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Form of Idioms which are Susceptible to Misinterpretation by the Fans of Witimbule Programme in Radio Mambo FM

Solomon Luvonga Chenenje*¹, David Ogoti Ongarora¹, & Jackline Atieno Okelo¹¹Department of Linguistics, Maseno University, Kenya**Article History**

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Abstract: Idioms are notoriously applicable in Witimbule Programme of Radio Mambo FM broadcast among the fans from the Luhya speaking communities to make their language native-like, for face-saving and regulation of human behavior. However, it has been found that some idioms are susceptible to misinterpretation during interlocution. The study employs relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (2002) which explains that human mind follows the path of least effort strategy to process information and the moment it becomes complex, there is a high possibility of misinterpretation. The study adopted descriptive research design because it is within qualitative research paradigm. The sample population selected was 66 informants based on purposive sampling technique and the idioms selected were 69 by listening to Witimbule programme. It was found that the form of idioms which is susceptible to misinterpretation was proverbial followed by hyperbolic. This is because they demand extra effort to process and they are cultural specific.

Keywords: Interlocution, Misinterpretation, Proficiency and Susceptible.

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INTRODUCTION

Thyab (2016) says that idioms are widely used in English to make speech lively and rich. Native speakers use them in their everyday language. He points to the fact that idiomatic knowledge makes the interlocutors native-like during the conversation. This indicates that if non-native speakers of English are to be proficient in it, they should master the art of using idioms. The study highlights the prominence of idioms in conversations. However, it could have pointed out the difficulties encountered during the interpretation of such idioms for effective communication and the strategies for interpretation. Whether the conversation is informative or not, interpretation is vital for effective communication. The current study intended to investigate the nature of idioms and how the interlocutors comprehend them for communication of the message to the hearers.

Idioms are frequently used by the native speakers, especially in media houses, to pass information to the intended audience (Mantyla, 2004). He further said that the media houses have become a platform on which local people air their views and concerns, whether they are literate or illiterate. When British University students were compared to Finnish ones, British were able to interpret idioms better than Finnish. This, therefore, implies that non-native speakers are susceptible to misinterpretation of idioms. There was a need to study the effective strategies of idiomatic interpretation of idioms to accurately communicate the message.

Yus (1998) highlights that decoded meaning of a sentence is compatible with a number of different interpretations in the same context. Therefore idioms are realized pragmatically in day-to-day conversations. Poor mastery of them impedes communication in any social setting. There was a need to establish the best strategies for interpreting idioms in various contexts.

Wilson & Sperber (2002) emphasize that if the hearer fails to match the intention of the speaker with the interpretation of an idiom, there can be miscommunication in the conversation. The current study aimed at finding the difficulties that can be encountered by interlocutors during a conversation when interpreting idioms.

The study of idiomatic interpretation had been necessitated by the fact that interlocutors use more idiomatic expressions than proverbs which are preserved for specific occasions as a result of the native speakers' accumulated knowledge over the years (Cacciari, 1993 P.27). Therefore, there was a need to study how idioms can be interpreted for effective communication during conversations.

The study by Gibbs (1993) claims that idioms are not dead metaphors because their structure is not that of metaphors and, therefore, should be treated differently. However, previous studies reveal that some idioms exist as metaphors.

Chi (2013) says that a good idiom always give rise to the association of ideas and lets the readers think

deeply in the spirit it contains. He further states that idioms are composed of set words, phrases, proverbs and colloquialisms. Therefore, those idioms which are composed of proverbs are proverbial idioms. The current study dwells on different forms of idioms which demand various strategies to interpret due to their nature or uniqueness. Such forms of idioms include proverbial, euphemistic, hyperbolic and metaphorical.

The previous study concentrated on the comparison between English and Chinese idioms only to find that English idioms are culturally rooted, but to an extent, they resemble the Chinese idioms in terms of meaning. Therefore, context is crucial in idiomatic analysis. The current study dwells on Luhya idioms from the fans of the radio programme. The idioms are from the first language of the interpreters. Therefore, the current study sought what may cause lack of uniformity in the interpretation of idioms that are culturally specific to the fans of *Witimbole* programme in Radio Mambo FM among the fans from the Luhya community.

Idioms are classified as transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque and opaque (Matifari, 2016). They are classified according to their link to literal meaning during interpretation. He used some strategies of interpretation, such as metaphorical broadening and context of utterances with some level of cultural understanding. Therefore, he sticks to the fact that idioms are culture-specific. The present study delves into the categorization of idioms in terms of form which include metaphorical, euphemistic, hyperbolic and proverbial, depending on their relationship with other stylistic elements of the language. This is necessitated by the fact that idioms are based on the speaker's intention and not the literal or implied meaning.

It is said that idioms are fixed phrasal expressions but not completely frozen forms. The individual words of an idiom cannot be replaced by synonyms and still retain the idiomatic reading of the phrases, hence fixed form (Ifill, 2002). He, therefore, grouped idioms as transparent and opaque. He then finds that opaque idioms are frozen (fixed) and hence difficult to interpret. The current study grouped the idioms into different forms for the sake of interpretation to gauge those that cause the most challenges, leading to misinterpretation. The study adopted idioms that are culture-specific and interpreted them at the pragmatics level since the fans of *Witimbole* programme may find it challenging to know the intention of the speaker in applying the idioms since, in pragmatics interpretation of the idioms or any utterance, we are interested in what is communicated rather than what is uttered hence the speaker meaning.

Patricia (2014) analyses the cognitive approach to hyperbolic idioms, Gibbs (1990); & Cacciari (1993) elaborate on metaphorical idioms and proverbial idioms. Lonyangapuo (2014) highlights euphemistic idioms. It is

found that they did not explain how misinterpretation of those idioms may arise and lead to miscommunication and the least effort strategy to interpret those idioms. The current study seeks to investigate the difficulties that can be faced by interlocutors during conversations and the least effort strategy to reach cognitive effects in the framework of relevance theory. It is, therefore, obvious that each form of idioms has specific challenges to address and find the one with the most deterrents leading to misinterpretation.

The scholars in this field, such as Patricia, Alati, Gibbs, and Cacciari did not realize that idioms are pragmatic and may pose extra effort due to the speaker's intention; hence most fans may tend to apply the knowledge they have in society over a span of time. Therefore, they did not investigate the cause of misinterpretation during the conversation. This study found various forms of idioms that caused misinterpretations due to their complexity. Wilson & Sperber (2002) reiterate that the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance. In this study, the form of idioms which require a higher processing effort can be less relevant to the hearer and make it challenging to interpret hence causing miscommunication. The current study aimed at determining the form of idioms that may be more difficult to interpret compared to the rest. The form of idioms which was mostly misinterpreted by the fans was viewed as difficult to interpret; hence investigate the cause of difficulties encountered during interpretation. That demanded the most effective strategies to interpret hence efficacy in communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In several studies, linguists have attempted to categorize idioms based on some facts for easy analysis.

In the linguistics journal of Takacs (2015), idioms are categorized for easy interpretation. Therefore, the idioms were classified based on difficulties in interpretation and whether they are direct or implied.

This study reveals that the interpretation of idioms needs to be assigned figurative meaning to parts of the idiom. It highly contributes to the current research because it shows why some idioms are easily interpretable while others are problematic. This study groups idioms according to their form for interpretation. The form can be proverbial, metaphorical, euphemistic, and hyperbolic idioms.

Gibbs *et al.* (1997) have revealed that people use metaphorical mapping of information and think in form of metaphors. Consequently, they concluded that idioms are metaphorical by citing several examples. The study is vital as it reveals metaphorical idioms and how they are interpreted by conceptual metaphor theory. This study then is a departure from the previous because it highlights various forms of idioms not only limited to metaphorical ones. The previous study forms a basis for

this study. The current study aimed at carrying out the autopsy to ascertain how much effort is needed to interpret metaphorical idioms and attempt to find the least effort strategies to interpret idioms.

Elshamy (2016) grouped the idioms basing on their functions as; swearing, complaining, sympathizing, opposing, and advising in the framework of speech act theory, meaning that idioms are emotive in nature. Such idioms were used by the lower-class people (Taxi) within their working environment and therefore easily interpretable in their context.

The study is applicable to the present study because this study groups the idioms according to the form. The functionality of idioms can be included in various forms for interpretation. The current study encompasses people from all social classes in formal conversation in the framework of relevance theory. This study delves into four categories of idioms which include proverbial, hyperbolic, metaphorical, and euphemistic. It investigated the form that possesses the most difficulties during interpretation.

Patricia (2014) grouped the idioms as hyperbolic and explains that idiomatic expressions are conceptual in nature and not purely linguistic because we cannot predict their meaning by component parts but other constructions. This means that hyperbolic idioms are full of exaggerations to emphasize the information in humorous manner without offending the hearer or interlocutors. It is important therefore to determine the difficulties encountered during interpretation of hyperbolic idioms so that appropriate strategies of interpretation can be put in place.

The speakers tend to use cognitive mechanisms such as metaphors, metonymy and conventional knowledge. Therefore, this indicates that idioms exist in other aspects of figurative language but cannot be interpreted at lexical but pragmatic level. This has contributed to this study only that idioms exist in other forms such as proverbs, metaphors, and euphemisms which she did not highlight. Relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (1995) was applicable to the current study because it explains how the complexity of the information may lead to extra effort to reach the conclusion. The study seeks to unearth what makes some forms of idioms which are demanding on the side of the interpreter and arrive at the least effort strategies.

Patricia (2014) analyses the hyperbolic idioms in conversations and attempted to apply cognitive approach to interpret them and on the other hand Gibbs & Cacciari (1993) elaborate on conceptual metaphor theory to analyse metaphorical idioms. Lonyangapuo (2014) highlights on euphemistic idioms. The fact that they did not explain the forms of idioms which are highly susceptible to misinterpretation the current study intends to determine the form of idioms which are demanding

extra effort to interpret. Attention was drawn to establish the best strategies to suit interpretation of various forms of Oluluhya idioms. The study also tested the authenticity of relevance theory in explaining the constraints that cause misinterpretation of all forms of idioms and the appropriate strategies of interpreting such for effective communication.

According to Sigrit (2017), idioms are fixed phrases with arbitrary meanings and use the language in a metaphorical way. From this definition, idioms are not literal, and the meaning of each lexical item cannot be used to derive the meaning but it is the sum of the total meaning of the words. This implies that lack of competence in the language being used can lead to idiomatic misinterpretation and leads to miscommunication between the speaker and the hearer.

Idioms are an important part of the language because they convey our feelings in a more concise and effective way (Murali, 2014). Their interpretation is very paramount for any successful communication to take place. Without proper interpretation of idioms, there can be a miscommunication in conversation. However, there are forms of idioms which are susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations. They demand the least effort strategy to interpret in order to minimize the cases of misinterpretation.

Luvonga (2017) points out that in the Luhya community, the artists notoriously use figurative language not only to make their songs interesting but mainly for face-saving. He mentioned the main aspects of figurative language used as a metaphor, euphemism, symbolism and hyperbole. The study emphasizes that artists express their concerns in songs to castigate the societal evils which cannot be spoken directly but *dressed* to be readily accepted by people of all ages and gender. However, the study did not explain how the aspects of figurative language can be interpreted using the path of the least effort strategy. It was only interested in the face-saving rather than interpretation by the interlocutors in day-to-day speeches.

Research by Ifill (2002) also notes that some idioms are frozen and so cannot exist in passive and retain their meaning. The idioms which undergo passivation are flexible and can be interpreted based on their elements are transparent while opaque idioms are fixed and frozen. Since this study dwells on the syntactic structure of idioms and interpretation, the current study dwells on different ways of interpreting various categories of idioms in various categories to ascertain the most difficulties encountered and the best strategy to interpret idioms used by fans of *Witimbole* programme.

The previous study implies that linguists have shown a constant interest in idioms and that idioms are not only to colour the language, but they have more

impact than non-idiomatic expressions since they are closely associated with a certain language and culture.

Anna (2018) defines idioms as a number of words which when taken together mean something different from individual words of the idiom when they stand alone. Idioms are peculiar to a language. Therefore, an idiom is a group of words with hidden meaning but draws the content from a particular culture and language. Therefore, they are culturally specific in nature and vary from culture to culture. The current study dwells on the interpretation of idioms in Luhya culture.

It is found that Lonyangapuo (2014) analyses linguistic morality in HIV and AIDS discourses in Kenyan society and finds that cultural aspects, relationships, sexuality and diseases resulting from sexual intercourse are taboo and therefore should not be discussed in direct language of communication as it dehumanizes and defaces the affected participants in the conversation.

Therefore, most of the societies in Kenya use silence, sheng, metaphors and euphemism to substitute direct language. This finding is in tandem with Luvonga (2017) who finds that in Lukabras cultural songs, the artists use substitution features of style such as metaphors, euphemisms, symbolism and metonymy mainly for face-saving. The current study is based on idioms, their interpretation and strategies of interpretation. It will be specific to idioms to test whether they are also for face-saving or other major functions. Whichever functions they are intended for, some fans may misinterpret these idioms leading to miscommunication. The study seeks investigate the form of idioms which is highly susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations and analyse the best strategy to interpret them.

Wilson & Sperber (2002) in relevance theory, they explained that the more complex the information is, the greater the processing effort and the greater the cognitive effects. This shows that if the idiom is complex to the hearer, the more effort will be applied and hence the higher the chance of misinterpretation or rejecting the information. Human mind tends to concentrate on the information which requires little effort to process. So the study investigated such forms of idioms to ascertain those susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design. Inaam (2016) says that this research design can describe phenomena as they exist including social events, structures, and situations. The study was restricted to only 19 Luhya speaking dialects by sampling 66 informants purposively depending on the dialect and 69 idioms were collected until saturation stage was attained. The data collection techniques include unstructured interview orally because the interviewer can explain the questions from the interview guide depending on the situation to make the respondents understand better (Kumar, 2011). Data was presented and analysed on content analysis guide and tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This is the finding of the study that sought to investigate the forms of idioms which are highly susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations in *Witimbule* programme of Radio Mambo FM.

Kaburise & Klue (2014) recommended that because language is the property of the society and its users, there is a need for it to grow and transform the society by creating new words or broadening the old ones. They further said that communication is articulating one's intentions in such a manner that the hearer can interpret it. The interpretation is aided by shared language, cultural background and interlocutors' willingness. The current study sought to investigate whether such factors affect interpretation of idioms in Radio Mambo FM *Witimbule* Programme. This is so because interpretation of idioms in any language during conversation is paramount hence the study to establish the form of idioms which is susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations and the reasons behind it. The study sought to determine whether the new words accommodated can make interpretation of idioms easier.

Bozena & Zuzana (2018) conceived idioms as figurative and cultural specific by describing them as cultural bound. The current research has also ascertained that it true only that the previous study concentrated on the nature of idioms rather than the solution to the problem. The current study found that because they are cultural based, there is a need for the application of knowledge of cognitive environment and native speaker's intuition before other auxiliary strategies.

“We follow the path of the least effort strategy to interpret an utterance and stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied” (Wilson & Sperber, 2002).

Table 1: Metaphorical Idioms

Code	Interpretation	Misinterpretation	No Response
01	35	30	1
02	50	16	0
03	60	6	0
04	48	17	1
05	62	4	0
06	33	30	3
07	61	4	1
08	63	3	0
09	40	24	2
10	55	11	0
11	64	2	0
12	47	13	6
13	60	3	3
14	40	26	0
15	50	16	0
16	42	24	0
17	39	25	2
18	30	36	0
19	41	25	0
20	45	21	0
21	64	2	0
22	60	6	0
23	65	1	0
24	58	8	0
25	50	16	0
26	53	13	0
27	50	16	0

This is the form of idioms which was mostly interpreted well except code 18, 1&6 which were highly misinterpreted because the interpreters lacked the knowledge of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition to enable them to use the immediate environment to interpret correctly. For instance code 1...*Wukwile mutsindang'unyo - Has fallen in black ants.....*

The interpreter should have the knowledge of what is being spoken in the neighbourhood at that period. This will make them to map *etsindang'unyo (black ants) to police officers* hence interpretation. Most of the fans used literal interpretation as finding yourself in the real black ants, others interpreted it as being in the dangerous situation. Those who used truth condition semantic approach failed to interpret it correctly. Those who used native speaker's intuition knew the meaning of black ants but misinterpreted the idiom. Therefore, cognitive environment knowledge was required in order to activate conceptual metaphor knowledge (mapping strategy). This shows that even CMT as a strategy of interpreting metaphorical idioms depends largely on cognitive environment approach to reach cognitive effects faster than the others.

Code 6. *Amang'u kekhupa mupanipepa -Beasts landed in pan paper factory in Webuye.* The interlocutors' misinterpretation was as a result of lack of native speakers' intuition and cognitive environment.

Therefore they failed to apply conceptual metaphor knowledge to map *Amang'u* to our leaders in pan paper factory. Under cognitive environment, they are to use encyclopedic entries to get the meaning of *Amang'u*. *Amang'u* were known to be ferocious beasts which used to exhume corpses and eat everything including bones. Meaning that they left nothing in turn. Therefore *Amang'u* are very corrupt leaders or managers who misappropriate or squander everything in the company or organization and leave it in a quagmire. In order to activate conceptual metaphor theory, the interlocutor had to apply the knowledge of cognitive environment approach besides native speakers' intuition to master the vocabulary (*Amang'u*).The vocabulary was used long time ago and only most of the fans who were above 45 years old or those who had been within the Oluluhya speaking communities for more than 20 years would fathom due to native speakers' intuition.

Code 18. *Nakhamuna nende wanangwe.. Squirrel and the leopard.* The interlocutor with minimal knowledge of cognitive environment could not map the metaphorical animals to the target language to guess the interpretation. The idiom also demanded truth condition semantic approach to detect the relationship between the leopard and the squirrel. They are enemies. Such names were used long time ago and only resurface in oral narratives. In this case you need the knowledge of the native speakers' intuition to master the vocabulary to the

fullest. These days the animals are respectively called *Eshimuna nende eyingwe*.(squirrel and the leopard)

Code 023: *Nishulu na munwa... Are nose and mouth*. This idiom was interpreted correctly by all except one individual. It only demanded activation of conceptual metaphor theory or mapping strategy because nose and mouth are commonly encountered in every day’s conversation. You do not need the knowledge of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition to tackle it. The vocabulary used is prevalent in all the settings. The idiom means close neighbours or friends. The distance between the two is close.

Code 008: *Wakhomba muyapakha... Licked the fermentation pot*. This idiom was one of those which were well interpreted. The hearer was just expected to have the native speakers intuition or mastery of vocabulary in Oluluhya dialects. Once you know the function of the fermentation pot and map the word licking onto the situation you will get the interpretation correctly. However, cognitive environment approach would be applicable to reach cognitive effects faster than the other strategies. Licking the fermentation pot means you have found when all wine is finished and you have decided to lick whatever has remained. You will end up failing in your attempt.

Among the Abaluhya people, licking the fermentation pot showed that you have failed completely. This is because others have enjoyed the wine. The other factor which has contributed to the interpretation of this idiom is that it has been used frequently in communication in *Witimbule* programme. Its frequency

in usage is an evidence that it is used commonly in day to day conversation.

From the 5 examples of interpretation and misinterpretation of metaphorical idioms, the key strategies of interpreting idioms are cognitive environment approach, native speakers intuition and conceptual metaphor theory that entails mapping strategy.

In relevance theory, Wilson & Sperber (2002) propounded that an input is relevant to an individual if it connects with the background information to yield cognitive effects. Therefore the greater the cognitive effects, the greater the relevance. Human mind follows the least effort strategy during processing of information.

Furthermore, when the information is repeated, it has a high chance of being interpreted correctly. This therefore implies that repetition has a direct bearing on interpretation of idioms. This explains why idiom code 008 has a higher rate of interpretation despite the fact that it demands three strategies to interpret or reach cognitive effects. Most of the idioms of metaphorical form are not demanding on the side of interpretation once you are exposed to the target language and mastered the vocabulary before activating the knowledge of mapping strategy.

Yus (2006) simplified the explanation that hearers rely on powerful criterion when selecting the most appropriate interpretation, which makes it possible to select one. When the interlocutor reaches the first interpretation, the hearer stops there.

Table 2: Proverbial Idioms

Code	Interpretation	Misinterpretation	No Response
01	40	26	0
02	30	36	0
03	25	41	0
04	30	36	0
05	27	39	0
06	39	27	0
07	26	40	0
08	19	47	0
09	50	16	0

Proverbial idioms were fewer than other forms of idioms in the conversation. According to Alati (2015), they are preserved by the society and commonly used by elders to teach morality to the young generation. They demand a lot of wit to apply them in any conversation. The elderly people were mainly the ones who applied them but sparingly. They demand the native speaker’s intuition. Lack of vocabulary and history of a particular speech community, you cannot easily interpret proverbial idioms in this conversation. Those who managed to interpret proverbial idioms correctly were mainly elderly people who have been in the community for a long time of their life. Nonnative speakers of

Luluhya dialects can guess the interpretation of other forms of idioms once the context is provided but proverbial idioms are a preserve of the native speakers. Such idioms required that the interlocutor should have the context of the speaker to derive the meaning but the context was missing in some cases. The above table shows that proverbial idioms are highly susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations among others. Therefore there is a need for the best strategy to interpret them correctly because it can lead to miscommunication between the speaker and the hearer.

The best illustration is the proverbial idiom code 008: *Kumusukuni mumatayi –the first hunting rod or stick*. It was highly misinterpreted among others because there was no context given to guide the interpreter. Truth condition semantic approach cannot be applicable. Narrowing and broadening was unreliable. It was the matter of activating the knowledge of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition. Meaning that if you are far from the culture of the community in addition to lack of competence in the language you cannot interpret it.

The idiom highlights the importance of the first attempt in any doing. Once you throw the first hunting stick and miss the mark you would have lost because all the birds will fly away from the tree and leave you with nothing to hunt. It emphasizes on utilization of the first opportunity we get in life. If the context would be given, there would be high rate of interpretation.

Another idiom is code 003: *Omukambi wulile amatsukhu... The most selective person has eaten the lungs*. The idiom needed the knowledge of cognitive environment to use the Luhya culture to interpret it. You need to know what lungs means among the Luhya speaking communities. It is therefore interpreted that lungs form the worst part of the meat and it is not delicious compared to others like liver, hind quarter and the other soft parts of the cow.

Among the Luhya speaking communities meat from the slaughtered cattle was so important that if one was denied, he could complain all the days. There were some people who used to complain about any part they was given until they ended up getting the remains which were lungs.

To interpret the idioms, the interlocutor applied the strategy of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition then immediately mapped the lungs onto low quality gift of no worth. From the above assumptions about interpretation the idiom is interpreted as, the perfectionist always lands on poor or unworthy choice at last.

The strategies applied are cognitive environment approach, native speakers intuition and mapping strategy. It was found to be brain tormenting because it is not widely used in every day's conversation.

Code 005: *Mavanga kalulimi....Blood of the tongue*. It had also poor interpretation by the fans. There was no context given hence the interlocutor needed the cognitive environment approach which entails the cultural knowledge of the community from which the idiom is derived. In addition to that, you should have heard the idioms being used before. But they are used sparingly and in most cases if you fail to match the speakers' intention with your interpretation, it can be null and void.

According to Oluluhya culture, blood of the tongue means something you cannot avoid. Once your tongue begins to bleed you cannot manage to spit out all the blood but you can swallow some even against your wish. Blood of the tongue is inevitable.

We bring in cognitive environment approach if there is no context clue. Thereafter, you map the tongue onto the person close to you, then blood onto the problem at hand. Then we find that if a relative crosses your path you have to bear with him or her to survive. In this environment, if you cannot change the situation, you close your eyes and let it go.

Code 001: *Eyikhondo yivoyele kwayo... The guerrilla has tied itself with its own ...*. This idiom was interpreted fairly well among this category because it had 40 interpretations and 26 misinterpretations. Here the speaker needed the native speakers intuition approach to interpret the meaning of guerrilla then cognitive environment approach to know how it has tied itself or whether it is its lifestyle. The guerrilla can be mapped to a person in need. Tying to be mapped to assisting. Tail means what you have at hand. Collectively the idiom is interpreted as the needy person has used his or her own resources to go through the problem.

Code 009 was the best interpreted idiom because it did not demand the knowledge of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition among only the Luhya speaking communities but outside the boundaries. It does not need entirely the context and cognitive environment to interpret but once the interpreter has mastered the vocabulary of the speech community, it is the matter of mapping strategy. Slipperiness of trees in the forest shows that it is not well. There is danger. Slipperiness is mapped to dangerous situation. Slipperiness is associated with cunning if they are people or animals but trees being slippery means you cannot climb them. This shows that it is interpreted as things having fallen apart.

Alternatively you can still apply the knowledge of cognitive environment by applying the Luhya proverb: *Eisuku ya Eyikhondo nefwile emisaala chirelekhangamumutsuru... The day when the guerrilla dies (will be killed) all the trees become slippery in the forest*. The least effort strategy to reach cognitive effects faster is now cognitive environment approach.

Schroeder (2012) already emphasized the relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (2002) that the information which demands a complex strategy to reach cognitive effects are difficult to interpret during conversation. The higher the processing effort the lower the relevance and the lower the cognitive effect. However, they laid emphasis on context clue strategy. In this study most of the idioms exist in isolation.

Ong'ayo *et al.* (2018) expounded further that information is relevant in context when it interacts with the context to yield cognitive effects. This is not true entirely because most of the proverbial idioms do not meet such conditions. Then the conclusion from the current study is that cognitive environment approach and native speakers intuition are paramount strategies of interpreting proverbial idioms. This is so because they are cultural based.

The findings were also in agreement with the relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (1995) that the more recent the information is, the more it is likely to be interpreted easily. That still reinforces that cognitive environment approach is paramount because the most recent information is at the back of the mind of the interlocutor hence cognitive environment knowledge.

Previously, the findings of metaphorical idioms revealed that when the idiom is repeated now and then, it is correctly interpreted. Most of the proverbial idioms proved difficult to interpret during *Witimbole* programme because they are used sparingly in conversations. "Everything else being constant, the smaller the processing effort in achieving effects, the greater the relevance of the input to that individual at that time" (Wilson & Sperber, 2002). This is matching the implication that if the information demands extra effort to interpret, it is likely to be misinterpreted. Proverbial idioms are challenging to interpret because they are not used repeatedly in the conversation. There is a need to establish the best strategy to interpret them for efficacy in communication.

Table 3: Euphemistic Idioms

Code	Interpretation	Misinterpretation	No Response
01	50	15	1
02	60	6	0
03	50	16	0
04	61	5	0
05	65	1	0
06	35	31	0
07	46	20	0
08	50	16	0
09	39	27	0
10	60	6	0
11	32	34	0
12	30	36	0
13	30	36	0
14	40	26	0
15	40	26	0
16	50	16	0
17	40	26	0
18	60	6	0
19	51	15	0
20	40	26	0
21	39	27	0

Euphemistic idioms are mostly used apart from metaphorical idioms. This is in line with Luvonga (2017) who concluded that figurative language among the Luhya speaking communities is majorly for face saving. Alati (2015) said that idioms are for regulation of human behaviour. This is true. Among the Luhya speaking communities, the moral behaviour is not imparted directly but through figurative language.

Figurative language include idioms. Such language is used to correct the wrongs or misbehaviour without necessarily causing embarrassment or hurting the doer of the action in public. Therefore euphemistic idioms are inevitable in Luluhya social setting. Primarily euphemistic idioms cut across other forms. They were well interpreted compared to proverbial and hyperbolic idioms. One of the reasons is that they are used in day-

to-day conversation and many people are versed with them.

Wilson & Sperber (2012) in Schroeder's work proved that the more recent the information, the easier it becomes to interpret. When information is repeated in every day's conversation it will be easily interpreted. For example an idiom code 5: *Wutsile ekombe –he /she has gone to Ekombe* has been repeatedly used during funeral ceremonies until many Luhya speaking communities are used to it. Out of the 66 interlocutors there was only one respondent who misinterpreted. This was either as a result of incompetence or negligence. The Luhya speaking communities fear to mention death by the name and have resolved to say going to *Ekombe* the world of no return. In the funeral context, many people can infer the correct interpretation. Therefore the strategies used are cognitive environment approach, native speakers

intuition and mapping strategy. Cognitive environment approach is where interlocutors have cultural knowledge, have been in the community for a long time and have frequently used the idioms. Thereafter, the word *Ekombe* is mapped to death. Those new in Luhya cultural setting cannot comprehend the word *Ekombe*. Good mastery of vocabulary is paramount to interpret idioms, hence cognitive environment knowledge.

Code 018: *Winyoshe... has gone home...* has been also interpreted well because many people in Luluhya speaking communities commonly use it during death. Mentioning death is a taboo in Luluhya setting and so they have used it frequently until many natives are conversant. Therefore cognitive environment knowledge and native speakers intuition are prevalent in interpretation of this idiom. *Has gone home* is mapped to has died using the cultural knowledge you possess.

However, Code 6,11,12&13 raised the concern due to significant misinterpretation. Code 6: *Okhukanya omufu –to fold the dead*. You need cognitive environmental knowledge and native speakers intuition to interpret it in addition to the context. If you lack cultural knowledge then you may fail to interpret it. It is commonly used by elders to mean slaughter of the cattle to honour the dead. The context is not provided, truth condition semantic approach failed to yield the results. The only approaches applicable were cognitive environment and native speakers intuition.

Code 11. *Okhukhalaka emikoye –to cut the ropes*. It is complicated because you need cognitive environmental knowledge and native speakers intuition. This shows that cultural knowledge is paramount here. This is the funeral of a man and thereafter the widow needs to be inherited. Before the inheritor comes, it is believed that the widow is still tied to the dead husband by the ropes which need to be cut by a different person from the inheritor. The first intercourse after the burial of the husband is called cutting the ropes. If the inheritor does it before rope cutting he will die instantly. Such euphemistic idiom is demanding cultural knowledge in addition to native speakers intuition. This is because the idiom is culturally rooted among the Luhya people. The funeral can be the context but cognitive environment approach is paramount without which miscommunication can occur.

Code 12 *Okhukhalaka amakhola –to cut the banana fibres*. If you have the knowledge of the code 11 you can apply the same strategy to interpret this one. You need extra effort to know that ropes are stronger than banana fibres then conclude that it is the first intercourse after giving birth to a child.

If you base on the knowledge of code 11, you can apply truth condition semantic approach to detect the meaning of this idiom.

Code 013: *Weimoni indala...Mono-eyed* was highly misinterpreted because it was ambiguous idiom that is hard to interpret without a context. If you have mastered the vocabulary used with native speakers' intuition you can interpret it. If you are reading the same script with the speaker, you can easily interpret it. This then signifies that you should mark your interpretation with the intention of the speaker to yield cognitive effects faster. Being in the same environment with the speaker means you have an idea at the back of your mind. That is cognitive environment. One-eyed person can be a woman of no value or any woman you come across for marriage. Alternatively elders used to refer to a monogamist and such was of low status. Culturally it means a monogamous relationship. When she dies it is like you had one eye and when lost you are totally blind. An eye is mapped to a wife.

Such language cannot be spoken in plain. Euphemistic idioms save us from causing embarrassment. However, their interpretation is an issue of concern to be addressed by researchers. Therefore the current study found that cognitive environment approach is paramount for interpretation of euphemistic idioms in *Witimbule* programme. After activating this knowledge we then map the domain to the target language to reach cognitive effects.

In relevance theory, Wilson & Sperber (2002) explain that context is provided to disambiguate the idioms but they did not provide an alternative in the absence of contextual clue. The current study has investigated and found that the most effective strategy is cognitive environment before mapping strategy.

Schroeder (2012) reiterates that interlocutor should possess the knowledge of cognitive environment which includes cultural knowledge and what is at the back of the hearer during interpretation period. The knowledge which the interlocutor brings to the conversation is cognitive environment. It is factual then that there is a wide gap between the sentence meaning and speaker meaning which has to be filled inferentially (Yus, 2006). If there is a gap between the speaker meaning and the interpreter, there is a high level of misinterpretation. Therefore, it is imperative to breach the gap between the two in order to reach the cognitive effect first.

Table 4: Hyperbolic Idioms

Code	Interpretation	Misinterpretation	No Response
01	22	44	0
02	26	40	0

03	40	26	0
04	42	24	0
05	46	20	0
06	37	29	0
07	41	25	0
08	48	18	0
09	30	36	0
10	30	36	0
11	34	32	0
12	35	31	0

Hyperbolic idioms are highly susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations apart from proverbial. They are also not commonly used in conversation. They are associated with exaggeration and mockery. They demand extra effort to interpret, possibly including truth condition semantic approach aside cognitive environment knowledge approach. They also demand activation of conceptual metaphor theory of mapping strategy.

Schroeder (2012) emphasizes that if information demands most effort to interpret, it strains the mind yet human mind shifts to the least effort strategy to process the information. The idiom that warrants the most effort strategy to interpret is either given less concentration or rejected. Example: Code 1 *Achunne ofiye –pinched the corpse* has the highest level of misinterpretation. Most of the respondents activated the knowledge of truth condition semantic approach that proved futile. Conceptual metaphor theory could not solve it. The interlocutor had to apply the native speakers intuition and cognitive environment approach to reach the cognitive effects. Lack of context and cultural knowledge leads to misinterpretation.

To pinch the corpse can be mapped to hatred towards the dead which is wrong. If we apply truth condition semantic approach it will still be mapped to mean doing nothing or attempting impossibility which is still outside the interpretation. If you have native speakers intuition and cognitive environment as a result of accumulated knowledge about the culture from which it is set, you can interpret it correctly. The idioms is only found among the Banyore dialect of Luhya speaking communities.

Lack of exposure to the vocabulary used in the idiom made fans to misinterpret it greatly. All Banyore dialect speaking people interpreted it correctly. It is interpreted as being selfish. The meaning of the idiom is not correlated with the meaning of the words used. There is a higher need for only cognitive environment approach to interpret this idiom.

Code 003: *Waluma musikalo... has bitten in the palm* is the idiom which demands the knowledge of cognitive environment approach besides native speakers intuition. If you lack cultural knowledge of the community from which the idiom is derived, it will be

difficult to interpret it. As a result, human mind tends to reject such information. Such an idiom is derived from Olunyole speaking dialect.

It means to lead difficult life with persistence. To bite the palm means to persevere in difficult life.

Code 008: *Amarevo kekala amarwi....deaf questions...* This question was interpreted correctly by many fans. It does not need the knowledge of cognitive environment and native speakers intuition but the partial knowledge of the target language to understand idioms. Blind questions can be immediately mapped to difficult questions to understand. Common knowledge can still be used to interpret the idiom.

Ong'ayo *et al.* (2018) acknowledged that the context of the speaker is important for the hearer to process information correctly. Relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (1995) explain in the same vein that having a shared knowledge is crucial to interpreting the utterances in a given setting. Therefore cultural knowledge which is under the umbrella of cognitive environment is appropriate for the interpretation of idioms.

CONCLUSION

Tables 1-4 show how the fans of Witimbule programme interpret idioms used during conversations. The form of idioms which is rarely used and highly susceptible to misinterpretation is proverbial. Only code 01 and 06 were well interpreted but the rest were mostly misinterpreted by the fans. This is attributed to the fact that proverbs are old and preserved by the society over a long period of time. If the interpreter is not versed in a particular culture, it can be difficult to interpret. It can also be noted that most of the fans lack cultural knowledge that led to misinterpretation of proverbial idioms.

Those few idioms which were well interpreted are commonly used in day-to-day conversation making it familiar to most fans. Idioms which are commonly used in day-to-day conversation are interpreted easily. This is in line with relevance theory (Wilson & Sperber, 2002) "...the most recent and familiar information is easily interpreted" while idioms which were used during the ancient times are rarely used today such as proverbial

idioms are difficult to interpret. Majority of fans who cannot interpret proverbial idioms are aged below 40 years meaning that they have minimal exposure to the native language.

It is therefore concluded that misinterpretation of a particular form of idioms is commonly not as a result of dialectical variation but lack of exposure to societal knowledge and idiomatic expressions. This therefore implies that the interlocutor should be versed with the knowledge of cognitive environment approach to interpret proverbial idioms.

The form of idioms which was mostly interpreted was metaphorical because it was the matter of activating the knowledge of conceptual metaphor theory. Once you are exposed to the context of the idioms or cognitive environment, you can easily interpret them.

Euphemistic idioms form another category which is mainly well interpreted because they are mainly applied in day-to-day conversation. Luvonga (2017) unearthed that the Kabras people who belong to Luluhya language use figurative language (idiomatic) majorly for face saving besides making their speech alive.

Because euphemistic idioms are commonly used to caution people from various vices and expose societal evil without causing embarrassment to the public, they are majorly used in conversation of *Witimbole* programme of Radio Mambo FM. Because the fans encounter them frequently, they interpret them with ease.

Relevance theory by Wilson & Sperber (1995/2002) highlights that the information which is frequently encountered during communication has a high chance of being interpreted correctly. This is because the human mind tends to concentrate on the information which is repeated in every aspect of life. They also reiterate that knowledge of a particular culture is crucial to the interpretation of figurative language because most of the idioms are peculiar to specific culture. This is in line with the findings in this objective which finds that proverbial idioms are difficult to interpret during *Witimbole* programme conversation because some interlocutors lacked cognitive environment which is the umbrella term for cultural knowledge, situation at and what is at the back of the mind of interlocutor at that time of utterance or conversation.

It was also observed that most of the idioms which are highly susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations are proverbial and hyperbolic. Most of the idioms that were well interpreted were metaphorical and euphemistic. However, code 1, 6 & 18 of metaphorical idioms really challenged the interpreters who had poor competence in native speakers intuition approach.

Proverbial idioms were used sparingly by mainly elderly people to caution and regulate social and

moral behaviour (Alati, 2015). They were susceptible to misinterpretation during conversations because they demanded extra effort to process. Human mind follows the path of the least effort strategy to reach cognitive effects (Wilson & Sperber, 2002/ 2012). Information which is complicated and quite demanding in terms of processing is rejected. Mostly the proverbial idioms can be interpreted using cognitive environment approach and native speakers intuition beside other strategies.

Hyperbolic idioms were found to be exaggerative, sarcastic and satirical. To be interpreted correctly, the interlocutor had to apply truth condition semantic approach and CMT. TCS approach is demanding, yet human mind tends to concentrate on the information which can be easily interpreted. Demanding information is either rejected or misinterpreted.

Recommendation

The findings reveal that proverbial idioms are complicated to interpret followed by hyperbolic, for effective interpretations, the interlocutor needs to apply the knowledge of cognitive environment approach to interpret them correctly. Further study should focus on interpretation of idiomatic language in other areas including songs, poems and social ceremonies among the Luhya speaking dialects.

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