

THE ROLE OF EUPHEMISM IN KIIMENTI PROVERBS AMONG THE IMENTI COMMUNITY OF MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

There is a growing need to examine how euphemism operates in African oral traditions. In Kiiminti, speakers frequently employ euphemistic expressions to address culturally sensitive topics such as death, morality, authority and social deviance. These expressions not only soften potentially offensive messages but also reflect social hierarchies and community values. This study seeks to analyse the role of euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs among the Imenti social groups of Meru County, Kenya. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 40 purposively selected participants aged 70 years and above. These participants were recognised as custodians of the community's indigenous knowledge. The proverbs were identified and analysed for instances of euphemistic expression and were thematically classified according to their social, moral and communicative functions. The study was guided by the principles of Linguistic Ethnography Theory (Snell, 2025). This framework enabled an examination of how language, culture and social interaction intersect in the use of euphemism. The analysis reveals that euphemistic proverbs serve as a critical communicative strategy for promoting social cohesion, mediating conflict, and negotiating authority without direct confrontation. Metaphorical and symbolic language within the proverbs facilitates face-saving, moral instruction, and the reinforcement of social norms. The study concludes that euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs is not merely a stylistic device but a culturally grounded mechanism that sustains politeness and communal harmony. It is recommended that insights from these indigenous communication strategies be applied in community mediation, education, and other social interaction contexts.

Keywords: Euphemism, Kiiminti, Kiiminti Euphemistic proverbs, social harmony, power relations linguistic ethnography

Introduction

Oral traditions have long served as repositories of collective wisdom and cultural identity in African communities. Among their most enduring and influential forms are proverbs, which encapsulate societal values and lived experiences in concise and memorable expressions. Scholars generally agree that proverbs are brief, established statements that convey shared truths, advice, or moral insight grounded in human experience (Kobia, 2016; Alghamdi, 2019; Wu et al., 2023). Their enduring relevance lies not only in their brevity and memorability but also in their capacity to transmit cultural knowledge across generations.

According to Finnegan (2012), proverbs function as compact repositories of ethical values,

social conventions and collective experiences, serving as a bridge between the past and the present. In the Imenti community of Meru County, Kenya, proverbs are deeply embedded in everyday communication and are commonly employed in contexts such as conflict resolution, moral instruction, leadership discourse and intergenerational interaction. Yankah (2015) observes that the communicative strength of proverbs lies in their ability to convey complex meanings in culturally appropriate and socially acceptable ways. This highlights their role not as ornamental language but as active instruments for shaping behaviour and reinforcing social norms.

A defining feature of Kiiminti proverbs is their extensive reliance on euphemism. In this study, Imenti referring to the ethnic community and

geographical region within Meru County while Kiiminti denotes the specific dialect of Kimeru spoken by the Imenti people. These terms are therefore related but not interchangeable, as Imenti identifies the speakers whereas Kiiminti identifies the linguistic variety they use. Within this linguistic and cultural context, most of the themes addressed through these proverbs—including death, ageing, sexuality, moral failure, authority and social deviance—are culturally sensitive and potentially face-threatening. Direct reference to such topics is often regarded as disrespectful or socially disruptive within Imenti society. As a result, speakers employ indirect, metaphorical and symbolic language to communicate difficult messages while maintaining social harmony. Allan and Burrige (2006) describe euphemism as a pragmatic strategy that allows speakers to address taboo or sensitive subjects without violating norms of politeness and decorum. In the Imenti context, euphemism thus functions as a culturally informed linguistic resource that enables respectful yet effective communication.

Primary data for this study were drawn from Kiiminti. In this study, Kiiminti is the language of the Imenti people of Meru County, Kenya while Imenti is a subtribe of the larger Meru community which inhabit the central highland region of the country and are distributed across three administrative sub counties namely: Imenti North, Imenti South and Imenti Central (County Government of Meru, 2014). The Imenti are a culturally and historically rich group, closely related to other Meru subtribes in terms of language, social organization, and cultural practices. However, they maintain distinctive traditions, beliefs, and values that set them apart. Like their Meru counterparts, the Imenti are predominantly agriculturalists. They cultivate crops such as maize, beans and various vegetables. Socially, they are characterized by strong kinship networks and deep clan and lineage bonds, which continue to play a significant role in shaping social interactions and communal decision-making. These cultural and linguistic features make the Imenti and their language, Kiiminti, an ideal context for examining the use of proverbs. In particular, Kiiminti provides a fertile ground for

analyzing the subtle deployment of euphemism as a pragmatic strategy

Euphemism is widely recognised as a universal linguistic phenomenon, particularly salient in societies that value restraint, politeness and communal cohesion (Allan & Burrige, 2006; Chick, 2023). In African oral traditions, its importance is amplified by strong age-based hierarchies and communal value systems, where authority and correction are often exercised indirectly (Yankah, 1995; Olateju, 2016). Proverbs provide a socially sanctioned medium through which euphemistic language can be used to instruct, warn or critique without direct confrontation.

Despite the centrality of euphemism in African proverbs, much existing scholarship has focused primarily on their moral and philosophical dimensions, with comparatively limited attention to their pragmatic and ethnographic functions. In Kenya and neighbouring contexts, recent scholarship has increasingly examined euphemistic language and proverb usage in diverse communicative settings. For example, Amwoma and Ogutu (2024) investigate euphemising strategies underlying sex euphemisms in selected Kenyan radio talk shows, showing how euphemistic utterances are used to navigate taboo topics in media discourse. Similarly, Situma (2024) provides a pragmatic analysis of Turkana proverbs and their cultural significance, demonstrating how proverb use reflects contextual meaning making within a Kenyan speech community.

Internationally, studies such as Mansyur and Suherman (2020) explore the functions of proverbs as communicative and educational media in Wolio discourse, highlighting their broader pragmatic relevance in non-African contexts, while Yusupova (2024) examines the euphemisation of proverbs and sayings across languages, showing ongoing global interest in euphemistic expressions. Together, these recent studies illustrate both the continuity of proverb research and the need for focused linguistic ethnographic work on euphemism within specific dialects such as Kiiminti dialect of Kimeru. This gap necessitates a closer examination of how

euphemism operates within specific linguistic and cultural contexts.

This study therefore argues that euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs is not merely a stylistic device but a culturally grounded communicative strategy. It enables the Imenti community to manage taboo, maintain politeness, negotiate power relations and sustain social cohesion. By situating euphemistic proverbs within their social contexts of use, this paper demonstrates their continued relevance and functional vitality in contemporary Imenti society.

Objectives

This study aims to examine how Kiiminti proverbs function as culturally grounded communicative tools in the Imenti community, with a focus on the pragmatic use of euphemism to address sensitive topics, maintain social harmony, and convey moral and social norms. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the role of Kiiminti proverbs as repositories of cultural knowledge, ethical values, and social norms within the Imenti community of Meru County, Kenya.
2. investigate the use of euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs as a pragmatic strategy for addressing culturally sensitive or face-threatening topics while maintaining politeness and social harmony.
3. analyse the communicative and ethnographic functions of euphemistic proverbs in contexts such as moral instruction, conflict resolution, leadership discourse, and social critique.
4. contribute to linguistic and cultural scholarship by providing a focused study of euphemism in Kiiminti, addressing gaps in existing research on African proverbs' pragmatic roles.

Theoretical Framework

This research employed Linguistic Ethnography (LE) to examine the Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs. As noted by Shaw, Copland and Snell (2015), LE constitutes a methodological and theoretical framework that amalgamates linguistics and ethnography to investigate how social and communicative processes function within diverse environments. Its inception can be traced back to the endeavors of scholars affiliated

with the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) during the 1990s, which served as a forum for interdisciplinary discourse. Pioneering scholars in this domain encompass Frederick Erickson, John Gumperz and Dell Hymes, whose contributions to the ethnography of communication have profoundly impacted the discipline. The principal advocate was Hymes (1996), who emphasised the need to examine "ourselves" rather than remote cultures, thereby redirecting attention to linguistic disparities and their societal implications. Hymes' scholarly contributions established the foundation for the formation of the Linguistic Ethnography Forum (UK LEF) in 2000. This forum has promoted interdisciplinary cooperation in the exploration of language and social interaction.

The fundamental tenets of Linguistic Ethnography are predicated on the understanding that language and culture constitute interdependent phenomena rather than discrete constructs (Agha, 2003). This viewpoint, as articulated by Maybin and Tusting (2007), can be traced back to the foundational theories of linguistic anthropology, particularly Edward Sapir's (1921) proposition that language and culture are intrinsically linked. Linguistic Ethnography integrates the systematic dimensions of language (langue) with its fluid application within sociocultural contexts (parole). Informed by Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, Linguistic Ethnography categorizes signs as iconic, indexical or symbolic (Rampton, 2007). The interpretative process entails discerning how linguistic signs derive significance through social practices, historical circumstances and cultural conventions. Consequently, Linguistic Ethnography emphasizes the importance of examining ordinary language usage to reveal broader social dynamics and cultural transformations.

The study examines how euphemism functions at the nexus of language, culture and social interaction in Kiiminti proverbs by fusing linguistic ethnography with pragmatic theory. The framework enables an analysis of euphemisms' linguistic manifestations as well as their more general social purposes, such as community

cohesion, power negotiation and moral regulation.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine the use and cultural meanings of euphemistic proverbs in Kiiminti. Qualitative research focuses on interpreting human experiences and meanings through non-numerical data, making it well suited for exploring culturally embedded linguistic practices (Kothari, 2004). By foregrounding context and lived experience, this approach enabled an in-depth understanding of how euphemistic proverbs function within the social life of the Imenti community. Specifically, the study employed Linguistic Ethnography, which examines language use within its natural social and cultural settings. Beach and Caraballo (2021) note that Linguistic Ethnography is effective for analyzing how meaning is constructed and negotiated in everyday communication. This approach was therefore appropriate for investigating the practical use, interpretation, and cultural significance of Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs.

The study purposively sampled forty participants who demonstrated knowledge and regular use of Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs. Purposive sampling was suitable because the research prioritized depth and contextual richness rather than statistical generalization. Gentles et al. (2015) observe that small samples are appropriate in qualitative research aimed at generating detailed, context-specific insights. Similarly, Charmaz (2014) emphasizes that qualitative studies often achieve saturation with relatively small samples, while Yin (2011) recommends a sample size of forty to sixty participants for studies seeking rich qualitative data. Guided by these perspectives, a sample size of forty participants was deemed sufficient for thorough yet manageable data collection and analysis.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for guided but flexible engagement with participants. Individuals aged seventy years and above were deliberately selected because elders are widely regarded as custodians of cultural knowledge and are more likely to possess extensive familiarity with traditional proverbs and their euphemistic

meanings. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while also probing emerging themes through follow-up questions (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Through this process, fifty Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs that were widely recognized and frequently used within the community were identified and later translated into English to facilitate analysis and presentation.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively, focusing on how euphemism operates within Kiiminti proverbs. The proverbs were first examined to establish their contextual meanings, with particular attention to how euphemistic language mediates culturally sensitive topics. The analysis emphasized the social, cultural and communicative functions of euphemism within the Imenti community. The selected proverbs were then subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and social functions. Braun and Clarke (2023) describe thematic analysis as a flexible yet systematic method for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. In this study, it was used to examine how euphemistic proverbs facilitate moral instruction, maintain social order, aid conflict resolution, and reinforce shared community values.

Data Presentation / Findings

Fifty Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs were identified and selected for analysis in this study based on their frequent use and cultural significance within the Imenti community. These proverbs demonstrate how euphemism is employed to address sensitive social issues indirectly, allowing speakers to communicate criticism, warnings, moral instruction, and authority in a culturally acceptable manner. Rather than confronting issues explicitly, euphemistic proverbs soften meaning while preserving social harmony and respect, particularly in contexts involving elders, power relations and morally sensitive topics.

For analytical clarity, the identified proverbs were thematically categorized into three broad themes: euphemism and social harmony, euphemism and power relations, and euphemism and communicative roles. This thematic organization enabled a systematic examination of

the distinct social functions performed by euphemistic language in Kiimenti proverbs, including conflict mediation, moral regulation, reinforcement of communal values and indirect

social control. Table 1 presents all fifty Kiimenti euphemistic proverbs analysed in the study alongside their literal English translations.

Table 4.1 Kiimenti Euphemistic Proverbs coded P1–P50

Code	Kiimenti Proverb	Literal Translation
P1	<i>Akwina abicha</i>	He has danced topsy-turvy.
P2	<i>Ndinga na ndinga iti murimo</i>	Beat me, I beat you; it is not painful.
P3	<i>Kironda kia mwene giti nkoro njiru</i>	A wound to the owner does not cause nausea.
P4	<i>Bia thuguri bitiujuraga ncuku</i>	Bartered grains do not fill up the granary.
P5	<i>Ni-kae karumirwa ka nyeenje kaguruke na ruuo</i>	Let it be a bite of a cockroach and fly with the wind.
P6	<i>Mukui atiigagua ibeere</i>	A dying man does not hear the tambourine.
P7	<i>Guti mucuriru jutiejaga kiragara</i>	There is no young leaf that will not dry.
P8	<i>Guti thina ntwire</i>	No problem lasts forever.
P9	<i>Gutii mwaana wa muongo na wa ndaa</i>	There is no child of the back and of the womb
P10	<i>Mûtherenjo jwa kurû nîju mûthirikîrio</i>	The dog's crawling habits make it reach its peak.
P11	<i>Nthenge inkuru ititiyaga utheri</i>	An old he-goat does not sneeze for nothing.
P12	<i>Nja iri mukuru itiguujaga nderi</i>	The vultures would not land where a wise elder lives.
P13	<i>Ng'ombe ni cietu kuuma kaumo</i>	The cattle belong to us from the beginning.
P14	<i>Kuru ntaratari itirimaga mwene na kiano</i>	A loitering dog meets its owner with spear shots on its body.
P15	<i>Kinya Ng'ombe ikuru nirikana riria yari mwari</i>	Even an old cow remembers its youthful days.
P16	<i>Munyanya wa mbiti atitaraga marumwa</i>	A friend to a hyena does not count the bites.
P17	<i>Watwitha mbu utitwitha iriro</i>	When you hide your noises, you will not hide your cries.
P18	<i>Ari mutine jukuura</i>	He is under a leaking tree.
P19	<i>Chamba irundagwa ni muchakwe</i>	A hero is brought down by a maize cob.
P20	<i>Mwàànà wà njòkà ñôô njòkà</i>	A snake's child is always a snake.
P21	<i>Akagwata gikama mwanki-ukwora</i>	He grabs a red-hot iron from the fire.
P22	<i>Mucui weere niuri nkunyu cia kuthua</i>	He who seeks leprosy should have nails to scratch.
P23	<i>Ikinde itiregaga watho</i>	That which has fallen cannot refuse to be burnt.
P24	<i>Niku kwenja nkari maru</i>	It is to shave the leopard's mane.
P25	<i>Guti mwiti utuku atikamataga muguta jwa nthegere</i>	Everyone who walks at night carries the skin of a guinea fowl.
P26	<i>Ni utheri kwinira uri na mpara</i>	It is no use to lull a hungry child.
P27	<i>Nyama ukaria ugakia na ruumuri</i>	Meat you will eat—don't roast it in flames.
P28	<i>Chamba irundagwa ni muchakwe</i>	A hero tumbles on a maize cob.

Code	Kiimenti Proverb	Literal Translation
P29	<i>Niku kwenja nkari igoti</i>	To shave a leopard's mane.
P30	<i>Njene mwithu noyo nkuru</i>	The owner of the forest remains the elder.
P31	<i>Ng'ombe ni cietu kuuma kaumo</i>	The cattle belong to us from the beginning.
P32	<i>Nthenge inkuru ititiyaga utheri</i>	An old he-goat does not sneeze for nothing.
P33	<i>Ni-kae karumirwa ka nyeenje kaguruke na ruuo</i>	Let it be a cockroach bite that flies with the wind.
P34	<i>Nkia iti maruru</i>	A poor person does not remain bitter forever.
P35	<i>Muti jumwe tiju mwitu</i>	One tree does not make a forest.
P36	<i>Guti mbiji itiiri</i>	Nobody knows without being taught.
P37	<i>Murega akiirwa atiregaga agikuunjwa</i>	He who rejects advice does not reject misfortune.
P38	<i>Bia thuguri bitijuraga ncuku</i>	Bartered grains do not fill the granary.
P39	<i>Agwikirithania na murampa</i>	He has rubbed shoulders against a baobab tree.
P40	<i>Agwikia jua nduu kaara</i>	He has inserted a finger into the anus of a monster.
P41	<i>Agiicurua ta kireere naiji uria akareera</i>	When he hangs himself like a bat, he knows how he will dangle.
P42	<i>Nagwurite kareere maigo</i>	He has extracted the bat's teeth.
P43	<i>Ni nyongo ikuthekeru rugio</i>	It is a pot laughing at the potsherd.
P44	<i>Cookera akui, Nturutimi yacookeere Nciru</i>	Return before you go further into destruction.
P45	<i>Mucera na mukondu akondokanigia naju</i>	Those who walk beside criminals become criminals as well.
P46	<i>Ndara mugumone itiji ndaara mugene nikumuntwa</i>	One who sleeps on a fig-tree ignores another's pain on a cactus.
P47	<i>Thiina iti miiri</i>	Poverty has no roots.
P48	<i>Ikinde itiregaga watho</i>	The overpowered one is ruled.
P49	<i>Naanga yereragua ni ruuo</i>	The anchor cloth flies with the wind.
P50	<i>Nkia iti maruru</i>	A poor person does not remain bitter.

Discussions

Euphemism and Social Harmony

In the Imenti society, euphemism is not just a language tactic but a social tactic of ensuring peace and unity in the interaction between people. Euphemistic proverbs allow speakers to discuss delicate issues in a manner that does not damage dignity and does not start an argument. Such expressions serve important face-saving purposes, a feature that is universal across languages. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) broader observation that face-saving strategies help sustain cooperation between interacting parties.

To ensure social harmony, Kiimenti euphemistic proverbs restrain direct attack. This is exemplified in proverb 1, *munyanya wa mbiti atitaraga marumwa* (A friend to a hyena does not count the bites), where criticism is delivered indirectly through metaphor. Instead of openly blaming someone for poor decisions or misguided loyalties, the speaker uses the image of a hyena to offer caution in a non-confrontational manner. This indirect strategy allows the listener to self-reflect without feeling personally attacked thereby maintaining social balance and promoting

communal cohesion. Such communicative practices align with Brown and Levinson's (1987) observation that indirectness functions as a face-saving mechanism across cultures. It is, therefore, clear that Kiiminti speakers use euphemism not only to convey meaning but also to uphold the dignity and social cohesion of their community.

Euphemistic wisdoms play a crucial role in reconciliation and mediation among the Kiiminti-speaking people. For instance, during elder councils (*njuri ncheke*), participants are expected to speak circumspectly rather than bluntly. An example is proverb 2, *Ndinga na ndinga iti murimo* (Beat me, I beat you is not painful), which conveys values of forgiveness and mutual understanding. Its reciprocal nature facilitates the restoration of equilibrium between conflicting parties reflecting the view that conflict is a collective experience rather than a divisive act. The rhythmical repetition and negation within the proverb serve to mollify the emotional tension of disagreement which transforms pain into tolerance and aggression into sympathy. Through such euphemistic formulations, moral instruction is conveyed as emotionally safe metaphors that preserve dignity and encourage reconciliation. This aligns with Hussein's (2022) observation that African euphemistic communication transforms potential enmity into symbolic and civilized discourse that upholds community harmony.

From the foregoing, it is clear that euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs functions as a deliberate sociolinguistic strategy for sustaining social harmony within the Iminti community. By encoding sensitive messages in metaphor and indirection, these proverbs enable speakers to address potentially confrontational issues without threatening interpersonal dignity. Such practices resonate with Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of face-saving, where indirectness fosters cooperation and reduces social friction. The proverbs further demonstrate how criticism and moral instruction can be communicated without escalating conflict. This helps to encourage reflection rather than resistance. In institutional and communal settings, especially in mediation contexts, euphemistic expression facilitates reconciliation by reframing conflict as a shared

social concern. Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs, therefore, illustrate how language operates not merely as a communicative tool but as a cultural mechanism for preserving cohesion and mutual respect.

Euphemism and Power Relations

In Kiiminti, euphemistic proverbs function as strategic tools for negotiating power relations within the community. They allow speakers to show deference or influence others without direct confrontation thereby moderating interaction in line with social hierarchies. Their use reflects and reinforces authority particularly in relation to age, gender and social status. Age, for instance, often determines communicative authority, with elders being recognized as carriers of cultural knowledge and moral guidance. By employing euphemistic proverbs, elders assert influence without resorting to overt commands. This creates space for listeners to interpret guidance thoughtfully rather than feeling coerced.

This mediation of authority is exemplified in proverb 3, *Nthenge inkuru ititiyaga utheri* (An old he-goat does not sneeze for nothing), where the speaker highlights the wisdom of experience while indirectly requesting respect. Young listeners perceive such utterances as moral recommendations rather than directives. This reflects the subtle balance of influence and deference embedded in euphemistic expression. This communicative strategy authenticates Goffman's (1981) view of face-work, as it preserves the dignity of both speaker and listener. Kilonzo (2024) further notes that euphemism in hierarchical relations facilitates social regulation without confrontation. Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs, therefore, manage authority and maintain respect in interpersonal interactions.

Another example is proverb 4, *Nja iri mukuru itiguujaga nderi* (The vultures would not touch a wise elder), which carries symbolic weight. The metaphor of the vulture conveys caution and respect by highlighting the authority and protective role of elders within the community. By likening a wise elder to one untouchable by vultures, the proverb emphasizes leadership and the expectation of reverence. This proverb safeguards social order by softening the

impact of potential criticism, thus, allowing speakers to comment on leadership or morality without direct confrontation. From a Linguistic Ethnography perspective, such euphemistic expressions encode cultural norms regarding authority and respect. They ensure that guidance or correction is communicated in a socially acceptable manner.

As indicated in the discussion for proverbs 3 and 4 above, Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs function as strategic linguistic tools that both reflect and regulate power relations within the community. As Oloo (2022) and Locher (2020) observe, euphemistic proverbs often maintain political and moral harmony while allowing guidance and critique to be communicated subtly without direct confrontation. Authority is further reinforced through the differential distribution of euphemistic competence where elders often possess interpretive authority. Youth and women, on the other hand, use these expressions within restricted and context-specific boundaries. This structured access upholds social hierarchies while simultaneously creating space for subtle negotiation and resistance. For instance, women may employ euphemistic humour or irony to critique male authority in domestic settings without breaching social norms. This demonstrates how indirect speech functions both as a stabilizing force and as a tool for sociopolitical negotiation. Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs, therefore, reveal the dual role of euphemism in sustaining authority and enabling delicate social maneuvering.

Communicative Roles

Euphemism in Kiiminti proverbs has a variety of communicative functions: face saving, indirectness, avoidance of taboo and social identity reinforcement. These functions help speakers convey sensitive messages and maintain social norms within the Imenti community. For example, proverb 5, *Ni-kae karumirwa ka nyeenje kaguruke na ruuo* (Let it be a cockroach bite and fly with the wind), illustrates the face-saving function. The proverb allows the speaker to respond to a minor harm or offense with metaphorical detachment by conveying acceptance rather than anger or grief. By using figurative language, the speaker diffuses tension and mitigates the emotional impact of the

situation. This use aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of negative politeness where linguistic strategies avoid imposition and protect the face and dignity of interlocutors. In this way, the proverb demonstrates how euphemistic expressions in Kiiminti not only communicate meaning but also preserve relational harmony and reinforce culturally sanctioned norms of emotional restraint and decorum.

Proverb 2, *Ndinga na ndinga iti murimo* (Beat me, I beat you; it is not painful), also illustrates the communicative function of indirectness. The proverb allows the speaker to address potential conflict without direct confrontation by conveying mutual understanding and equality. The repetition within the proverb establishes rhythm and balance. It signals reconciliation rather than aggression. By employing this figurative structure, the proverb transforms a possible conflict into a dialogue that preserves relationships. This use is in line with Locher's (2020) observation that euphemistic proverbs often mediate disputes by turning confrontation into relational negotiation. In this way, the proverb demonstrates how Kiiminti euphemistic expressions not only communicate meaning but also facilitate indirect conflict resolution while maintaining social equilibrium.

Moreover, proverb 6, *Ng'ombe ni cietu kuuma kaumo* (The cattle belong to us since the beginning), illustrates the communicative function of cultural reaffirmation and community belonging. The proverb allows speakers to remind members of their shared ancestry and collective identity, hence, reinforcing social cohesion and unity. The use of such euphemistic expressions signals linguistic competence and moral maturity. Only those familiar with the cultural context can fully interpret the metaphorical meaning. This aligns with Kisaka and Obiero's (2023) observation that euphemism in African oral knowledge functions as a group identity marker that distinguishes insiders who understand the metaphor from outsiders who do not. By employing these proverbs, speakers engage in a culturally sanctioned act of tact and understanding. In this way, the proverb demonstrates how Kiiminti euphemistic expressions not only

communicate meaning but also regulate emotional expression and maintain the social balance necessary for harmonious group life.

Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs, therefore, function as vital communicative tools within the Imenti community. They enable speakers to manage face and avoid direct confrontation. Through metaphor and indirectness, these proverbs promote social harmony and emotional restraint. They also reinforce shared cultural identity and communal values. In this sense, euphemism emerges as a central mechanism for sustaining respectful and cohesive social interaction.

Conclusions

This study concludes that Kiiminti euphemistic proverbs serve various interconnected functions that are essential to social existence. They encourage social cohesion by instructing individuals on how to manage delicate issues delicately and sustain harmonious connections. Euphemism also governs moral and ethical conduct, enabling the discussion of taboo topics without breaching community norms. Moreover, these sayings illustrate power dynamics by conveying authority and gender hierarchies subtly

while facilitating negotiation within social frameworks. Ultimately, their practical and communicative roles show that euphemistic proverbs serve as effective means of maintaining dignity. They aid in promoting cultural unity and enable efficient personal interactions

The study recommends that policymakers and organizations involved in public communication and mediation ought to incorporate insights from Kiiminti's euphemistic proverbs into their training and community involvement. The delicate application of euphemism illustrates successful tactics for handling interpersonal face and resolving conflict. Implementing these concepts can enhance diplomacy and ethical dialogue in both social and professional settings. The research emphasizes that the communicative and pragmatic roles of Kiiminti proverbs can act as effective resources for maintaining cultural continuity and strengthening communal values.

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