada (after)	4	7	13	16	40
	Baadaye (later)	0	1	2	2	5
	Halafu (then)	0	1	1	3	5
Time Relaters of Cooccurrence	Sasa (now)	7	4	2	8	21
	Wakati huu (at this time)	2	0	4	11	17
Time Distributors of Frequency	Kila + (every +)	5	0	4	3	12
	Mara + (+times)	13	5	13	10	41
Total		34	21	42	62	159

From the table above it will be seen that time relaters of subsequence are the second most frequently repeated of all elements. In this sub-group it is the element baada ya (after) that is more frequently repeated than others. In fact it is the

second following nara + (+ times) as far as frequency is concerned. This suggests that often events follow one after another, as if there is a chaining effect. Although one would expect this in a narrative it is their frequency and relationship that concerns us. It should also be noted that in the sub-group of time ~~relations~~ of subsequence the frequency increases from the first text to the fourth in all the elements studied (see figure above). Although this is seen in other elements, there is no other sub-group which has all its elements developing in this way. It is only in the time distributors of frequency that the first text has more elements repeated than the fourth. This suggests either that a set of events occurred more frequently, or that more temporal relations of frequency were marked by 'connectors' in the first text. This covers the time before Kazimoto, the main character, becomes exposed to secondary school education. It will also be seen that the ~~second~~ text has the smallest total of the elements repeated in all the texts studied. This seems to be in relation to the short time given by the author in the novel between the time the main character abandons the traditional culture (text 1) to the time he becomes seriously involved with the modern culture (text 3).

Time Relaters of Precedence.

The time relaters of precedence have a very significant role to play in both the settings of the story and in the development of the episodes in the novel. As seen from the figure above the elements that fall under this group are the fewest in terms of frequency. These elements are zamani (in the past), tangu (since) and kabla ya (before). Looking at the sentences in which they appear, these elements seem to suggest that the events happening have a temporal relationship created by them. But their being less frequently repeated than others may be supported by the expectation that these events are located in a period of time which these elements suggest is the beginning, expressing what Bennett (1975: 121) calls 'the source'. As they are above one could infer that the source was zamani (formerly/long ago/in the past) and kabla ya (before) which are found in the second, third and fourth texts as if referring to the past period of the first text when the members of the society (both the younger and the elder generation) are within the traditional culture.

Then there is a development of events from that time onwards as can be inferred from the element of tangu (since). This seems to suggest that there is a sequential development of increased reference to the past and a departure from it. The element tangu (since) is in the first and fourth texts and this may be caused by the reference made to the past (more likely in the fourth text) and the departure into new ventures (more likely in the first text).

In relation to the novel, it could be said that the source of the events in the novel is the traditional culture which existed before the changes that were brought about by many factors. The first of these factors could be the changing character of the members of the younger generation. This started happening not long ago and since then it is still going on.

Zamani (In the past/long ago/formerly)

The element zamani (in the past) has been used in the text in a way that suggests two vital clues. The first clue is that which is found in the sentence zamani mvulana alipata umri wa miaka kumi na tisa au ishirini kabla ya kujiona mtu mzima pp. 65-6 (in the past the boy become nineteen or twenty before seeing himself as a grown up). First of all, it is important to look at the sentence in the text. A young man argues with Kazimoto, telling him that the world has changed with time and this is one of the things that have changed. In addition to this observation is the position of zamani (in the past) in the sentence above. Standing as the opening of the sentence it calls for the attention of the reader, thus becoming 'the peg on which the message is hung' (Halliday 1970:161) in other words the theme. Observing it from the point of view of Lyons (1977:507) on theme, who suggests that:

it is the expression whose function it is to serve as the point of departure in the communication process,

the element zamani suggests that the author's point of

Most sentences in which the element zamani is used suggest that in the past things were better than they are at present. There has been a change in the people themselves, their possessions and ways of thinking and this change has been for the worse. The sentence zamani nilikuwa nikimwona mzee mwenye heshima kubwa sana.p.85 (in the past I used to see him as an old man worth of great respect) suggests that young men no longer respect their elders. But given the background of Kabenga's behaviour, Kazimoto has reason to hate him. He knows that the old man does not respect himself. he makes love with Tegemea for money and he is involved in the confusion that exists in Kazimoto's house. This old man, who would have deserved all the respect of young men, shares a woman with a very young boy, Kalia. He therefore is no longer worthy of the respect he used to enjoy when Kazimoto used to respect him. The sentences zamani wazee wetu walikuwa wakiamini kwamba mtu alikufa na kuzaliwa tena.p. 138 (in the past our elders used to believe that a person died and was born again). and zamani gari hili lilikuwa ~~lilikuwa~~ lakini sasa lilikuwa limelala chini, p. 203 (in the past this car used to move but now it just lies on the ground) suggests a better situation in the past. In the first sentence there was hope in the minds of the people, while in the second people possessed material wealth that was useful to them as opposed to the unusable and damaged car. The past seems to be glorious as opposed to the present.

The use of the element zamani (in the past/formerly/long ago) as well as the above interpretation suggest that the events happened in the past without identifying a more exact period of time. It is with the help of the element kabla-ya (before) that an interpretation can be made and the events located in time. This is arrived at through the sentences that have the element kabla ya (before) in them which give the events that happened before the point of primary concern. Two main periods of time are portrayed through the use of the element kabla ya (before). The first period of time, as will be seen in the examples that follow below, is the beginning of conflict prior to a departure. This use suggests that before an event takes place something which is different from that event was happening.

departure was the past and hence the traditional position. But what is even more important here is that this element is referring to a particular group within that traditional society. The object of reference is mvulana (boy/young male) and the event is his behaviour at that time. With the help of zamani in this sentence, it is also possible to see two periods carrying two different values for the group of people. Although the present is not used, it can be seen that the young people look at themselves today (in a different way) as compared to how they used to look at themselves in the past.

The second use of zamani is when it suggests the possibility of going back to the past. The sentence baba alikuwa amekwisha kuji tena katika hali yake ya zamani ingawa alikuwa amekonda p. 101 (father had returned to his former state of health although he had grown thin) suggests that the physical condition of Kazimoto's father was not good although health-wise he was much better similar to how he was in the past before the deaths of his wife, daughter and son. In reference to zamani and the story it is possible to infer that the sentence portrays the conditions of the traditional society. Kazimoto's father has been able to regain his past health, which can be compared to the traditional culture. But, unfortunately he is not strong enough, he is thin and weak. This suggests that, although he manages to look like what he was in the past, he is not indeed as he was. If this is compared to going back to the traditional culture, this sentence seems to suggest that it is possible to return to the traditional culture, but after the conflict with the modern culture, the return will not be complete. A good example of one of those who tried to return to the traditional culture after being exposed to the modern is Tegemea. Vumilia's mother, Tegemea, had left the village to go and become a prostitute in town. She realized the importance of going back to the village to try to live in the traditional way. Since she was already money-minded and enjoyed earning her living from having sex, she found it difficult to live without this life style. She therefore makes love with Manase's father as well as Kazimoto's younger brother. These paid her money in exchange for the sexual services she rendered to them so, although Tegemea went back to the village where she wanted to live in the traditional way, she ends up there with

The time shown here is an immediate past unlike that distant past of zamani. In the sentence siku chache kabla ya kaandoka kulikuwa na matata kidogo. p. 129 (a few days before leaving there was a small conflict at home) and lakini Kalia kabla ya kwenda mbinguni lazima ufe, p. 82 (but Kalia before going to heaven you must die) preparations towards entering new states are hard and unhappy ones. The element kabla ya (before) is a 'point' standing in between two situations or events which in most cases are different in that they cannot happen together. One has to happen first so that the second happens. This can also be found in other time relaters of precedence like miezi iliyopita (the past months) kwanza (first), and mwanzoni (at first/in the beginning) which show that there are things that happened before and these were followed by others.

Conclusion

It might be of value to note that time relaters of precedence not only suggest the setting of the novel in terms of identifying the events and situations of the initial period of the novel, but also seem to join the setting and the other episodes that follow. This is mainly done through the element kabla ya (before), zamani (in the past) and even mwanzoni (at first). The use of these elements in Kazilahabi's novel becomes vital in the understanding of his works mainly as indicators of the development of the underlying theme. They make the stylistic structure of Kazilahabi's work complicated in that they are used in different places in the novels and in different sentences but still remain vital parts in the structure of the setting as well as the whole novel. To students of literature this is one of the stylistic approaches to the analysis of a text.

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