

Article

## **Ubuciko Bomlomo: Wedding Songs as an Effective Means of Communication and Education among The Zulu People**

Bongephiwe Dlamini-Myeni\* & Samkelisiwe Diligence Mbokazi

Department of African Languages and Culture, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa 3886, South Africa

Corresponding Author: [MyeniG@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:MyeniG@unizulu.ac.za)

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**Abstract:** Songs are an integral aspect of Zulu folklore, as they are performed in almost all ceremonies in Zulu culture. Every ceremony, or occasion in which people come together, such as a wedding ceremony, (coming of age), *mhlonyana* (girls ceremony when they reach womanhood) or a funeral gathering, has particular songs associated with it. The aim of this paper was to explore the effectiveness of wedding songs as a means of communication and education in Zulu culture. The researchers first discussed the importance of music in African societies and secondly examined its role as a means of communication and education. The study adopted a qualitative approach located within the interpretivist paradigm. Ten songs were selected to illustrate how artists use songs to convey social messages. The songs were analysed using the critical discourse analysis approach. The researchers argued that the Zulu people compose songs to record a certain event or convey a social message. Thus, wedding songs do not only entertain people at a particular gathering or ceremony but communicate crucial messages that are educational at the same time. This article has revealed that most of the Zulu wedding songs contain repetitions that emphasise a certain word with an important social message. Therefore, the style and linguistic features of a song play a crucial role in emphasising the message embedded in it.

**Keywords:** Music; songs; wedding; marriage; expressions; Zulu people

### **Introduction**

Songs are an integral part of the traditional Zulu heritage. They were used to entertain, teach, and pass on society's customs to the next generation (Ntuli, 2010). The Zulu people sing songs as an essential element of their culture. They have songs for all occasions in one's life, spanning from the cradle to the grave. There are children's songs, recreational songs, war songs, wedding songs, funeral songs, and et cetera. These songs are orally transmitted from one generation to the other. Oral transmission simply means passing a message by the word of mouth (Nhlekisana, 2021). Research on wedding songs is widespread, particularly within the field of literature and folklore studies (George, 2014; Nhlekisana, 2007; Mtose, 2011; Mulaudzi, 2013, 2014; Zondi, 2000). Researchers concur that indigenous songs are a means of social communication. Nhlekisana (2007) states that wedding songs recommend what should be done to promote peaceful marriages and good relationships among the in-laws. The songs also highlight the possibilities of conflict arising in a marriage, if one of the partners fails to conform to the prescribed expectations.

In the Zulu culture, wedding ceremonies are graced by traditional songs, which are an important aspect of life. Hence, wedding songs are often pregnant with social meaning and are sung for a purpose. They are a

means of communication and education in Zulu culture. Songs are an effective way of communicating matrimonial ideas and values. As Mulaudzi (2013, p.42) observes, “wedding songs serve as vehicles of communication to enforce marriage cultural practices without taking into considerations the harsh realities the communities are facing”. The information is clearly disseminated and no further explanation is required as the songs do not contain any hidden message. The sender and the receiver of the information are properly matched. Thus, the message embedded in the songs is clear and received well. Sometimes, the receiver of the message responds through song and the whole event is superbly transformed into a ballet. The current study aims to explore the effectiveness of Zulu wedding songs as a means of communication among the Zulu people and to reflect on the importance of Zulu wedding songs as a means of education in Zulu culture.

### Literature Review

African oral literature has become the centre of international scholarship, and much progress has been made since the publication of Ruth Finnegan’s *African Oral Literature* (1970), which sought to convince the world that what has often been called “folklore” is a valid and rich literary production. Most of the work continues to focus on men’s knowledge production (Gueye, 2004). Marriage is an indigenous African institution in which two people tie a knot for the purpose of establishing a family. However, there is a dearth of literature on Zulu marriages, particularly on the importance of wedding songs in social life. Contemporary literature focused more on other aspects of the wedding songs. Ndao (2023) discusses the cultural meanings and functions conveyed through song lyrics among the Senegalese people, particularly in the Saalum community. The study revealed that the songs embodied such communicative aspects as conveying knowledge, promoting the process of inheriting social and cultural practices, and to educate the young generation, while exalting adults as providers of knowledge and guidance. Ndebele (2022) examines how the traditional Ndebele society in Zimbabwe help couples to mitigate or manage marital challenges that could destabilise marital bonds and trigger divorce. The study concluded that wedding songs are a realistic learning platform for the young people and prospective couples, and they serve as a revival platform to those who are already married.

Several studies have been done on the importance of songs in various traditional ceremonies in the African context, including South Africa. Most of these studies have focused on the significance of the rituals and the attitudes as observed in the analysis of a song in its contexts (Dlamini, 2009; Manqele, 2000; Mjomba 2012; Timammy, 2002; Zondi, 2020). Hence, Zulu songs constitute a form of oral communication, which has its relevance in the social system of the Zulu people (Manqele, 2000). Similarly, Dlamini’s (2009) study on Swazi women’s folk songs as performed by women in various social and communal gatherings and during Swazi traditional marriage rites such as *umtsimba* acknowledges that oral literature does not only entertain, but also serves as a space in which Swazi women engage in the reviewing of social relations and patriarchal discourses that work to their disadvantage. Indeed, Swazi women’s songs are a powerful critique of the social order. Some of the songs reveal the deep-seated meanings and scope of gender and power inequalities in that society (Zondi, 2020).

Earlier, Timammy (2002) investigated the ways in which wedding songs of Mombasa Swahili women contain a variety of stylistic devices to convey themes. The purpose of the study was to reflect on how different stylistic elements, including as metaphors, similes, and repetition, are employed by the singers in the Mombasa Swahili women's wedding songs to convey their meaning, emotions, and other nuances. Additionally, the study focused on how well Mombasa Swahili women's wedding songs employed stylistic devices to get their point across to listeners. The study also sought to determine how the wording and performance of wedding songs by Mombasa Swahili women related to one another. According to the study, Mombasa singers use powerful stylistic elements or figures of speech to assist them communicate their message succinctly and efficiently. Further, Mjomba (2012) focused on Taita wedding music examining several songs performed at various Taita (Kenya) social events. She found that people can use wedding songs to mock and celebrate others, as well as to communicate their feelings of love and praise. Songs assist in educating partners about married life, including the inevitable obstacles they may face. In addition, wedding songs are sung to compliment the bride and groom's parents on raising their children honourably. The purpose of the current study was to examine how well Zulu wedding songs function as a medium of instruction and communication.

In terms of literature, numerous studies were conducted on the importance of songs in various traditional ceremonies in the African context, including South Africa. Little has been done on the functions of wedding songs among the Zulu people. Thus, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. Determine the effectiveness of Zulu wedding songs as a means of communication among the Zulu people.
- ii. To explore importance of Zulu wedding songs as a means of education in Zulu culture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is guided by Jousse's (1886-1961) Oral-Style Text and Anthropology of Gesle and Rhythm (1954-1978). Jousse's theory of the Anthropology of Gesle and Rhythm is appropriate for the analysis of traditional songs because it considers all the aspects of the oral-visual-gestual mode of oral-style expression that are visible in the performance of the song. Jousse (1997) wrote an oral milieu, demonstrating his capacity to bestride oral literature interface in his inspired lifetime. The author was also in charge of developing insightful ideas about human expression in a lot of different contexts. Jousse claimed that the Anthropos will have to convey what is within of them when they are impressed. The message could be voiced by the Anthropos during the expression stage by using voice, gestures, or any other means of conveying feel. All human expression, including songwriting, is subject to this. The opinions of the community are expressed through the Oral-Style Text Theory, which also explains the purpose of wedding songs and how they serve as a reflection of a people's moral and social ideals.

The Oral-Style Text Theory enables one to investigate the style, performance and meaning of wedding songs, which usually advises the bride on how to cope with marriage life, praise her beauty and caution the groom to take utmost care of the bride. Wedding songs usually emphasise the use of figurative language that requires one to acquire deep knowledge of a people and their culture before interpreting the implied meanings. The theory also helps to look at the styles used in wedding songs (Bukonya et al., 1994).

The theory helps to explore the use of wedding imagery expressed through cultural and verbal symbols as a way of interpreting the emotions and ideas the narrators wish to artistically convey to their listening community and it enhances an analysis of the linguistic means by which the singer shifts from speaking to performance (Hymes, 1981). Jousse's Oral-Style Text Theory was used because it facilitates understanding of the language of the community used in the songs so that there is a careful scrutiny and understanding of the images since the researcher had attended some wedding ceremonies during the festive holidays. The theory enabled the researchers to carefully convey the correct meaning and draw the correct conclusion.

### **Methods**

The qualitative method was used in this study's data collection. Online resources including YouTube, theses, journals, and other publications that are relevant to this study were consulted by the researcher to obtain pertinent material. The researcher collected data by making notes and by making observations. In December 2022, the first author participated in several wedding ceremonies as part of the data collection process. Some Zulu wedding songs were on YouTube.

Furthermore, the data analysis model created by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used in this study. Three stages are suggested to make up data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting or verification. Data reduction, as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), is the process of picking out, narrowing down, streamlining, abstracting, and changing data that is found in recorded field notes. In order for data to be easily comprehended in relation to the problem being addressed, it must be changed in addition to being condensed for management purposes.

Moreover, a data display could be a longer textual piece or a new approach to organise and conceptualise the more textually contained data in the form of a diagram, chart, or matrix. Whether presented in textual or diagrammatic form, a data presentation enables the analyst to draw sufficient conclusions from the data to start identifying systematic patterns and linkages. When a researcher goes back over the data and decides based on the results, this is known as data verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Next, Jousse's (1886–1961) Oral-style Text Theory was applied to the data.

## Findings

Data were analysed using the lyrics of wedding songs. During the analysis, the song lyrics were translated from IsiZulu to English. Some of the information was collected through observation of wedding ceremonies held during December 2022 festive holidays. The aim was to identify and examine the message being communicated and imparted by the groom to the bride and vice versa. The lyrics of wedding songs and the information gathered assisted the researcher in analysing and interpreting the message to enhance the reliability and validity of the information analysed, because IsiZulu is the researcher's native language. In this study, the thematic analysis method was used to analyse and interpret data. Data were analysed qualitatively and were coded using predetermined templates. Data were then grouped into themes that emanated from the two objectives.

### 1. Style of The Wedding Song

The singers of wedding songs sing with happiness because the occasion is accompanied by merry-making and do not hesitate to repeat the lines that bring joy. Onu & Ugwuoke (2022) note that marriage is a joyous occurrence that carries some status because it elevates one to a higher rank among the elders. The songs performed during a marriage ceremony, on the other hand, are not just about the married couple but also about the community as a whole. Unity, patience, love, good neighbourliness, and generosity are among the values instilled in these songs. These values in these songs promote societal coexistence that is peaceful and harmonious. A wedding is one of the most memorable undertakings in Zulu culture. Wedding songs are performed by an individual or groups of people. Usually, wedding songs are composed orally and practiced a week before the wedding ceremony. Wedding songs are held in high esteem among the community because they are an expression of love involving loving couples. A wedding is also an opportunity for friends and relatives to meet. It is not only an occasion of survival, but it also embodies social prestige. The researcher looked into the use of the language both as a medium of communication and a creative material in the song. The study also looked at the styles utilised in the composition of wedding songs. Such styles include repetition, which is the most important aspect of Zulu wedding songs. The next section discussed the different kinds of repetition that characterised the selected wedding songs.

### 2. Different Kinds of Repetition

Repetition is a common occurrence in practically every aspect of life. As one of the earliest rhetorical devices used in art to produce effects like alliteration, rhyme, and assonance, it stands out (Harris, 1931; Leech, 1969; Nunes et al., 2015; Nurmesjœrvi, 1997). Assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and other literary devices are all achieved by the use of repetition as a tool. Chorus is a much more constructive and dynamic phenomena in music because it also uses repetition. The lyrics' most obvious repetitions are the words, lines, or groups of lines that appear after every stanza-refrain on a regular basis (Miruka, 1994). Usually, repetition is employed to build tension, show how long something has been happening, emphasize a point, and reaffirm a subject. Songs can have a lot of repetition and offer a rhythm that is memorable and pleasurable. Singers are able to reinforce their feelings and views on the bride and groom through the use of repetition in songs. The majority of Zulu wedding songs feature a lot of repeats, which serve a variety of purposes based on the message the song is trying to express. The songs that were analysed revealed that the repetition had refrain, alliteration, consonance, and assonance characteristics.

#### *Refrain Repetition*

A refrain is typically a line or phrase that is repeated and created lyrically within the verse. Perrine (1977) defined refrain as a repetition carried out in accordance with some preset patterns that periodically arise. As long as it is patterned, refrain can appear in phrases, lines, or groups of lines. It is any section of the song that has repeated lyrics. This song serves as an example of refrain repetition:

Ubethi ubhuti asizomlanda, umakoti (x2)  
Whuuuu !!! sizomlanda (x2)  
Whuuu, whuuuu

Sizomlanda umakoti.

(Our brother said we must fetch the bride (x2)  
 Whooooh!!!we will fetch her (x2)  
 Whooooo,whoooo  
 We will fetch the bride).

This song is sung by the groom's family when they go to fetch their bride, usually at mid-night. They do not just enter the bride's homestead, but they wait by the gate, singing this song. The repetition of some sounds in the song emphasises arrival of the big day and that there is no turning back. When the bride hears this song, she would of course realise that she is indeed permanently leaving her family to join her husband's family. This song has a repetition of word units, which Jousse (1997) called 'clamp words. Another good example of refrain repetition is found in the song "*Umakoti ungowethu*", which is sung as follows:

Umakot'ungowethu (x2)  
 Siyavuma  
 Ungowethu ngempela  
 Uzosiwashel'asiphekele  
 Siyavuma  
 Sithi nguye lo nguye lo!  
 Siyavuma

Asimufun'emashibhini  
 Siyavuma  
 Asimufun'ezinkwarini  
 Siyavuma  
 Simufuna esontweni  
 Siyavuma  
 Sithe welele! Welele!  
 Siyavuma

(The bride is ours (x2).  
 We agree.  
 She is really ours  
 She will do the washing and cooking for us.  
 We agree.  
 We say she is the one! She is the one!  
 We agree.

We do not want her to go to the shebeens.  
 We agree.  
 We do not want her to go to discos.  
 We agree.  
 We want her to go to church.  
 We agree.  
 We say yes! Yes!  
 We agree).

The word "*siyavuma*" appears in almost all the stanzas in this song and it means "we agree". This repetition shows the excitement about what the bride is going to do for the family. The arrival of the bride in the family is perceived as a blessing. There are things that the bride is supposed to change when she joins the new family. She leaves her family as a daughter and becomes a mother among the groom's family members, who tend to rely on her in almost every aspect of life.

### Alliteration

According to Arp and Johnson (2008), alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant sounds. This kind of repetition is prevalent in Zulu wedding songs. The following song helps illustrate alliteration repetition:

Baba mnumzane uyeyeye,  
Uhuuu uhuuu sivulele singene.  
Baba mnumzane uyeyeye,  
Uhuuu uhuuu sivulele singene.

Iyooo sangena sangena (x2)  
Iyooo sangena Phakathi (x2)  
Iyooo sangena sangena (x2)  
Iyooo sangena Phakathi (x2)

(Father honourable man yeh yeh yeh,  
Uhuuu uhuuu open and allow us to enter.  
Father honourable man yeh yeh yeh,  
Uhuuu uhuuu open and allow us to enter.

Yoooh we entered, we entered (x2)  
Yoooh we entered inside (x2)  
Yoooh we entered, we entered (x2)  
Yoooh we entered inside (x2)

In this song, the alliteration manifested in all the lines of the second stanza. Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant [s] in the stanza, which Jousse (1997) called clamp sounds. This repetition emphasises the word “*sangena*”. People from the groom’s side usually sing this song when they are going to fetch the bride at mid-night. With this song they are actually requesting permission to enter so that they perform all the traditional rituals to their bride before sunrise. Since they come during the night, they assume that the father, mother or elderly people are already asleep. They would sing the song until the bride’s family opens the gate for them, allowing them in. When they sing this song, they would dance, stamping and clapping to draw the attention of the bride family. Jousse (1997) notes that gestures make it easier to understand a person’s expressions. When the researcher observed this song being performed, people were expressing their feelings, and the researcher developed a deeper understanding of the purpose of the song.

### Consonance

Arp and Johnson (2008) define consonance as the penultimate consonant sounds repeated. According to Abrams (1971), consonance occurs when two or more words have different vowel sounds but the same consonant sounds. The song's lyrics contain multiple stanzas that contain consonance. This type of repetition was categorized as clamp-sounds repetition by Jousse (1997). The wedding song that follows is an example of consonance sound:

Asimufuni emashibhini Siyavuma.....	(We do not want her to go to the shebeens We agree
Asimufuni ezikwarini Siyavuma.....	We do not want her to go disco We agree
Simufuna esontweni Siyavuma, Sithi uwelele uwelele siyavuma	Wewant her to go to church We are agree We say, yes, yes, we agree).

This verse was extracted from the song “*Umakoti Ungowethu*”. The consonance is evident in lines 1, 3 and 5 and is a repetition of the consonant [mu]. The message conveyed in this song is discussed in the next section. However, the song sounds like a command. The groom’s family does not give the bride a chance to decide on how she wants to behave or conduct herself. They just give her instructions on what they expect from her as a married woman. The repetition in this song emphasises that the bride should always remember and adhere to the new rules. The repetition occurs in two words “*asimufuni*” and “*simufuna*”. This simply means they want her to take note of all the things that she is allowed or not allowed to do.

### Assonance

Vowel sound repetition is known as assonance (Arp & Johnson, 2008). Assonance is defined by Abrams (1999) as the recurrence of same or similar vowels, particularly in a stressed syllable, in a line or a series of adjacent syllables. The chosen song's lyrics have multiple stanzas that use assonance. The usage of assonance in the chosen songs is demonstrated in the excerpt that follows:

Salani kahle salani kahle  
 Salani kahle bafowethu  
 Sengiyahamba ngiyakhona  
 Lena kwamfazi ongemama  
 Noma ngigula, noma ngifa  
 Bayothi kimi ngiyazenzisa.

(Goodbye! Goodbye!  
 Goodbye brothers.  
 I am now leaving,  
 Going to the woman who is not my mother.  
 When I get sick, even when I die.  
 They will say to me I am faking).

In this extract, the assonance is manifested in the repetition of the identical vowel [e] sound in the stanza. Jousse (1997) classified this kind of repetition under clamp-rhymes. The words in which the assonance occurs are /ngiyakhona/ongemama, /ngifa/ and /ngiyazenzisa. This kind of repetition in this song makes the song rhyme slowly and nicely. The meaning and messages that the song conveys are discussed in the next section.

### 3. Communicating The Message Through Songs

Songs are a form of language that uses tones and rhythm and they are also a universal medium of communication. Language and music are known to have similar communicative modes. Zulu wedding songs do not only serve as entertainment, but also convey a message to particular groups of people. Zulu people use the songs to communicate their feelings and messages, either directly or indirectly to avoid direct confrontation.

#### *Song’s Lyrics Directed to The Bride’s Side*

There are songs that are only sung by the people from the groom’s side and those sung by the bride’s side. The performance of the wedding songs becomes like a dialogue between the two parties. For instance, a song sung by the groom’s side is directed to the bride. In Zulu culture, there are norms and values enshrined in a song. The groom’s family always has its own expectations from *umakoti*, which at times puts the bride in a corner as she tries to impress her new family. The following song conveys a message to *Makoti* on how her new family expects her to behave:

Umakot’ungowethu (x2)  
 Siyavuma

Ungowethu ngempela  
Uzosiwashel'asiphekele  
Siyavuma  
Sithi nguye lo nguye lo!  
Siyavuma

Asimufun'emashibhini  
Siyavuma  
Asimufun'ezinkwarini  
Siyavuma  
Simufuna esontweni  
Siyavuma  
Sithe welele! Welele!  
Siyavuma

Uzosiwashel'asiphekele  
Siyavuma  
Sithi nguye lo nguye lo  
Uzosiwashel'asiphekele  
Siyavuma  
Uzosiwashel'asiphekele  
Siyavuma  
Sithi nguye lo nguye lo  
Siyavuma

(The bride is ours (x2).  
We agree.  
She is really ours  
She will do the washing and cooking for us.  
We agree.  
We say she is the one! She is the one!  
We agree.

We do not want her to go to the shebeens.  
We agree.  
We do not want her to go discos.  
We agree.  
We want her to go to church.  
We agree.  
We say yes! Yes!  
We agree.

She will do the washing and cooking for us.  
We agree.  
We say she is the one, she is the one.  
She will do the washing and cooking for us.  
We agree.  
She will do the washing and cooking for us.  
We agree.  
We say she is the one, she is the one.  
We agree).

This song is sung by a group of people from the groom's side as they welcome the bride. The groom's family lists all the things expected of the bride. In the Zulu society, the bride is expected to work hard and



bear children for the family. Clearly, the most important function of the bride in Zulu society is to provide service to the groom's family and be the groom's life partner. The bride is also expected to do all the domestic chores; cooking, washing, fetching water and raising children. However, circumstances have changed as the bride may seek employment, sometimes staying away from the groom's family. This is supported by Zondi (2007) who says that a woman is brought in as a kind of borrowing 'to do the job' of bearing children for the groom and his clan. This song further informs the bride about the things that she is supposed to refrain from doing. The following lines of the song state all the things the new bride ought to avoid:

Asimufuni emashibhini Siyavuma.	(We do not want her to go to the shebeens We agree
Asimufuni ezikwarini Siyavuma.	We do not want her to go disco We agree
Simufuna esontweni Siyavuma, Sithi uwelele uwelele siyavuma	We want her to go to church We agree (We say, yes, yes, we agree).

These lines show that the bride is expected to change her behaviour and the way she carries herself as a married woman. The song emphasises that there must be a difference between a married woman and an unmarried one. The way the married woman conducts herself in the community must differ from the way a single woman behaves. The society expects *makoti* to even change her circle of friends owing to the belief that there is nothing common a married woman can share with an unmarried friend.

There are songs that only speak to the groom as well. The songs convey messages without confrontation. The bride can use the song to communicate her happiness, sorrows and fears. The bride's family can also use wedding songs to communicate certain concerns to their son-in-law. The bride's family does not get the time to speak with their son-in-law about their expectations and so forth. Therefore, when they get an opportunity to sing, they make sure that they pass the message, although the song cannot communicate everything.

#### *Song lyrics directed to the groom*

Ayi wesibali, sibali sami siyakuncenga  
Mbuyisel'ekhaya  
Usiz'ungamshayi, ungambulali, mayekwehlula  
Mbuyisel'ekhaya

(No! Brother-in-law, my brother-in-law we beg you.  
Bring her back home.  
Please never beat her, never kill her, if you get tired of her  
Bring her back home).

In this song, the bride's family reminds the groom that they are not selling their daughter, sister, cousin, and etcetera, but they are only building a relationship. So, if the groom is failing to take care of her, he must bring her back home. He must not beat or kill her for whatever reason. The song expresses consciousness of situations where the couple would have problems in their marriage and end up killing each other, thus disadvantaging the children.

#### *Inkondlo kaMakoti*

The song presented in this section was a bride's poem (*Inkondlo kaMakoti*). The *Inkondlo kamakoti* is the principal wedding dance and its performance represents an important moment in a woman's life. It is when the bride expresses everything about herself. Sometimes, *inkondlo* (poem) speaks to the groom, in-laws, the

bride's family, friends and relatives. During the performance, other people are not allowed to dance as the bride is the only one who should dance and that moment is regarded as the moment for her to shine. They listen to the bride and sing along with the bride while dancing towards a person representing traditional authorities (*iphoyisa lenkosi*) to hand over a small mat to him.

The following are the song lyrics sung by the bride, while dancing towards the person representing traditional authorities (*iphoyisa lenkosi*) to hand over the small mat to him.

Salani kahle salani kahle  
 Salani kahle bafowethu  
 Sengiyahamba ngiyakhona  
 Lena kwamfazi ongemama  
 Noma ngigula, noma ngifa  
 Bayothi kimi ngiyazenzisa.

(Goodbye! Goodbye!  
 Goodbye brothers.  
 I am now leaving,  
 Going to the woman who is not my mother.  
 When I get sick, even when I die  
 They will say to me I am faking).

The message in the song speaks directly to the groom's family. The bride is actually alerting her family about the kind of life she would live henceforth. The word '*umfaziongemama*' in the song refers to a slave. The song indirectly tells the groom's family that she is aware that she would be treated differently in that family. The bride is reminding them that she is also human and vulnerable to sickness. Therefore, they must not expect her to perform all the domestic chores when she is not feeling well. She expects them to be lenient with her when she is physically unwell or sick. The following extract is another example of *inkondlo kaMakoti* (wedding song):

Baba nomama wami  
 Aningiyekeleni  
 Ngoba ngiyamthanda ngazikhethela  
 Noma sebemzonda bonke  
 Beth'akanalutho kodwa ngiyamthanda ngazikhathela  
 Ngitelebhele .....  
 Akeningiyekeleni ngitelebhele

(Mother and father  
 Leave me alone.  
 Because I love him, I chose him myself.  
 Even if they all hate him.  
 Saying he has nothing.  
 I love him because I chose him myself.  
 I dance for him.  
 Leave me to dance for him).

It is common that the family may not like the groom for various reasons. This song reminds everyone who does not like the groom that he is not theirs. The bride is telling her family to allow her to love her husband in peace, because she made her choice. Such wedding songs caution parents against the culture of promoting forced marriages. They encourage parents to give their daughters the chance to choose their own marriage partners, possibly because forced marriages hardly last. Naturally, not everyone would be happy when one is getting married to a good husband; even the so-called friends would become jealous of the bride.

As such, some friends might try to fool the bride into thinking that she has made a mistake by getting married to her husband.

Apart from communicating about being treated separately, it conveys the message that in life everyone is entitled to her/his decision and must not allow other people to dictate how they should live their life; even one's own parents do not have that prerogative. This song is not sung by everyone, but by the bride and it is called *Inkondlo kaMakoti*. The bride sings the song when handing the mat to the person representing traditional authorities. During that singing, the families of both the bride and groom would stop singing and listen to the bride. The whole stage is given to her for her to perform. *Inkondlo kaMakoti* is a song that should always remind both families about the message conveyed by the bride to the groom in front of both families. It ties the groom and the bride and conveys a variety of messages to the groom's family. The following extract is another song that is usually sung by *umakoti* to relay a message to her husband is presented as follows:

Sengiyamethemb'angedlalengami  
 Angek'adlalengami  
 Angek'adlalengami  
 Ngobangiyamethemba

Wemkhweny'uzungadlalingami  
 Angek'adlalengami  
 Angek'adlalengami  
 Ngobangiyamethemba

(I trust he will play about me  
 He will not play about me  
 He will not play about me  
 Because I trust him

Groom don't play about me  
 He will not play about me  
 He will not play about me  
 Because I trust him).

The truth embedded in this song is that no matter how much one know their partner, they are not guaranteed of dignified treatment. Some people enter into marriage knowing very well that the man or woman they are committing themselves to is not yet equally committed to the matrimony. When things are not going well between the couple, they act as if they were not aware of their partner's character. Of course, some partners are committed and act faithfully and honestly until their true and inner character manifests itself. Here, the bride sings this song as a plea to her husband, requesting her husband to treat her respectfully and with dignity.

In the Zulu culture, marriage is a lifetime commitment that should not be broken. However, due to the popularity of human rights, promiscuity has become rife and, in most cases, the wife is the one that gets affected, as culture prescribes difficult principles and conditions for females. That explains why married women have to grapple with fear of the unknown because they cannot tell exactly what is going to happen to them in their marriage

#### *Miscellaneous Wedding Songs*

This study has classified miscellaneous songs as those that are neither directed to the bride's side nor the groom's side. These songs either speak to the community as a whole or whoever matches the concerns being raised. A typical example of a miscellaneous wedding song is sung as follows:

Uyababona Labantu benzani  
 ASibazi

Uyababona Labantu banzani  
Asibazi

Dubula mawudubula  
Gwazamawugwaza  
Thakathamawuthakatha

(Do you see these people what they are doing?  
We don't know them.  
Do you see these people what they are doing?  
We don't know them.

Shoot if shoot.  
Stab if you stab.  
Bewitch if you bewitch).

It is common that when people prepare for their wedding, they encounter various problems some of which are a result of jealousy be it from other family members, the community, neighbours, ex-lovers and etcetera. That is why a wedding is only announced when crucial rituals have been done, such as paying *lobola*, *mthembiso*, *membeso*, *mkhehlo* and others because people fear witchcraft. The wedding day would only be known by the close families until there is certainty that everything is in order. Then invitations may be sent out to people.

After sending out invitations, the families do not relax but do whatever they can to protect the bride and the groom from evil spirits. On the wedding day, the families sing songs of victory, thanking God and ancestors for the protection. This is supported by Ntuli (2010, p. 216) who says, "the Zulu sing when they are happy, when they are sad, when they work. They sing in times of war and of victory, when performing ancestral ceremonies, when there is a marriage, etcetera". The message being conveyed in song presented above is clear. The singers are boasting (*kloloda*) that they have finally made it to the big day and that if one does not like it, they can do whatever they want, but it would not change anything.

The following extract is another example of a miscellaneous wedding song that is performed by either the bride's family or the groom's side.

Awuphind'ubhekefuthi  
Gabi gabimfaz'ozalanga

Awuphind'ubhekefuthi  
Gabi gabimfaz'ozalanga

Wen'uzothiwabonani  
Uzothiwabonanimfaziongazalanga

(Look back again and see!  
Have a look barren woman!

Look back again and see!  
Have a look barren woman!  
What would you say you saw?  
What would you say you saw barren woman?).

This song is usually sung by the bride's family. It is an interesting song with a great vibe. However, it conveys a very sensitive message to those who do not have a girlchild or children in general. The following song further reveals this song's meaning:

Uthando lungumanqoba  
Size ngothando laph'ekhaya  
Size ngothando

Uthando lungumanqoba  
Size ngothando ngothando laph'ekhaya  
Size ngothando

Uthando lungehlule  
Sizengothando ngothando laph'ekhaya

Love conquers all  
We have come because of love in this home.  
We have come because of love.

Love conquers all  
We have come because of love in this home.  
We have come because of love.

Love conquered me.  
We have come because of love in this home

This song is performed by girls and elderly women when they accompany the bride to do the cow slaughtering ritual. This depends on the family; the bride may go there in person or may send her sister or cousin to represent her. This ritual is done in the morning after the arrival of *umthimba*/brides' family. At mid-night, the groom's family goes and fetches the bride and on arrival, they leave *esihlahleni* and give them breakfast. After having a breakfast, they would be requested to go into the kraal where the bride would present the cow to those who slaughter it and cut it into pieces. The parts of a cow slaughtered for the wedding has names and each part belongs to a certain group, such as, *ezintombini*(girls), *komama* (mothers), *kobaba* (fathers) and *komakoti* (wives).

This song means that without love, the bride would not have been there. An IsiZulu idiom says, "*Ihlonipha nala engawukwendelakhona*" (You respect everyone because you do not know where you will marry). Love is the only thing that makes a woman to make a sacrifice of leaving her own family to join a family of strangers. They sing the song to show love and appreciation to the groom's family. If one has a girl child, s/he wishes them well in life and s/he also wishes that they get married and have their own family. So, when that becomes a reality, it is considered as a dream that is fulfilled through luck and blessings and not an achievement.

## Discussion

This study focused on the effectiveness of Zulu wedding songs as a means of communication and education in Zulu culture. In the Zulu culture, marriage is a relationship between individuals, between families, and between communities. The wedding is a communal ritual in which both sexes participate according to their traditional spheres of activity, aimed at establishing a heterosexual couple within an existing community. Songs are an integral aspect of Zulu folklore, as they are performed in almost all social ceremonies in the Zulu culture. Every ceremony, or occasion in which people come together, such as *memulo* (coming of age), *mhlonyana* (girls ceremony when they reach womanhood), wedding, or a funeral gathering, has particular songs associated with it. The wedding songs provide valuable information as to how the negotiations are undertaken, particularly with respect to the husband-wife relationship. A wedding ceremony is an important event in Zulu culture. The study has shown that wedding songs are an integral aspect of the wedding rites, which provide clear messages pertaining to the sanctity of marriage and they communicate the social expectations of the solemn event. The extracts of the wedding songs presented in this study revealed two main

themes, which are the style of the wedding songs and content, which communicates the message through songs, with a wide variety of sub-themes. The research findings have revealed that wedding songs are effective as a means of communication and education in Zulu culture.

The findings have also revealed that some Zulu wedding songs are also common in other African societies. The most singers are women, who perform the songs during and after the wedding rituals. There are also two wedding choirs, one from the bride's side and the other from the groom's side, who responds to each other through songs, and thus transforming the whole event superbly into a ballet. The wedding ceremony is composed of several rituals and each ritual has its own songs and dancing styles (Tylor, 1871). A close analysis of these songs has revealed different social functions apart from entertainment.

The research findings have revealed that wedding songs also provide the Zulu people, particularly women, space to review social relations and reflect on patriarchal injustices that work to their disadvantage. They use songs to communicate important messages in a passive manner, without resorting to confrontation is a subtle and powerful tool. The study has also revealed that most of the Zulu wedding songs are characterised by a great deal of repetitions, which have different functions depending on the message that the song intends to convey. Repetition in songs enables singers to convey their feelings and thoughts to the bride and groom in a way that enhances enforcement.

## **Conclusion**

This article examines Zulu wedding songs and their functions. Zulu wedding songs express values and attitudes underpinning the Zulu marriage institution. These values are understood by analysing some of the wedding songs. The study has focused on the effectiveness of Zulu wedding songs as a means of communication and education in Zulu culture. It focused on 10 Zulu wedding songs sung at different times and places in the course of a wedding ceremony. The 10 songs included those that were directed to the bride, to the groom and to the whole community. The oral messages conveyed by these songs touched directly and indirectly on the life of married couples and individuals. Hence, wedding songs reflect the way of life of the Zulu people irrespective of their location. The study also examined language use and choice of words selected for effective communication between the singers and the intended audience. The findings have revealed that although a cursory glance at Zulu wedding songs would give the impression that most of them are meant just to entertain people, a deeper, more careful examination of them showed that behind all the rhythmic and melodious overtones, there are critical elements of communication and education among the Zulu people. The researchers recommend a further study on gender stereotyping that is portrayed in selected Zulu wedding songs. They observed that there are songs that perpetuate patriarchal stereotypes that promote gender inequality, injustice, and typical gender roles. This was not part of this study but it emerged during data analysis. The data were kept in a safe place for future research. Further, the linguistic analysis of the language used in Zulu wedding songs has not been thoroughly studied. Therefore, this is a potential area for further research.

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