

Euphemistic Expressions in the Kagulu Language of Tanzania

Raymond Remi Sekabigwa

Africa International University

Nairobi, Kenya

rbigwa@twftw.org

Abstract

This document aims to show how euphemisms are being used in the Kagulu language of Tanzania and how euphemistic expressions reflect cultural realities of the Kagulu language community. Euphemisms are used to substitute words or speeches which are too harsh when referring to some unpleasant or embarrassing situation. In other words, euphemisms are used to make unacceptable words or language to become sweet and acceptable. The Kagulu speakers employ euphemistic expressions to handle such matters, which are thought to be unacceptable to be spoken directly before other people of the community. In the Kagulu language, euphemisms are used to avoid the use of such words, to teach the Kagulu community about their ethics, to avoid conflicts and embarrassments, and to bring stability in the community. Euphemisms are used to motivate people to like and use their language in the right way. Normally, the Kagulu language speakers, who use euphemistic expressions when they speak, are considered to be people of wisdom and are honored greatly in the Kagulu community.

Key Terms: Euphemism, Kagulu, cultural norms and environments, traditional religious beliefs, taboos

Introduction

The Kagulu language speakers are found in the east Central Region of Tanzania, having 400,000 language speakers. The Kagulu land is in the Morogoro Region, lying

between Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest business center, and Dodoma, the government capital city. The Kagulu language, also known as Chikagulu or Chimegi, is a Bantu language, and it belongs to the Niger Congo phylum; according to Guthrie (1948) it has been registered as ISO 639-3 its number is G12 (Eberhard et al., 2024).

The word 'euphemism' originates from a Greek compound word consisting of two words, the first part is (eú) which means good or well, and the second part is (phēmos) which means speech, so euphemism simply implies "good speech". The main functions of euphemisms are to make what is thought to be unacceptable or shaming words to become acceptable in the concerned community.

The theoretical framework that was used are concepts from relevance theory (RT), as developed by Sperber et al. (1995). This is a cognitive approach to pragmatics, which has two main concepts; the cognitive effects, also known as the contextual effects and the processing effort which deals with how the mind processes the inferred information to grasp the intended meaning. Relevance theory works on two principles: (i) the cognitive principle, which focuses on how human cognition that is geared to the maximization of relevance and (ii) the communicative principle which says that utterances create expectations of optimal relevance, "every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Sperber et al., 1995, p.249).

The research method used is a qualitative research survey, where the phenomena of the Kagulu euphemistic expressions are investigated in their natural language setting. All data were collected through interviews which were carried out in 8 villages; two villages that were easily reached in each of the four Kagulu language dialects. In each village, I interviewed 5-6 people, which were chosen randomly, but focusing on the elderly, adult men and women, and the young people as well as school children, aged between 12-15 years. Normally those

school children are in Standard 5, 6 and 7 and are still mainly under parental care. It is children of these ages who are receiving the Kagulu traditional teachings about cultural ethics through euphemistic expressions.

Euphemisms in the Kagulu Language

According to the literature on euphemisms, Bello (2014) and Burridge (2012, pp. 67-70), have explained very well about euphemisms and their functions. The following has been organized according to the model they have suggested as follows:

Protective Euphemisms

One category by Burridge which was very prevalent in Kagulu is the *protective euphemism*. Protective euphemisms are used to hide or to protect all matters which the people of any community are not happy to talk about openly or directly because this is considered an act of bringing embarrassment, shaming or disrespectful, see the following examples:

Euphemisms for being close to death

Naturally all the Kagulu speakers know the context when someone is seriously sick to the point that all the people around have lost their hopes that the sick person will survive. The direct word to refer to a sick person is (*mtamu*), but if a person is very sick, to the point of death, the word *mtamu* has an added suffix *-si*, (*a sign for very*), to become (*mtamusi*). In some of the Kagulu dialects, like the Itumba, there is another term to refer a sick person, which is *kodoka* and when the person is very sick, they add a suffix *-sa* to become *kodokesa*. Both these words bring ambiguity because they are also used to refer to a sick animal and even plants. Then it is counted as a disrespectful act to use these terms, to refer to a person who is very sick.

(NB. According to the Kagulu grammar, the ‘I’ at the beginning of the following first words, is an initial vowel (IV) which works like an augment in English language).

(1) *I-m-tamu ka-sumw-a*

CL1-sick 3SG.PRG-fail-IND

‘The sick person is failing.’

‘The sick person is helpless, unable to do anything.’

(2) *I- m-tamu k’ha- ki-dah-a*

IV-CL1-sick NEG-3SG.PRG-RFL-able-IND

‘The sick person is unable to help him/herself.’

Traditionally, the Kagulu people use herbal medicines taken from various leaves, roots, and bark of some trees as medicines. The following euphemism to refer the sick person, but the focus is on the medicines that were being used to treat that sick person.

(3) *Ga-ma-biki ga- dug-a*

3PL-CL6-trees 3PL-PRG-fail-IND

‘The trees have failed.’

Euphemisms for death

As in other language communities, people are very much afraid to talk about death. The direct word for death or dying in the Kagulu language is ‘-ifa’. However, the term -ifa’ is also used to refer to all other living things, such as animals and plants when they die. It is only differentiated by the class pronouns or a prefix that is to be attached at the beginning of the term to show who or what died. For example, if it is an animal that has died, people will attach the pronoun used to refer to an animal so it will be ‘dyu’+ifa =dyufa. Then if it is plants or even a farm, a pronoun ‘u’+ifa =ufa would be used. To avoid the use of the word -ifa, some euphemisms focus on the environments where the people were living. For example, the people who are living on the Kagulu mountain ranges, which are covered by a forest, the wild dangerous animals like leopards, foxes, lions, hyenas, and other predators approach

people's compounds searching for livestock. In many incidents, people are killed or badly wounded. This experience has given rise to the following euphemistic expression to talk about death.

(4) *Ka- lut-a ne di-koko*

3SG.PST-go-IND CONJ CL4-fierce animal.

'He/she was taken by a fierce animal.'

Another euphemism for death is '*kubanika*' meaning to be destroyed. According to the background knowledge of death that the Kagulu speakers have, a dead person does not function at all, so speakers use the word *kubanika* to refer to a person who has died. The word *kubanika* also carries the meaning of decaying. It is a fact that the body of a dead person does not function at all and will decay.

(5) *Ka-banik-a*

3SG-CONT.broken-IND

'He/she has been broken.'

'He/she is not functioning at all,'

Usually, the people who are living bordering with other languages, tend to adopt some foreign words from their neighbours and then add it into their own lexicon. The Kagulu speakers also have adopted a word '*Loje*' from the one ethnic group of Massai living on the northern parts of the Kagulu land. The word '*loje*' is believed to be the land where, when people die, are going there to live with their ancestors.

(6) *Ke-ja Loje*

3SG: PRG-go Loje-STV

'He/she has gone to a place called loje.'

When some time had passed since the death happened, and someone who did not hear about it comes to ask about a person who has already died, it will be like opening a healing wound to the relatives. So, the Kagulu speakers answer such questioning as a way of comforting themselves.

Euphemisms about burial

In the Kagulu community, children are not allowed to witness or to attend any burial activities. When such an incident happens, the children will be shifted to live with relatives till all matters of death and burial are finished. The word for burying in the Kagulu language is '*kusika*'. In the past, people used goat or cattle skins for burial activities. They wrapped the body using that skin, then lay it into an open grave. Based on this background knowledge, the Kagulu speakers use the following euphemism for burial.

(7) *Ku-gones-a mu-ghingo*

INF-lie-IND LOC-skin.

'To make it lie or wrap into a skin.'

However, some of the Kagulu dialects are using a borrowed term '*Kumosa musanga*' which was adapted from their neighbours, the Ngulu language. The word means to hide something in the sand. This word is used for the purpose of hiding what is going on, especially from the children,

(8) *Ku-mos-a mu-sanga*

INF-hide-IND LOC-sand.

'To hide in the sand.'

When a death occurs, many people will come to join the family to mourn with them. They will stay there for three up to seven days. On the last day, people will be given a local beer which is prepared from *uhemba* (millet). The millet will be put in a dark room and be

watered and covered well. After a few days, the millet will start to germinate then it will be dried under the sun and pounded to make millet powder, which will be used as yeast to prepare the local beer which will be served on the last day of mourning. Reflecting on this process which is known as ' *kuika uhemba* ' meaning 'to put millet' for preparing the local beer, the following euphemism refers to the mourning during burial:

(9) *Ku-ika uhemba*

INF-put millet

'To put millet.'

Euphemisms about sex

It is seriously forbidden to talk about sex openly. Sexual intercourse is always a secret issue, and it must be hidden. When the terms referring to sex are spoken directly it is offensive, as they are thought to be insulting, violating the Kagulu taboo about marriages and children bearing. The Kagulu term for sex is ' *kilomba* ,' but once it is spoken directly, people become embarrassed, because first it is not to be said directly, and secondly the peoples' minds infer an act of irrespective sex or violent sex, such as raping. Not only that, but usually it is said aiming to insult a woman who has had unlawful sex, they would say in a passive form ' *-lombwa* '. So the following expression is only used for an abusive, violent act of sex:

(10) *Ka-lombwa*

3SG-PST.violent sex

She had been assaulted sexually.

Another word is ' *Kidiya* ,' though sometimes it is used euphemistically to talk about sex, but many of Kagulu speakers are not happy to use it or hear it when spoken about sex as it carries a notion of doing sex carelessly of and biting like dogs do. Normally it is used when someone wants to gossip or whispers to someone else about what is going on at the present.

(11) *Wa- ki- diy-a*

CL2-RFL.CONT -eat-IND

‘They are eating themselves’

It means, they are having sex.

The following euphemisms are commonly used to talk about sex in the Kagulu language community,

(12) *Wa- ki- sol-a*

‘CL2 RFL.CONT-take-IND’

‘They are taking themselves.’

It means, they are having sex.

(13) *Wa-ki-bwed-a*

CL2-RFL-enjoy-IND

‘They are enjoying each other.’

It means, ‘They are doing sex.’

If a man and a woman are caught in adultery, the Kagulu speakers use the word *nhenga* which means to be in a separate secret place for sex.

(14) *Wa- kolw-a mu- nhenga*

CL2-PRG.caught-IND LOC-secret place

‘They are caught in secret place.’

The meaning is, ‘They are caught in adultery.’

Euphemisms about the menstruation of women

According to the Kagulu community ethics, to say directly that a woman is menstruating in a Kagulu expression, *yakulawa sakame* meaning she is discharging blood, or *katujuka* meaning she is flowing out too much blood, is unacceptable, It is counted as an act

of disrespecting and humiliating women who are generally the mothers of the people of the Kagulu community. To avoid such an embarrassing action, the Kagulu speakers have created several euphemisms to talk about women who are in that cycle of life.

(15) *Ke-tow-a nk'walo*

3SG-CONT.hit-IND stumble

‘She stumbled.’

It means, ‘she is menstruating.’

(16) *ka- mu-ma-juwa gakwe*

3SG-CONT- LOC-PL- Day POSS

‘She in her days’

Meaning, ‘She is menstruating.’

(17) *Nu-wa ku- mwesi*

1SG-be CONT. LOC-CL14-moon

‘I am in the moon.’

Meaning, ‘I am menstruating.’

Euphemisms for pregnancy

The Kagulu word for pregnant is *inda*, but Kagulu speakers are reluctant to openly mention that someone is pregnant, because the term *inda* (pregnancy) is a result of sex, which people are not allowed to mention directly. Not only that, but also traditionally it is known that when a woman is known to be pregnant, then witch doctors, sorceresses, jealous friends or neighbours, may wish to harm the pregnant woman or her unborn child. So, to hide the news that someone is pregnant, Kagulu speakers use euphemisms to protect a pregnant woman.

(18) *Ke- ngil-a nyumba*

3SG-PRG-enter-IND house

‘She has entered the house.’

It means. ‘She is pregnant.’

The Kagulu speakers also use the euphemistic term ‘*keyoha*’ meaning “she has tied herself” referring to a pregnant woman. This expression focusses on women when they are busy working, either in the fields, or at any other places or when they are grieving for a loss of a loved one, women would use a piece of cloth, known as a *kanga*, to fasten around their waists. However, the verb *-yoha*, has two senses: (a) to wrap things together so that nothing gets out; in this case, it refers to the stoppage of the menstruation when a woman becomes pregnant; or (b) encourage someone to hurry up; in this case it means a pregnant woman is in a hurry to get a child.

(19) *Ka- ki- yoh-a*

3SG.CONT-RFL- tie -IND

‘She has tied herself.’

It means; ‘She is pregnant.’

Euphemisms for Giving Birth

According to the Kagulu traditions, when a woman gives birth, she is required to stay inside her house for a long time until the baby is grown enough to be carried outside the house. The purpose of doing so is for protection of the woman and her baby from being bewitched by evil people. Focusing on this event of staying for a long time inside a house, the following euphemism talks about a woman who is in labour or who had given birth. It is, ‘*mwingila majumba*’, meaning the one who has entered houses.

(20) *Mwi- ngil-a ma-jumba*

3SG.REL.PR.G. enter-IND PL-house

‘The one who has entered houses.’

It means, a woman who has given birth.

Usually children are very inquisitive, sometimes a child asks its mother, “Where did you get the child from?” Here again, the Kagulu cultural norms do not allow parents to tell their children openly about such a matter, fearing that if they do, it could inspire the sexual curiosity of their adolescents. So, the Kagulu mothers respond euphemistically saying:

(21) *Mw-ana ka- londi-gw-a ku-lwanda*

CL1.child 3SG-CONT.take-PASS-IND LOC-CL11.river

‘The baby has been taken from the river.’

Moreover, when a woman is pregnant, and unfortunately has a miscarriage, or the child dies before or immediately after being born, it is counted as a misfortune, and the people are prohibited to talk about it directly because it concerns a taboo. Therefore, people coined the following expression using the term ‘*kuyila mnjila*’ meaning “returning on the way”. The purpose of this expression is to hide what had happened and it is used to comfort the woman who had lost the pregnancy or the child:

(22) *i- mwana ko- yil-a m-njila*

IV-CL1.child CL1-PRG.return-IND LOC-way/road.

‘A child has returned back on the way/road.’

It means, ‘A miscarriage, or the infant died before being born.’

Other Protective Euphemisms

In the past, when Kagulu speakers did not have toilets, the people went to the bushes to relieve themselves. So, according to these environments, the following euphemism was employed to talk about someone who has gone to the toilet.

(23) *Ko-wa ku-mbago*

3SG.CONT-be LOC-bush

‘He/she is in the bush.’

Meaning: ‘He/she is relieving themselves.’

In the Kagulu society, a word ‘*mphende*’, is used to refer to an impotent person.

Some people use this word to insult and to shame others even if they are not impotent.

Focusing on the physical condition of the impotent person, that he does not function as a normal man, the Kagulu speakers compares him with a rooster which does not perform its duty of crowing. Therefore, the Kagulu speakers say ‘*dijogolo sidikwika*’ to refer such a person, in a respectful way.

(24) *Di-jogolo si-di- kwik-a*

CL4-rooster NEG.PRG-crow-IND

‘The rooster is not crowing.’

Meaning: ‘Impotent.’

When a Kagulu girl reaches puberty and is menstruating for the first time, a traditional ritual ceremonial must be performed for her. The ritual is accompanied by offering a sacrifice of a hen or a goat with chanting some words to bless her. Many years ago, this was the time to undergo genital mutilation, and the concerned girls were forced to stay inside a house for months with strict rules, not to get out during the daytime, except at nighttime to relieve themselves. However, later the government intervened to stop this practice. This whole event is called ‘*kufinigwa*’ literally it means to be played or danced. The Kagulu speakers prefer to call this whole event euphemistically as ‘*nk’hola mkono*’, which means to hold a hand or to give a hand, implying helping. The Kagulu society believes that this whole event helps the girls to not become prostitutes but to become good and respectable wives and mothers of the society in the future. But nowadays, after the government intervention, the

girls are no longer kept indoors to practice the dangerous genital mutilation. Instead, older women relatives teach the girls the Kagulu ethics. However, some families still practice it secretly.

(25) *Nk'hola mkono*

COM-Hold hand.

‘To hold a hand. /giving a hand.’

‘Female circumcision.’

Provocative Euphemisms

Burridge (2012, pp. 67-70) also suggested that euphemisms can be used provocatively to inspire people not just to take the meanings from the simple given content of the message but to think beyond it and to challenge prejudices embodied in the given words or phrase. Normally in the Kagulu language, provocative euphemisms are expressed as idioms, wisdom sayings or proverbs. For provocative euphemisms to be successful communication, both the speaker and the hearer must have known the contextual assumptions required for interpretation. In the following examples, the hearer is expected to construct the assumptions based on what he/she can perceive on the hearing, according to the environments that he/she is in, and according to the assumptions which are already stored in his/her mind (Sperber et al., 1995, p. 39).

The Kagulu women who are recently married must be taught all the necessary issues of how to run one's house, including taking good care of a husband. Among the many teachings, they learn the importance of providing food for their husband immediately after he arrives home from work or from a journey. Here are the idioms used to prompt the wife to prepare food for her husband! The waist here represents the stomach; it is an innermost expression of true love and care when a wife holds her husband's waist from the back.

(26) *M-kole mgosi wako di-nenghe*

2SG:COM-catch husband POSS CL4-waist

‘Catch your husband’s waist.’

Meaning: ‘Prepare food for your husband.’

Euphemisms which are also used as proverbs

The euphemistic statement below which is also a proverb, is used to warn people who are quick to interfere with other people matters, especially when they are in a conflict, trying to make a name for themselves that they helped those people to reconcile. Such a people would always find themselves in trouble or being hurt at the end. In the Kagulu language there is a statement used to warn such people that they must be very careful when trying to do a reconciliation. The expression has grown out of the daily lives of the Kagulu people, whereby they normally use firewood or charcoal for cooking, and sometimes if they are not careful enough, they hurt themselves by being burnt while using the firewood. Therefore, people compare the conflict with a fire or hot charcoal, advising the people to use a pincer when trying to hold a burning charcoal otherwise they will burn their own fingers.

(27) *Ponda mubanho u-nkha-lakas-e i-fidole*

COM-Forge pincer 2SG-NEG-burn-SUB IV-fingers

‘Make pincer not burn fingers.’

‘Make a pincer in order not to burn your fingers.’

The next euphemism is also a warning for people. It reminds people to be careful and not to provoke others, because when someone continues to provoke others, whether by words or actions, it may result into a fight thus to endanger peace. People say, ‘*Ngongongo igalaga khondo*,’ literally it means when you continue knocking on something, you will provoke or disturb others, then you could make them become angry with you.

(28) *'Ngo-ngo-ngo igalag-a khondo,*

Knock-CONT. Knock brings-IND fighting/war.

‘Continuous knocking will lead to a fight/war.’

Meaning: ‘Continuous provoking others would lead to a fight/war.’

(29) *Adino ni i-tanga ndugu*

PRON CONJ IV.PRG-recognize brothers

‘This thing recognises the brother’

Meaning: This issue needs the closest brothers to handle it.

Cohesive Euphemisms

The purpose of these euphemisms is to show unity or to define a common group of people which have the same interests. Normally the people of the concerned group tend to use a euphemism to display their identity especially when encountering people outside of their group. According to relevance theory, in order for the following communications to be understood successfully, it depends on both the speaker and the hearer having the background information of the context and their ability to link that information to the Kagulu cultural context. For example, a group of very clever and talented people would call themselves by the name *wasungula*, referring to the unseen mighty creatures, who resemble angels. But these are believed to be the descendants of the mighty and powerful Kagulu ancestors. There are many existing myths in the Kagulu language, telling how hares were very clever, smart and have solved many problems and difficulties in society in the past. Focusing on this, the Kagulu speakers created the euphemism below to refer to proud people who claim to be very brave and can do whatever is difficult:

(30) *Cha-wa-sungula*

PRON-CL2-PRG.hares

‘We are hares.’

Meaning: We are smart, and very helpful like angels.

The people who are not living in the Kagulu mountainous areas have built a tendency to consider their fellow Kagulu people, who are living on the Kagulu mountains, to be primitive and conservative. So, they seriously despise them. Therefore, the people from the mountains encounter other people, they themselves as people from ‘*Itumba*’ meaning the from the swollen land to avoid being despised. The topography of this mountainous area in the Kagulu land looks like it had been swollen up from the rest of the Kagulu land and it is very fertile. Based on this idea, these people use the following name to introduce themselves.

(31) *Cha-wa-tumba*

PRON-1PL-PRG.swollen.

‘We are the swollen.’

Meaning: ‘We are from the mountainous fertile land.’

In the Kagulu language community, the family matters concerning death, marriages, ritual ceremonies and so forth, are mainly handled by both the people from the maternal side, and the paternal side. However, the people from the maternal side are considered to have less authority in making decisions, compared to those from the paternal side. However, the maternal side would boost themselves saying, ‘*chawegasi*’ meaning ‘the givers’ we are the senders of the women or the relatives from the maternal side”, and if it is not for us you, the paternal side, would have nothing to boast of. When any event among the mentioned above happens, you find people sitting in small groups according to paternal or maternal sides to discuss what to do. So, the maternal side instead of saying, “We are the parents or the relatives from maternal side” they would introduce themselves generally by a euphemistic word, ‘*wegasi*’ to avoid of being despised when they give opinions of what to do.

32) *Cha- we- gasi*

PRON-CL2-PRG.give out.

‘We are who gave out.’

We are from the maternal side of the married woman.

Ludic Euphemisms

This type of euphemism is explained by Majeed et al.(2018, p. 90), and is for having fun and entertainment, largely to amuse using word play, sounds and letters. In the Kagulu community, they are not just for having fun, but they are also used for moral teachings, especially in warning the people who are not living right. In application to relevance theory, it works in the same way as the category of the cohesive euphemisms discussed above, that for the following communications to be successful, it relies on both the speaker and the hearer recognizing contextual effects, so people can interpret what the intention of the speaker is. For example, the staple food in Kagulu society is ugali, a stiff porridge made from corn flour as well as cassava. But first the corn must be crushed into powder form. The Kagulu name for eating the uncrushed corn is *ng'henda*, so, the Kagulu speakers have created the following euphemism to ridicule and at the same time to warn a lazy person who does not want to work.

(33) *U-ka-diya ng'henda*

2SG-FUT-eat CL8.uncrushed corn

‘You will eat uncrushed corn.’

NB: The uncrushed corn here, is a metaphorical saying to ridicule a lazy person who cannot even do the work of preparing food.

Another ludic euphemism in the Kagulu language, is that which is used to insult prostitutes. In the Kagulu area, there are local and bush cucumbers. You would find

them growing by the side of a way or a path, and anyone is free to pick the cucumber fruit. Therefore, the Kagulu speakers have created the following ludic euphemism for teasing and making fun to prostitutes because they could be taken by anyone who wants to.

(34) *I-tanga dya mu- njila*

IV-CL4.cucumber PREP LOC- way/path

‘The cucumber on the roadside.’

Meaning: ‘a prostitute’

For the male adult who does not want to marry, the Kagulu speakers have the following expressions to ridicule such a person:

(35) *Mkulu we- di-sepo*

chief POSS- CL18-house of unmarried men

‘Chief of the house of the unmarried men’

Meaning: ‘A man who is an adult but still a bachelor.’

Traditionally, in every Kagulu family compound, people build a house which is called ‘*isepo*’ to be used by boys and young men who are not yet married. It would also be used by boys and young men from the neighbouring families or other friends from that village. But there are some people who are so used to living in such houses that they refuse to marry even though they have reached the age of getting married. In contempt for such persons the Kagulu use the euphemistic expressions below to scold and to ridicule them:

(36) *U- kwija ku- fila mwi-sepo*

2SG. FUT - CONT die LOC-house of the unmarried men

‘You will die in a house of the unmarried men.’

Meaning: ‘You will die without being married.’

The following expressions are used to show contempt for a woman who is pregnant without being officially married.

(37) *Ka- mema*

3SG.CONT-full

‘She is full.’

Meaning: ‘She is pregnant.’

When someone has threatened to kill himself or is going to do something that will endanger or hurt him/herself, the Kagulu speakers would refer to that person in a joke saying: He/she is tired living in this world.

(38) *Ka-chi-sok-a i-chi-lunga*

3SG.PRG-tire-IND IV-CL5.The world

‘He/she is tired with the world.’

Meaning: He wants to die because he is tired to continue living in the world.

Furthermore, there are some people who cannot control themselves because they are enslaved by lust. The Kagulu speakers have a simile which compares people who have developed such a lust habit, to be the same as people who have a hot desire of eating sugar. They cannot resist when they see sugar, it must be eaten. The Kagulu word for sugar is *sanga njelu* literally it means, ‘white sand’.

(39) *Ya-kwende- sa sanga njelu*

3SG-CONT.like-IND sand white

‘He/she very much likes sugar.’

‘He/she is enslaved by sexual desire.’

Religious Euphemistic Expressions

It is difficult to determine which linguistic category the following Kagulu euphemistic expressions belong to because they are not commonly used, only during traditional religious events. Here too, in the application of relevance theory, it requires the background knowledge of both the speaker and the hearer about the context that is being talked about. In this case people are talking about the Kagulu traditional religious activity. One of the examples is the traditional Kagulu boys' circumcision ceremonies which are known as '*Dikumbi*'.

According to tradition, before the commencement of the circumcision ceremonies, the Kagulu tribal elders and traditional priests offer a sacrifice of a male goat, which is to be offered on the very first day of clearing the place in the bush, to build a camp for the circumcision of the boys. This sacrifice is called '*isengakumbi*' literally meaning to cut a circumcision.

(40) *Senga kumbi*

Slash:COM circumcision

'Clear the circumcision.'

Meaning: A sacrifice of a he goat which is offered at the time of clearing a place in a bush, where a circumcision camp for boys will be built.

Then the circumcision is done by cutting the boys' foreskins; in the Kagulu language this action is called '*kudumula mafuli*'. The verb term '*kudumula*', means to cut something in a cruel and a rude way, like slaughtering a neck of an animal, or a bird. The action of cutting the foreskins, must be done rapidly using a very sharp small knife or razor. It is a very painful procedure, and it is performed without using any painkillers or medicine to stop the bleeding. The boys are told not to cry. The brave boys, who do not cry during the procedure will be praised by the elders through using the euphemistic term '*nkhambaku*' a term used to

refer to a male strong animal such as a bull of a cow, a male lion, or a male buffalo etc. Then the boy's fame must be announced to the whole community, and he will be given many gifts.

(41) *Kwa- nkhabaku*

2SG- CL4. a bull

'You are a bull.'

Meaning: 'You are very brave/strong boy like a bull.'

Another activity refers to the Kagulu clans. Every year, every clan is required to practice a worship service to their ancestors, accompanied by offering an animal sacrifice. They would take a goat or a sheep then slaughter it at a designated place in a forest. Then the meat will be cooked in a big pot on a three stone stove. This meat is called '*inyama ya malafo*', meaning 'the offering meat'. But the Kagulu elders who perform this ritual sacrifice refer to it as '*difugo*,' a big pot on fire. The elders do this to hide the boiling meat before other people, fearing meat craving people would come and defile the rituals of the sacrifice. Moreover, this sacrifice must always be accompanied by local beer. It is only the elders of the clan and those who are chosen that are allowed to eat the meat and drink that local beer of the sacrifice.

(42) *Di- fugo*

CL4.CONT.boiling big pot of meat.

'An annual sacrifice for every Kagulu clan.'

The Kagulu people also have a ceremonial tradition of giving sacrifices as a thanksgiving to their gods for the harvest of the year. The sacrifice is always offered after harvesting in the month of July, in Kagulu it is '*Lusanja*' or in the month of August, known as '*Idosamusala*'. People build a small hut under a designated large tree in the bush, and

they put in it a small quantity of every type of crop that they have harvested that year. This ceremony is called *Chamchijumba*.

(43) *Cha- m- chi-jumba*

PRON.CONT LOC-CL10.house

‘We are in a small house.’

Meaning: ‘We are celebrating a thanksgiving sacrifices for the harvest of the year.’

Conclusion

Euphemisms are figures of speech which are embedded in the linguistic cultural context. The Kagulu language, just like other languages of the world, has its own euphemistic expressions that are used in teaching the ethics and norms of the Kagulu people. Euphemisms such as the ludic euphemisms are used for fun and to bring amusement: However, the most important aspect in using euphemisms is to neutralize all insensitive, improper, and unacceptable sayings, which can cause misunderstandings, embarrassments, and conflicts. Therefore, euphemisms are used to bring stability in the community and to motivate people to be proud of their language and use it in the right way. In the Kagulu society, a person who uses euphemisms is highly respected and valued as a very wise person. However, Kagulu speakers nowadays are facing a challenge due to the influence of the Tanzanian national language – Swahili. Most young people do not understand the full meaning of some of the Kagulu euphemisms anymore, except for the grown-up people and elders who are consistently using euphemistic expressions.

References

- Al Qahtan, O. 2020. Translation techniques applied in the translation of euphemisms for hardship in the Quran.
- Al-Shawi, A. 2013. Translating euphemisms: Theory and application.

Barnwell, K. 2020. *Bible Translation: An introductory course in Translation*

Principles. 4th. edn.

Bello, U. 2014. A study of taboo and euphemistic expressions in Bible translation

from English to Yoruba.

Bhattacharjee, A. 2012. *Social science research: Principles, Methods and Practice*.

Burridge, K. 2019. Euphemism and Language Change: The sixth and seventh ages.

Clack, B. 2013. *Relevance theory*

Dooley, R. 2008. *Relevance theory and discourse analysis: Complementary approaches for translation training*.

Dooley, R., and Levinsohn, S. 2010. *Analyzing discourse*

Duvall, S., & Hays, D. 2012. *Grasping Gods Word: A Hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible*. 3rd edn.

Eberhard, D., & Simons, G. 2023. *Ethnologies: languages of the world*. 26th edn.

Ellingworth, P., & Hatton, H. 1995. *A handbook on Paul first letter to Corinthians*.

Fee, G. 1987. *The first epistle to the Corinthians*.

Halmari, H. 2011. Political correctness euphemism and language change

Levinson, S. 1983. *Pragmatics*

Mohammed, E. 2020. *Problems of translating English euphemisms into Arabic*.

Fakhir, M. 2018. A content analysis of euphemistic functions: *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 23(2), 87-99.

Mădălina, C. 2018. *Euphemism translation strategies: An analysis of corpus based. English Romanian Translations*.