

**EUPHEMISMS AND TABOO WORDS: A CASE OF KIKUYU'S  
KABETE DIALECT**

**RITA NJERI NJOROGE**

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS,  
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES,  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

**NOVEMBER, 2014**

## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for any award of degree in any university.

Signature.....

Date.....

Rita Njeri Njoroge

This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors.

Signature.....

Date.....

Prof. Mohamed Hassan Abdulaziz

Signature.....

Date.....

Dr. Mwaniki Isaiah Ndungu

## **DEDICATION**

Special dedication to:

Stephen Njoroge Kiarie (Dad)

Rosemary Muthoni Njoroge (Mum)

Fr. Francis Mburu

Thanks for your encouragement and support. I love you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I appreciate the people who contributed in one way or another toward the success of this work. Special thanks to my true friends, first to Bernard Njugura and his family for the support throughout the two years of my M.A. Course and to Peter Kariuki (Munaita); I really appreciated all the support you have accorded me. Be blessed.

I am greatly indebted to my lecturer Dr. Ayub Mukhwaha whose sociolinguistic classes gave an insight into choosing a topic, and who discussed with me the topic of research and whose advice helped to shape this study. I would also like to thank other course lecturers; Dr. Marete, Mr. Mungania, Dr. Schroeder, Prof. Okoth Okembo, Prof. Lucia Omondi, Dr. Kaviti, Dr. Oduor, Dr. Michira and Dr. Maloba for their constant encouragement.

I acknowledge with a lot of humility and appreciation the commitment, scholarly piece of advice and guidance I received from my supervisors Prof. Mohammed Abdulaziz and Dr. Mwaniki. Thank you for your patience and be blessed. You were more than my supervisors. You were my parents.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my Dad and Mum for their inspiration, moral, support and the prayers they accorded me during this research and to my brother Jude, my sisters Margret, Clare, Betty, Peris and my cousin James. Thank you all for your support. To my dear friends Samson and Rosalia you were always there to encourage and assist me. May God bless you abundantly.

To my M. A. Linguistics and classmates and everyone else who contributed in any possible way towards the completion of this project I say thank you. To crown it all, I thank God who gave me favour with the Board of Postgraduate studies. He chose me among the many of us who qualified for the University studies.

## **ABSTRACT**

This work is a discussion of the relationship between informativity and interpretation of euphemism as well as taboo words and the social – cultural context in which they are used by speakers of Kikuyu as a first language. The theoretical framework used is politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). The objectives of the study were to identify and describe the euphemisms and taboo words that are popularly used by speakers of Kikuyu, to establish the informativity and semantic attributes of euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu language and to analyze the pragmatic and social functions of euphemized taboo words which are used by speakers of Kikuyu. Data for the study was collected from twenty male informants and twenty female informants from Kabete area of Kiambu County. This was primary due to the fact that the researcher is a native speaker of the Gi-Kabete dialect spoken in the Kiambu County. The results of the research showed that in order to avoid embarrassment and face – loss, Kikuyu people try to look for substitutions that can hide or cover up the harmonious power of taboo words. Consequently, euphemisms are employed to replace offensive expressions that can cause harm and shame to the speaker of Kikuyu language.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.1.1 Background to the study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	3
1.3 Aims and objectives of the study .....	4
1.4 Hypotheses of the study .....	5
1.5 Rationale of the study .....	5
1.6 Scope of the study .....	6
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	7
1.8 Literature Review.....	13
1.9 Research Methodology .....	18
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	21
2.0 EUPHEMISMS ON SEX IN KIKUYU .....	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Taboo Words and their Euphemisms in Kikuyu.....	22

2.2.1 Lexicon on Sex .....	23
2.2.2 The Lexicon on Male Sexual Organ.....	26
2.3 Female Sexual Organ.....	28
2.3.1 Lexicon Used on Prostitutes .....	30
2.3.2. Lexicon Used for Erection.....	32
2.3.3 Lexicon on Pregnancy and Giving Birth .....	33
2.3.4 Lexicon on Homo sexuality and Lesbianism.....	34
2.3.5 Lexicon on Rape .....	37
2.3.6 Lexicon on Orgasm.....	39
2.3.7 Lexicon on the Clitoris.....	40
2.3.8 Lexicon on Pubic Hair .....	40
2.4 Conclusion .....	41
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	42
3.0 EUPHEMISMS ON BODY EFFLUVIAS IN KIKUYU .....	42
3.1 Introduction.....	42
3.2 Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Taboo words and Euphemisms on Body Effluvia in Kikuyu .....	43
3.2.1 Menstruation .....	43
3.2.2 Defecation .....	49
3.2.3 Urination .....	51
3.2.4 Ejaculation .....	52
3.2.5 Lactation .....	54

3.2.6 Sternutation .....	54
3.2.7 Flatulence .....	55
3.2.8 Salivation .....	56
3.2.9 Lacrimation .....	57
3.2.10 Regurgitations .....	58
3.3 Conclusion .....	59
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>60</b>
4.0 EUPHEMISMS ON DEATH AND DISEASES IN KIKUYU .....	60
4.1 Introduction.....	60
4.2 Analysis, Interpretation, Discussion of Taboo and Euphemisms on Death and Diseases.....	61
4.2.1 Death .....	61
4.2.1.1 Natural death.....	62
4.2.1.2 Homicide.....	63
4.2.1.3 Accidental death.....	63
4.2.1.4 Suicidal death.....	64
4.3 Diseases.....	66
4.3.1 HIV and AIDS .....	66
4.3.2 STDs .....	69
4.4 Conclusion .....	70



<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> .....	71
5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION .....	71
5.1 Introduction.....	71
5.2 Summary and Conclusion.....	71
5.3 Recommendation .....	73
5.4 Conclusion .....	74
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	75
<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	79
<b>APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE</b> .....	80

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

##### **1.1.1 Background to the study**

This research analyses and discusses the relationship between informativity in the interpretation of euphemism as well as taboo words and the social – cultural context in which they are used by the speakers of Gikuyu as a first language. Euphemism is defined in the Longman Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics 2010, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition by Richard J. and R. Schmidt as “the use of a word which is thought to be less offensive or unpleasant than other words”. In the penguin Dictionary of literary terms (1976) it is defined as “the substitution of a mild and pleasant expression for a harsh and blunt one”. Leech and Rowson (1995: 269) further explains that euphemism is a word or phrase which people use in place of terms which are more disagreeable or offensive to them or to their audience.

When a phrase becomes euphemistic, its literal meaning is always pushed aside since euphemism is used to hide unpleasant ideas. It can thus be said that euphemism are words that are used to soften the reality of context in which one is communicating to participants in interactive discourse. They constitute a universal feature of language use in social interaction. All cultures typically use them to talk about things they find terrifying or obscene in polite context. For example there are euphemisms that are used in the representation of aspects of ill health, death and sex. Therefore, euphemisms are used for dissimulation to refer to a taboo topic in a polite way to mask profanity.

Taboo expressions represent bans or inhibitions resulting from social custom or aversions. The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language (2000) defines taboo words as sanction or restriction on both institutional and individual level under the assumption that some harm will occur if a taboo word is spoken.

Allan and Burridge (2006:1) define taboo as a “prescription of behaviour that affects everyday life” and state that people usually avoid tabooed behaviour unless they intentionally intend to violate a taboo in order to achieve specific communicative intention. Evan et al (2000:2) agrees and states that taboos have control over our everyday lives and set social boundaries for what is acceptable or unacceptable, appropriate or inappropriate social behaviour. Therefore a linguistic taboo is any/ or word or phrase or a topic that if mentioned in public causes embarrassment and feeling of shame or provokes a sense of shock and it may affect the hearers sensibility or one’s belief. Taboo words are avoided entirely or at least avoided to a certain degree in social context of mixed company or polite company. The lexicon that is taboo is found to be inappropriate or debased in certain contexts. What counts as taboo expressions is something defined by culture and there is nothing intrinsic in that particular language and in this case, Kikuyu language.

Taboo words are transmitted from generation to generation. Some become archaic and are discarded as society changes and new ones are introduced as a result of cultural and social economic changes and modernization. Others may be introduced as a result of inter-ethnic contacts and inter and intra-dialectal interaction.

Existing studies by Muriuki (1974), Mutahi (1977:14) show that Kikuyu has 7 dialects. These are the Gaaki (Nyeri), Mutemi (Muranga), Gi-Kabete (Kiambu), Ki-Embu, Ki-Mbeere, Gi-Gichugu and Ki-Ndia. Although euphemisms expressions and taboo words are widely used by the speakers of seven dialects of Kikuyu in specific social contexts, their diversity, distribution, value and conceptual attributes in relation to the social appropriateness and acceptability vary according to the dialect in which they are used.

Additionally, their informativity and interpretation depend on the unique semantic content that is expressed in each dialect. Each of these dialects has a number of euphemisms and taboo expression that are unique and are not used in other dialects. This means that the expressions show wide variations in respect of the dialects and sometimes social context in which they are used. For example a teacher speaking Gi-Kabete dialect while teaching a physical education lesson in Kirinyaga County instructed the pupils “*mwinyitei njohero*” meaning “place your hand on your waist”. Immediately the pupils heard that expression they were stupefied, she later learned that in Kirinyanga, “*njohero*” is a euphemistic term for sexual female organ. Therefore, this study is restricted to the Southern Kikuyu Dialect (SKD) commonly referred to as the Gi-Kabete dialect.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Euphemism is the avoidance of words that may be seen as offensive, blunt, obscene or somehow disturbing to the participant in social discourse. Items that are thus euphemised are said to be tabooed.

Euphemisms and taboo words are widely spread in social discourse of Kikuyu speakers, this is because the participants in the discourse want to appear to be as cooperative as possible, that is, they want to be clear and at the same time be polite. Despite their extensive use, their informative and communicative effectiveness as well as social appropriateness and acceptability raise questions of interpretation and ambiguity particularly in respect to inter-dialectal and intra-dialectal intelligibility. This research is designed to provide answers to the following questions which are pertinent to how speakers of Kikuyu use euphemistic expression and taboo words in social discourse.

1. To what extent are euphemisms and taboo words used by speakers of Kikuyu?
2. What are the semantic attributes and functions of euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu language?
3. Why are euphemisms and taboo words extensively used in social discourse?

This research is designed as a case study in which the data is culled from four types of phenomena namely; sex and sexuality, body effluvia death and diseases. The data collected using questionnaires, interviews and observations will provide an account of how representation of semantic attributes is achieved in social discourse.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives of the study**

- i. To identify and describe the euphemisms and taboo words that are popularly used by speakers of Kikuyu.
- ii. To establish the informativity and semantic attributes of euphemism and taboo words in Kikuyu language.

- iii. To analyze the functions of euphemized taboo words which are used by speakers of Kikuyu.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses of the study**

- i. Euphemisms and taboo words that are popularly used by speakers of Kikuyu can be identified and described
- ii. The informativity and interpretation of euphemism and taboo words are dependent on the shared semantic attributes and beliefs by speakers of Kikuyu.
- iii. Taboo words which are used by speakers of Kikuyu are euphemized with an aim of attaining social functions in the Kikuyu society.

#### **1.5 Rationale of the study**

The Kikuyu, the subject of this research, are the most numerous and populous, the most aggressive and most economically, socially and politically powerful ethnic group in Kenya (Guthrie 1967, Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000). Although a people supposed to be residing in the central counties of Kenya, the Kikuyu are found in almost every county of Kenya, and their aim of using euphemisms is to hide unpleasant ideas and avoid frightening or unpleasant subject. This also protects the speaker and the audience from negative consideration by others.

The essence of the present study is to seek to find out how euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu language have features that are obtained in other Kenyan languages. This study will also enable the Kikuyu speakers who will read this project before and after its

publication to use Kikuyu euphemisms correctly. As the study uses politeness theory, the study will be of benefit to the person who may wish to do studies on euphemisms using other theories.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no objective, in-depth study has been undertaken on euphemisms and taboo terms in Kikuyu language. Even if similar researches have been done on the same language, euphemisms and taboo terms are culture based and given that culture is dynamic, there is justification for such a research even where there are earlier researches on the topic on the Kikuyu language.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

In a Sociolinguistic study like the present one, the word taboo denotes any prohibition on the use of particular lexical items. Given the definition of euphemisms and taboo words, euphemisms are thus two faces of the same coin (Grady, W et al 1997). Kikuyu language is varied in that it has several regional dialects. For the purpose of the present study, we shall concentrate on the Kiambu/ Kabete dialect that is presumably the standard Kikuyu dialect.

We have limited our scope to a single dialect due to time and resources limitation. Furthermore it will enable the researcher to access informants easily being a native speaker of the dialect. The researcher will therefore use her intuition as a speaker of the Kiambu/ Kabete dialect. Besides, the topic of euphemisms and taboo terms in Kikuyu is

wide and varied. For the purpose of our study, we shall concentrate on the topic of body effluvia, sex, death and diseases.

In addition, there are noticeable tendencies for politicians to resort to euphemisms to make otherwise unpleasant concepts tolerable. This is meant to conceal aspects of their policy. This study will adopt the above aspects in its study of euphemisms and taboo words in the Kikuyu language. The aim of having this scope is to have enough body of knowledge or data with which to work besides keeping a historical account of euphemisms and tabooed words in Kikuyu language.

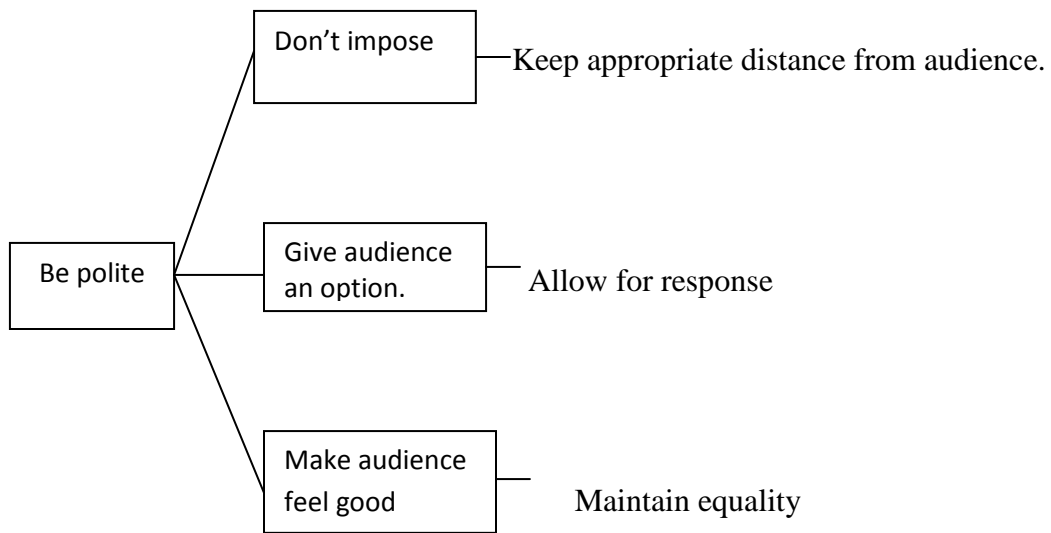
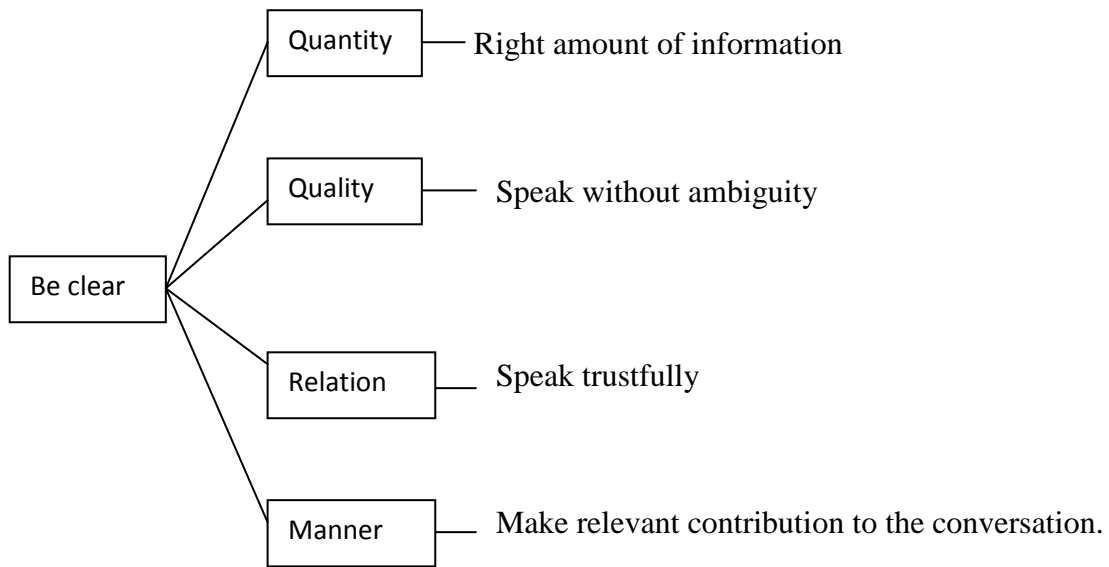
### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

Several theories have been applied in studies on euphemisms and taboo terms the world over. Some of these theories include Halliday's Socio-semiotic theory (1978), Austin's speech Act theory (2002) and Robin Lakoff politeness/ Face Theory (1973). This theory by Lackoff has been extended by Brown and Levinson (1987).

The present study will employ the latter Brown and Levinson (ibid). To Lackoff when people converse they generally adhere to cultural norms, showing that they are component speakers. In that case, such people will strive to:

1. Be clear
2. Be polite





**Adapted and modified from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/4981649/theory-of-politeness-strategy>.**

In most cases, speakers try to fulfill both of these requirements. However, if these rules conflict politeness supersedes because it is considered more important in a conversation

to avoid offense than to achieve clarity. This is because in most informal conversations, actual communication of important ideas is secondary to reaffirming and strengthening relationships.

Lackoff's Politeness theory has three major standpoints which are;

- i) Don't impose
- ii) Give options
- iii) Make one feel good – be friendly.

Although these rules are deceptively concise, they are actually complex because languages provide multiple forms for expressing them. For example, the passive construction such as *Dinner is served* is more polite than direct question like, *would you like to eat?* In this example, the first sentence is in compliance with Rule (I) above for it avoids intruding into the addressee's wants or needs and is thus interpersonally distancing.

Speakers comply with Rule (ii) that gives options by using hedges and mitigated expressions that allow hearers to form and hold their own opinions. By not forcefully asserting propositions, hedges and mitigation, thus by use of Rule (ii), speakers can provide hearers with options to respond either affirmatively or negatively. The following two sentences by Lakoff (Ibid) help explain this Rule further:

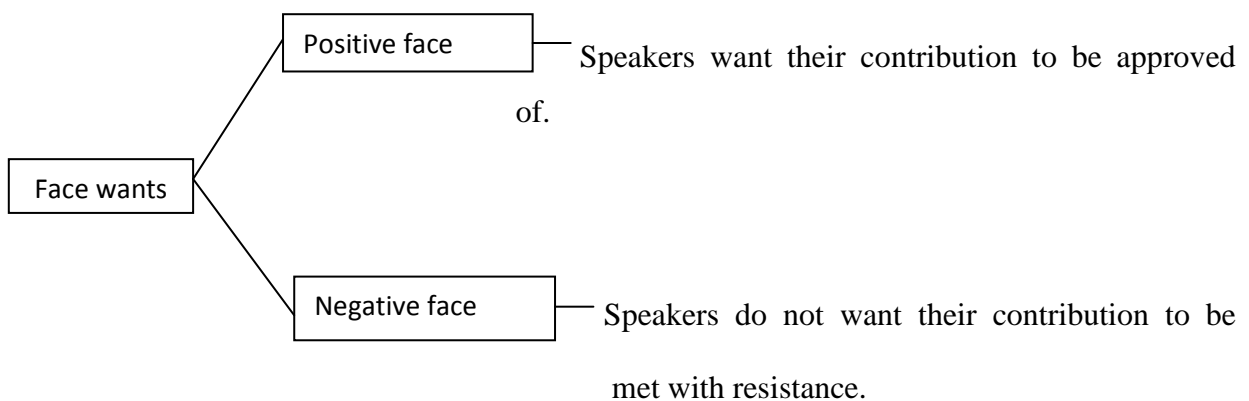
1. I guess it is time to leave.
2. It is time to leave, is it not?

Standpoint or Rule (iii) by Lackoff (ibid) which requests that a speaker makes the spoken-to, to feel good by being friendly to him or her is the most variable in terms of cultural meanings. This rule implies that co-participants share similar models and norms of behavior and that they evaluate speech according to the same presupposed notions.

Following this lead by Lakoff on Politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that everywhere polite behavior is based on assumptions of cooperation because all social groups need to minimize conflict among co-members. In Brown and Levinson's (ibid) the terms, politeness is concerned with **face** which they define as an individual's self-esteem or the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself or herself. This notion of **face** entails different kinds of desires or **face wants** that all people have and that all people know others have to have.

These desires or **face wants** are of two basic types:-

1. **Positive face wants**: this is the desire to be approved of.
2. **Negative face wants**: this is the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions.



Source: (Ibid).

Brown and Levinson (ibid) hold that although these wants or desires are universal, they are subject to cultural specifications of many sorts: What kinds of acts threaten **face**? What sort of a person has special rights to **face** protection? What kinds of personal styles in terms of things like graciousness and ease of social relations are especially appreciated? ( Bonvillain 1997:118).

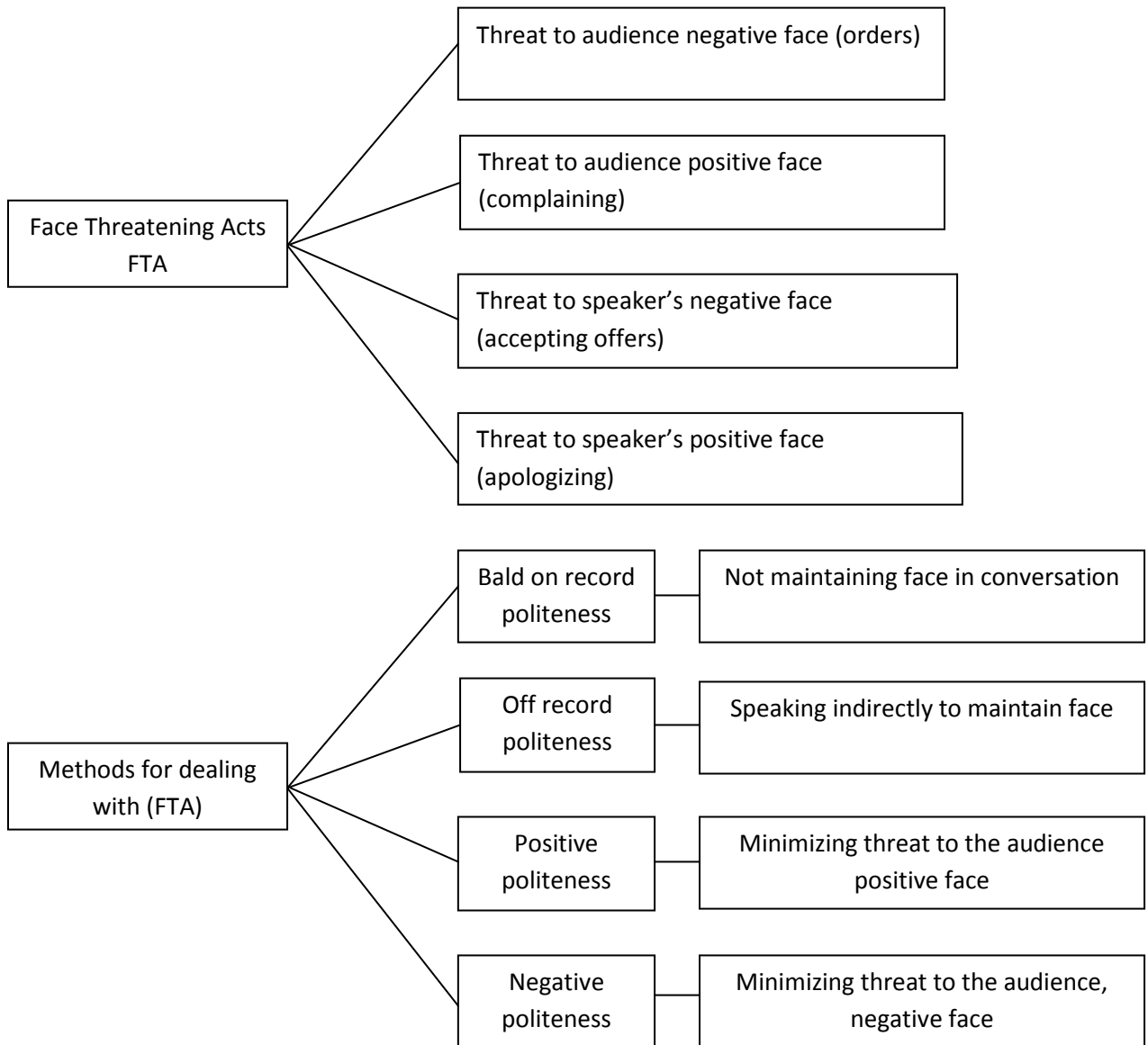
Brown and Levinson (ibid) distinguish strategies of polite behavior by differentiating **face-wants**.

Positive politeness: this is oriented to the positive image which a hearer claims; here the speaker recognizes the hearer's desire to have his or her positive **face-wants** respected.

- i) Positive politeness: expresses solidarity, friendliness and in-group reciprocity.
- ii) Negative politeness: this is oriented to hearer's desire not to be imposed upon; here, the speaker recognizes the hearer's rights to autonomy. Negative politeness strategies express speaker's restraint and avoidance of imposing on the hearer.
- iii) Off-record politeness: this has to do with indirect strategies which avoid making any explicit or unequivocal imposition on the hearer.

Speakers choose among these models and within each they select specific linguistic variants, depending on relationships to addressees within the overriding contexts of cultural assumptions about rights of co-participants, potential offensiveness of intended messages, and appropriateness of each behavior in any given context.

According to Brown and Levinson (ibid), politeness strategies develop to deal with face threatening act (FTA). FTAs are acts that intrinsically infringe on the hearer's face wants. The more threatening an act is, the more polite and indirect are the means used to accomplish it. This is how politeness theory originally by Lakoff (ibid) but modified by Brown and Levinson will be used to analyze euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu language.



Source: (Ibid).

## **1.8 Literature Review**

It is necessary to bring on board insights from other researchers on euphemisms in order to identify the specific knowledge gap and specific contribution to the theory of knowledge which the current study is expected to make. Scholars in this particular area have provided different definitions of euphemisms and taboo words while explaining how different societies use them in this case,

Qadi(2009) points out that the concept of euphemism originated from a Greek word which means sounding good. Qadi(ibid) quotes others such as Wilson (1993) who considers euphemisms as words with meaning or sounds thought somehow nicer, cleaner or more elevated and so used as substitute for words deemed unpleasant, crude or ugly in sound or sense. Among the English speakers for the euphemistic expression senior citizen stands for old person. Qadi (ibids) carried out an investigation entitled ‘A Sociolinguistic Comparison of Euphemism in English and Arabic’. Euphemisms according to Qadi (Ibid) are generally divided into positive and negative types. Euphemisms are employed positively in considering general social morals and expressing solidarity with the addressee or the referent. Positive euphemisms are exemplified in English with fancy occupational titles such as environmental engineers instead of garbage men. In Arabic too they have positive euphemisms. Negative euphemisms are employed to prevent face loss by erasing from the language everything that people do not want to deal with directly and straight forwardly.

He confirmed that it looked like most euphemisms in both English and Arabic were utilized negatively. For example, in both languages “poverty” in English and “Fogr” in Arabic are euphemized with low income.

According to Qadi (Ibid), euphemisms are regarded as an important aspect of every language and a language without euphemisms would be considered a defective instrument of communication. As such, they can be categorized as what the user of a language should avoid, what not to say or write. The current study will differ from Qadi (Ibid) as it is not a comparative study, but like English and Arabic, Kikuyu also utilizes negative euphemisms.

Nguti (2013) did a comparative study of Kikamba and Kiswahili on the use of euphemisms in the home place. The motivation to undertake the research arose from Stockwell’s (2008) observation that every society strives to instill morals and moral values to its members by use of euphemisms at home. Besides it being a comparative study, Nguti's research shows that euphemisms are an important communication tool in the home/and family setting. The conclusion the study comes up with is that communities may be different and varied in many ways but when it comes to thoughts about family values and their environment, they may appear to be the same. Data for the study by Nguti (2013) was collected by use of questionnaires and interviews where participants observation was also used and the theoretical framework was that of Politeness as advanced by Brown and Levinson (1978).

The present research draws much on Nguti's work in terms of the theoretical framework and research methodology. The present work, however, differs from Nguti's, for hers was comparative while the present one is not. Besides, languages under study are different for although they all belong to the Bantu group of languages, Kikuyu is culturally distinct from Kamba and Swahili. The two studies also differ in scope. While Nguti focused on home/family context, the present research is on topics of sex, body effluvia, diseases and death as they are euphemized in Kikuyu.

Mbaya (2002) presented a descriptive study of a custom in Oromo culture (Ethiopia) which avoids mentioning the names of the persons who are relatives by marriage. The study showed that because of linguistic taboo, husband, wife and the in-laws avoid using their respective names and substitute them with several forms, most of which are coinages. To show respect, Africans address people, especially the elder ones, by using euphemism. The study analyzed the taboo-words and described the mechanisms used for finding substitutes.

Munyiri (2006) did a research on Language and Gender a case study of the Gi-Kabete variety of Gikuyu. Her aim was to establish if the lexicon in Gikuyu had equivalent semantic connotation and to what extent certain lexical items if associated with one gender reinforce the subjugation of one gender while exalting dominance of the other gender. Munyiri (ibid) focused on language and gender and exactly how language can discriminate against both men and women. Her study confirmed that sexist language exists in Gikuyu, with women and men equated to food and animals for example njamba



meaning cockerel and “nyanya” meaning tomatoes. Munyiri quoted (Ivy 1994) who stated that the above may be interpreted as sexiest and deeming and it is in reference to either gender. In the Gikuyu Sexual language women were seen as passive and men as active.

In Munyiri’s (ibid) work the concept of euphemism was addressed just as an appendix of the work. In contrast to Munyiris, the present study treats euphemisms as a central theme. The earlier work by Munyiri (ibid) did not have euphemisms as its central theme and the two works differ as far as scope and theory are concerned. The present study uses politeness as theory as opposed to socio-semiotic theory which Munyiri used to analyze her data.

Nada Qanbar (2011) did a sociolinguistic study of the linguistic taboos in the Yemeni speaker. The Yameni’s avoid the use of words through different types of replacements of taboo words with more acceptable words such as using jargon terms, euphemisms, creating antonyms, metaphoric expression, circumlocution and use of standard Arabic terms. The paper also argues that these processes are conditioned by the cultural and religious norms of the society. It also offers an explanation as to why certain words are considered taboos in the society and why certain taboo words are accompanied by particular conventionally fixed words. Taboo words in Yemeni society have also been divided into two categories (general and context specific).

The words under context specific category are neutral and non-taboo but they get tabooed in particular contexts. Context specific taboo words are further divided into two non-taboo words and words related to the hearer's physical and social defects. On the other hand the subcategories under the general include the unmentionable. The words under this subcategory should be euphemized in polite speech. The current research will benefit from Nada's (Ibid) paper from the theoretical aspect as Nada (Ibid) uses the politeness approach in studying the linguistic taboo in Yemen. The same theoretical approach will be used in studying euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu, though the present study differs from Nada's research as it does not divide the taboo words in categories.

Wambua (2009) looked at euphemisms and taboo words in Kikamba. The study looked at Kikamba in comparative term, for it compared euphemisms in the Machakos dialect and euphemisms and taboo words in Kitui dialect. Wambua (Ibid) also investigated the differences in attitude evoked between the two dialects through the use of taboo words and euphemisms. The current study will benefit from Wambua's work in terms of methodology. Wambua (Ibid) used interviews and questionnaires to collect data, and the same will be used in the present study for data collection. However, Wambua's work will differ from the current study in terms of scope, as the present study analyses euphemisms and taboo words in Kikabete dialect and its central interest is euphemisms and taboo words regarding sex, body effluvia's diseases and death.

Simmon (2007) did a study on pragmatic analysis of Gikuyu lexical euphemisms in HIV/Aids discourses. Simmon's (abid) study was essentially an investigation of language

use in Gikuyu HIV/Aid discourse. This study by Simmon makes a pragmatic exploration of the lexical euphemisms as substitutes to what is taboo in Gikuyu speech community which includes the cultural inferences. The main aim of Simmon's (ibid) study was to establish whether the HIV/Aids message is effectively and politely communicated given the rampant use of euphemisms. During her research, she noted that some hearers could not infer the implicated message which led to communication breakdown. Therefore it was concluded that euphemisms are not adequate in communicating HIV/Aids message in Gikuyu.

Simon's (ibid) study uses two theories: Grice (1975) second theory of implicative and Brown and Lenvison (1987) politeness theory. The current study will benefit from Simon's work as it is using the second theory by Brown and Lenvison (1987), but will differ from Simon's work in the scope as Simon (ibid) dealt with euphemisms as presented on HIV/Aids discourses and the current study concentrates on euphemisms and taboo words on body effluvia, sex, diseases and death.

### **1.9 Research Methodology**

The researcher is a native speaker of the Gi-kabete dialect of the Kikuyu language. Thus, the researcher used her native competence in the language to undertake the present study. The researcher also developed questionnaires and interview schedules on the topic of euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu. She also employed participant observation as a way of data collection. The questionnaires and interview schedules were in both English and Kikuyu language.

Purposive sampling was done, for the researcher could not use every Kikuyu speaker for the study; neither was she sure that the people she chooses as samples would be agreeable. The study has used forty respondents in groups of ten thus four groups according to the four phenomena being studied of both sexes and of different age groups besides educational levels. Secondary data for the study was obtained from archival records, books, journals and other relevant reading materials from the library.

The researcher is a native speaker of Gi-kabete dialect, having this point in mind; the researcher used questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires are a good way of collecting data, given the taboo nature of the topic that was being investigated. This view is supported by Marshall and Roseman (1999) who state that questionnaires are commonly used to collect information about sensitive or controversial topics within the public domain. This study aimed at eliciting information about Taboo words in Kikuyu language that some participants could have felt apprehensive or even embarrassing to the user, in a face-to-face interview. Further advantage of using self-completed questionnaires is the fact that large scale samples can be served. Another advantage is that questionnaires are easy to administer and serve the purpose of easily gaining large amount of data.

The research also used semi-structured interviews in which the wording of the questions and the sequence were fixed and identical for every respondent. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher is able to interact personally with the interviewees to get first-hand information for the required data from the horse's mouth. If

the one informant failed to give a euphemism for a certain word or phrase, then the researcher would interview another informant to get it.

The researcher also used observation as a research process, the advantage being that, observation offers an investigator the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situation. In this way the researcher can look directly at what is taking place in a situation rather than relying on second hand account. Observation also enabled the researcher to look at everyday behavior of the observed.

This method was appropriate in the current study, in the sense that the researcher was actually there to observe and experience the actual use of euphemisms in the specific domains an example being in churches. Since the researcher is a native speaker of Kikuyu language, she was able to identify the presence or absence of these euphemisms in the various interlocations without much problem, through observation. The Kikuyu Bible was of help in that the researcher looked at the various verses to see how euphemisms are used in Kikuyu religious settings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 EUPHEMISMS ON SEX IN KIKUYU

#### 2.1 Introduction

Euphemism and taboo words in any language including Kikuyu help one to say things as if they are not, and by so doing be polite. This chapter looks at euphemisms for taboo words in Kikuyu language that relate to matters of sex. The topic of sex is guarded in polite company and yet it is very important for procreation and health.

Sex is one of the strongest providers of taboo words. Interestingly, sexuality is the provider of arguably the most popular swear words today, namely the four letter word (F\*\*\*) in English and it's many off springs. One would think however, that something completely natural such as intercourse, would not elicit anything remotely taboo. Instead one would think that this activity, which hinges on sex, would prompt positive and happy connection. Unmistakably, this is not the case. Pinker (2007) argues that there are several reasons why sex is tabooed, even today.

“Has everyone had fun? Not necessarily. One partner might see the act as the beginning of a lifelong relationship, the other, as one night stand. One may be infecting the other with a disease. A baby may have been conceived, whose welfare was not planned for in the heat of passion. If the couple is related, the baby may be susceptible to a genetic defect (Pinker 2007:347).

In addition, jealousy might be a dangerous opponent should other interested parties get to know what happened, and a problem sets in if a woman gets pregnant by another man other than her husband. In such a case the husband might end up raising a child sired by another man.

The worst misdeed is clearly rape in which one of the parties involved violently forces the other into having sex. Pinker (ibid) observes that there are many differences between attitude of sex between men and women. In every act of reproduction, females are committed to long stretches of pregnancy and lactation, while males get away with a few minutes of copulation. On the whole, men usually pursue the sex act much more frequently than women. This is seen as one reason why the male use swear words more than the female and that sexual talk might be seen as offensive for women.

The aim of this chapter is to enlighten native Kikuyu speakers and protect non-native Kikuyu speakers from using provocative Kikuyu language on sex. They will learn the meaning of words and expression prohibited in most contexts and the recommended words and expressions for the words that are supposed to be avoided in the language. This chapter therefore, gives euphemisms for sexual words that people will dread mentioning in polite company, in the Kikuyu language.

## **2.2 Taboo Words and their Euphemisms in Kikuyu**

In Kikuyu language, there are restrictions on the kind of vocabulary concerning an important social phenomenon called sex. Film, television broadcast and print media, radio and even sermons in churches in Kikuyu use euphemisms for what would have otherwise been taboo words to avoid offending the most hypercritical segments of the Kikuyu society. This study is out to give guidance on words that can pass for being offensive in Kikuyu language for future generations.

### 2.2.1 Lexicon on Sex

There are words of sexual connotation that are frequently used in male group talk. The findings from the study show that female correspondents use less sex offensive words than their male counter parts. Instead, if forced to, they euphemize the words, topics and expressions. The only exception of calling it as it is, is in the hospital contexts where four letter words are openly used by the medical practitioners. The researcher encountered a situation in the maternity wing of Kiambu General Hospital where nurses openly use words like “*guika*” meaning f\*\*\* and “*kiino kīna nagīko*” – “dirty vagina” without euphemizing them. The researcher observed that these terms were mostly used by female nurses.

In Kikuyu – Kabete dialect, there are various words used to refer to the act of copulation; consider the following data:

<b>Taboo words:</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Guthicana</i>	Sex
<i>Ngwīko</i>	Sex

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kuonana kīmwīrī	meeting body to body
Kūhumbūria nguo/kūheta nguo	uncovering your clothes
Kwīhumbīra na mūrengeti ūmwe	covering with the same blanket
Gūkoma/gūkomania	Sleeping
Gūthiī na mūdū	going with someone



Using the above terms, the hearer will be less embarrassed and FTAs will be minimal or none existence. As Njeri (2007) observed, sexual activity is also euphemized and mostly equated to a game or a common activity. Consider the following terms.

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kūhūra ndati	a game of dart
Gūtware mūithikiri	riding a bicycle
Kūhūra mbirūri	twirling a wooden cone
Gūthegethana	to drill one another
Kūhanyahanya	scratching repeatedly
Kūhinyia wīra	doing an activity thoroughly

As the researcher observed, these terms are used by the youth who view sexual act not as a serious activity which can result to pregnancy or even getting infected by a serious disease but as an act of enjoyment and passing times, and if as a result of the activity the girl involved gets pregnant, they go on describing her as “nī araihurire” meaning to get filled because to them it was just a game. In the Bible, euphemisms are used to refer to the act of copulation. Consider the following verses:

- Gen 16:2

*Nake Sarai agĩkĩra Aburamu atĩrĩ, rĩu-rĩ, Jehova aanangira gũciara;, ngũgũthaiha atĩ ũtonye, harĩ mũirĩtu ũyũ ũndungatagĩra, hihĩ no gũkorũo ndaya kwĩhandũ nĩ ũndũ wake.*

*Nake Aburamu agĩtikĩra kũigua mũgambo ũcio wa Sarai.*

And Sarai said unto Abram behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing, I pray thee go unto my maid. It may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

“*Utonye harĩ muiiritu ũyu udugatagĩra*” “meaning I pray thee go unto my maid” is a euphemism for copulation.

- Gen 29: 23

Na gũgĩkinya atĩrĩ, atĩ hwaĩ-inĩ akĩoya mwariwe Lea, akĩmũtwarĩra Jakubu; nake Jakubu akĩonana nake.

And it came to pass in the evening that he too took Leah his daughter and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

“*Akionana nake*” meaning “he went in unto her”.

This too is a euphemism used in place of copulation.

- Gen. 20:4

*Narĩrĩ, Abimeleku ndakoretwo amuthengereire; agĩkiuria atĩrĩ, mwathani, gĩthĩ woraga rurĩrĩ rũthingu?*

But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, Lord, will you slay a nation even though blameless?

“*Ndakoretwo amũthengereire*” meaning “had not come near her”. This euphemism means that they had not copulated.

The researcher observed that when the priest is preaching around those verses on copulation, he uses euphemisms to save his image and that of the hearers. Thus all these euphemisms used on the sex lexicon are used so to save the **face**.

### 2.2.2 The Lexicon on Male Sexual Organ.

The male organ is used for urinating as well as for ejaculating. Due to sensitivity of the organ being described, the Kikuyu speakers resort to the use of euphemistic expressions. For instance they use words like “*itĩmu*” – “spear” and when such is used, the accurate information which is supposed to be conveyed to the reader is lost. Such definition styles tend to sacrifice precision in meaning for increased acceptance in the society and as highlighted by Lakoff (1989) politeness supersedes clarity. In this case the speaker must be polite to save his **face** and that of the listeners. Consider the following terms as used to refer to the male sexual organ.

<b>Taboo word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
• Mũthiita	<b>Penis</b>
• Mũcuthĩ	<b>Penis</b>

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
• Itimũ	Spear
• Mũtĩ	Stick
• Cuma	Metal bar
• Mũcinga	Gun
• Mũthĩ	Pestle
• Gwake	His

A careful look at the euphemisms of the male organ shows the societal expectation of a Kikuyu man. The men are supposed to be strong, daring, insensitive and having an intense forceful sexual desire that demands immediate gratification.

The male organ is represented in positive politeness since it creates a sense of pride and solidarity and portrays men as the “active” partner in sexual matters. This shows that the relationship of people who use such terms is strong enough to cope with what is seen as naturally impolite language Brown & Levinson (1987:83).

The testicles are the male organs which contain seeds of manhood. The use of this term testicles, requires politeness; from the study the researcher discovered that the term testicles is not to be uttered in polite company. Most of the respondents prefer to use euphemisms, in which, the euphemisms of the word give a description of what it looks like and this does not help in explaining it directly. This indicates the societal disapproval of uttering this term in public or in polite company as this violates the moral codes of the Kikuyu. The use of euphemisms indicates the sensitivity that is associated with the term testicle. The most essential element of the meaning is lost. The Kikuyu term or word “*mĩrigo*” which is one of the euphemisms, meaning “goods” sacrifices precision for politeness in meaning.

<b>Taboo word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Nyee	Testicles
Heke	Testicles
Ndendera	Testicles

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Mĩrigo	Goods

### 2.3 Female Sexual Organ

The researcher observed that in most cases, female genitals in Kikuyu are euphemized for fear of being considered rude and are mostly used by male to male talk and very low female talk. However, the respondents observe that in the event of acquaintance male to female and vice-versa, talk can still use the terms freely. Below are the taboo words and their euphemisms for female genitals in Kikuyu language.

Taboo word	Gloss
Kĩno	Vagina
Gĩti	Vagina

Euphemism	Gloss
mũgũnda wa kĩaanda	The lower garden
Indo cia mutumia	Woman's wealth
Mũriigo	Good
Gĩbũyũ	Thermosflask

A closer look at the euphemisms used to represent the female sexual organ present a level of passiveness in sexual matters. Most of the words indicate “to serve.” This means that a woman is there to serve the owner. The owner being the husband and if he does not use her ‘goods’, they will stay unused. For instance, if the owner does not use the thermos flask, it will just be there unused. The euphemism also reveals that a woman’s sexuality is ‘goods’ “*mĩriigo*” and that it is the property of a man. As Njeri (2007) observes as a matter of fact, Kikuyu men have been heard in many occasions introducing their wives or girlfriend as

*ũyũ nĩwe mũndũ wakwa*

Literally meaning, meet my personal thing or

*ũyũ nĩwe mũtirima wakwa* meaning

This is my walking stick

There are terms that are potentially offensive mainly because of the topic and also the profane intent of the expression. For instance, a woman's behind is referred to as "*mũtũngĩ*" meaning "Jerrycan." This is a way of making this body part trivial or mocking it and so can be highly offensive to the woman who is being referred to and threatens her self-image. Women do take offence when men apply such terms to describe their bodies in what they think are euphemisms. Women breasts and buttocks have been assigned terms to describe them. Below are the terms used to refer to these women body organs.

<b>Taboo word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Nyondo	<b>Breast</b>

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Githuri	Chest
Githuri kinene	A big chest

The researcher observed that the euphemisms for breasts are mostly used by the youth aged ages 18 – 35. The term "*githuri kinene*" is used when a woman's breasts are seen to be extra big thus seen to be in a position to produce a lot of milk and be able to sustain a child or children.

<b>Taboo world</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Itina	Asshole

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>gloss</b>
Thutha	behind
Njĩkariro	Sitting apparatus

The researcher observed that the word “*thutha*” is common with the youth aged 18 – 35 years; njĩkariro is common with people aged 35 years and above.

On the whole the researcher observed that most of these words on female sexual organs in Kikuyu are used by male to male talk and when used to describe a woman, they can be insulting. These terms are considered as **face threatening** terms.

### **2.3.1 Lexicon Used on Prostitutes**

In many African societies, Kikuyu being one of them, immorality for women is detested. Prostitutes can be either men or women; but in most cases, women are the ones who are blamed in cases of prostitution. The following terms are used to describe a prostitute in Kikuyu.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Mũmaraya	Prostitute

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Mũkoma thi	Unmarried mother/prostitute
Njangiri	Prostitute/ wrong doer

The term “maraya” is the one commonly used to refer to a prostitute. The word is euphemized so as not to hurt the one being referred to. “Maraya” comes from the name ‘rūrāya’ meaning Western. In the Kikuyu culture, there was no prostitution and once a girl’s virginity was broken it meant that the culprit was to definitely marry the girl.

A woman was not supposed to get children out of wedlock thus if such a thing happened, one was referred to as “mūkoma thĩ” meaning “one who sleeps down with any man.”

In Kikuyu culture, the male prostitutes have names too though not considered as derogatory as those of women.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Mūmaraya	Prostitute

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Cuhūka	to swing from something (male prostitute)
Gĩ-tharia	erase or destroy (male prostitute)
Kĩumbani	a man who keeps a woman as mistress

The term “ki-umbani” is the name for a male prostitute and it does mean one who attracts many people toward himself for whatever the reason for the attraction. The researcher found out that such a person is looked at as a hero “njamba” for his conquests.

For the men who have other women besides their wives (kĩumbani) meaning “to create” these women are referred to as “gacungwa” – meaning a small orange. When the word first came into existence, it meant someone dear to one, but it has changed its meaning



with time to mean mistress or woman who is kept by men for sexual activity or a young prostitute. This term is polite and it is used to save ones self-image or **face**.

### 2.3.2. Lexicon Used for Erection

This is a sensitive subject as the researcher found out. If used in polite company it is treated as a **FTA** and is mostly used by men. Hardly would one find a woman talking of having an erection. The reason for this is that women in the Kikuyu society were or are assumed to have no sexual desires; theirs is to serve the men. Thus, if they happen to show any kind of sexual feelings, they are labeled names. Their main work is procreation and not enjoyment or entertainment. This came out from five of the women that the researcher interviewed.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Gũkia	Erection

<b>Men</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kũhanda	To wake
Gũkĩria	Standing
Kũratha	Shot

<b>Women</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Urugarĩ	Felling hot
Mũrukĩ	Smell
Kũimba	To swell

### 2.3.3 Lexicon on Pregnancy and Giving Birth

After a successful copulation, a woman conceives and when this happens either intended or otherwise, there are polite terms used to refer to that state. Mostly, the terms used depend on the age of those using them. The researcher realized that the youth aged 18-33 years had more words of this state than any other age group. For instance they use terms like “*kũgũthwo kĩndũ*” meaning “to be beaten by something”

“*Ee mbuĩ*” meaning “to fill completely”.

Such terms cannot be used among polite company as they are considered as **face threatening** terms. They are used by the youth among themselves. Other terms used among the Kikuyu community to describe pregnancy are as follows:

Taboo word	Gloss
Ihu	Pregnant

Euphemism	Gloss
Mũritũ	Heavy
Nda	Stomach

Once the pregnancy has come of age, a child is born. This is a very respected act and thus when referring to it, one must use terms that will not **threaten the face**; for instance, the term “*gũciara*” meaning “giving birth” is seen not to be polite especially when referring to a human being and may arouse bad feelings. The term “*gũciara*” though can comfortably be used when talking about an animal having given birth. From the study

the researcher came up with the following Kikuyu terms to describe the act of giving birth.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Gūciara	giving birth

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kūgia mwana	getting a child
Gūtanahīrwo	be blessed
Kūheo mwana	be given a child
Kūhūtha	gest lighter

### **2.3.4 Lexicon on Homo sexuality and Lesbianism**

Homo sexuality and lesbianism are seen in the Kikuyu community as a change of natural use of the bodies into that which is against nature. Those who practice these acts are looked at as spoilt people who border on mad men and mad women. Thus these acts are seen as an abomination and due to such labeling, the acts, if practiced are very secretive. However, if those who practice them are noticed, they are blackmailed. Being mostly Christian, the Kikuyu people also refer to Bible to condemn such acts

Homosexuality and lesbianism is a subject of taboo in the Old Testament in the book of

- Leviticus 18:22

*Ndūkanakome na mūndū mūrūme ta ūria andū-a-nja makomagwo nao; nĩ gukorūo ūndū ūcio wĩ thahu.*

Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is abomination.

- Leviticus 20:13

*Na rĩrĩ, mũndũ mũrũme o na ũrĩkũ angĩgakoma na mũndũ mũrũme ũrĩa ũngi, ta ũrĩa mũndũ – wanja akomagwo nake, andũ acio erĩ nĩmekĩte ũndũ wĩ thahu, nao matirĩ hingo matakoragwo; nao magacokarerwo nĩ thakame yao o ene.*

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed on abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

From the Bible verses, it is clear that, homosexuality is an abomination and it is punishable by death. In Kikuyu culture, this has surely coloured the public opinion towards homosexuality, which is evident when considering the many laws against it until today Allan & Burrige (2006 152-155).

In Kikuyu language, homosexuality and lesbianism are treated with a lot of contempt and disbelief. From the study, the researcher found out that homosexuality is considered as an immoral practice and one of the things the young men are warned sternly against after their circumcision is the act of homosexuality, the argument being that in the Kikuyu culture the main aim of marrying is procreation. However, when men engage themselves in this act of homosexuality, they are warned that this goal of procreation will not be achieved. Some of the terms used to describe this act of homosexuality in Kikuyu language are:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Ngũĩko ya arume	Homosexual

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kūrūma	Biting
Kūrĩa ciiniĩ	eating upside down
Kūgaganyūra mbūti	forcing a car boot to open

As Njeri (2007) observes that there is no positive politeness when it comes to homosexuality. **The bald on record strategy** come out in these euphemisms in this strategy, there is little attempt to minimize FTAs especially on homosexual people .The language used is almost abusive.

Like many Kenyan communities Kikuyu speakers do not accept homosexuality and this is seen through the euphemisms for homosexuality as they are negative and aggressive. This is a reflection of the Kikuyu culture on the notion of sexuality. The **face** is threatened by the mere mentality and uttering of homosexuality.

Lesbianism is not treated any different from homosexuality. Lesbianism is considered immoral and ungodly. Thus, in Kikuyu lesbianism is not a term to be mentioned in public as it causes a **face threatening act**. The researcher found out that in the older days the act of lesbianism was not common. Thus the English lexicon word lesbian does not have an equivalent word in Kikuyu. However in the recent years, it is on the increase due to the influence of foreign culture. Kikuyu people have invented a name for the act; consider the following;

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Ngũiko ya aka	Lesbianism

This term is mostly used by the media when reporting or discussing the act of lesbianism to the general public. From the study, the researcher realized that majority of the Kikuyu youth aged 18-35 years have no idea what the term “ngũiko ya aka” means and prefer to use the English equivalent, which to the ordinary uneducated Kikuyu may be a euphemism.

### **2.3.5 Lexicon on Rape**

Rape is forced manipulated or coerced sexual contact by a stranger, friend or acquaintance. It is an act of aggression and power combined with some form of sex. In Kikuyu language, there are various degree of rape depending on age gender relationship and circumstances.

In marriage, the Kikuyu believe there can never be rape because the two are married and the essence of marriage is basically copulation whether one is willing or not. Thus wives can never be raped by their husband and vice versa. As far as age is concerned older woman may have forceful copulation with younger men (boys) and older men may also have sex with underage girls who are not in a position to make independent decision whether to have sex or not. Thus in Kikuyu language, this is called *kũnyita mwana kĩa hinya*. Meaning; “getting hold of a minor by force”. This is in itself euphemistic for it does not openly say what it is.

On the other hand adults may forcefully force others into copulation due to some uncontrollable desires. In such a case this is rape but can only be treated so if one party

complained. This is treated as tilling somebody else farm without permission and its equivalent is making one dirty. In Kikuyu it is referred to as *kūgwata mūdũ* meaning “getting hold of a person by forces”.

It is good to note that the English lexicon word for rape does not have an equivalent word in Kikuyu. This is because traditionally among the Kikuyu community rape did not exist, virginity was highly valued and whoever attempted it, was forced to marry the girl after an act of “*kunyita kīahinya*” meaning “forcefully holding a young girl” however there were practices related with sexual orientation known as ceremonial rape. Which is totally different from what constitute modern rape, this is where for example during the initiation period; every boy was expected to perform the act of ceremonial rape called “*kũĩhaka mũũnyũ*” meaning, “to smear oneself with salt earth”.

It was thought that until a boy had performed the act of rape he could not have lawful intercourse with a Kikuyu woman and hence could not marry. During the initiation period boys would wander the country side in band of up to hundred in numbers. The object of each band was to find a woman on whom to commit the rape. The ideal woman was one from any enemy tribe who was married. In practice it appears that the ceremonial rape consisted of nothing more than masturbatory ejaculatory on the body or in her presence. Immediately after the act the boy was able to throw away the paraphernalia which marked him with the status of neophyte.

### 2.3.6 Lexicon on Orgasm

The Kikuyu people consider sex is as a journey where erection is the starting point and orgasm is the end of the journey. The sexual activity has a time span .Thus; orgasm is conceptualized as the final stage of the sexual encounter, the end point of the journey.

From the study, the respondents pointed out that orgasm is generally treated more as a male act rather than female. The reason for this is that in Kikuyu culture women are not supposed to have feelings for their sole work in copulation is to serve their men. All in all, orgasm is treated as a **face threatening** term and cannot be mentioned in polite company. The term is used mostly in male to male talk especially those of the same age set. From the study, the researcher realized that most of the terms on orgasms are used by the male youth aged 18- 35. On the other hand, respondents aged 46 years and above and of both sexes are not comfortable talking about the term orgasms as they do it conservatively. This is due to the sensitivity of the term and its nature of being **face threatening**. Consider the following terms used to refer to orgasm:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Güitükwo	Orgasm

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Güita	to pour
Güka	Come

The term “güka” is a loan translation of the euphemism of the same in English “to come.”



### 2.3.7 Lexicon on the Clitoris

This is the sensitive elongated erectile organ at the interior part of the vulva in a woman. In the Kikuyu society this was the organ which was extracted to mark the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood in women. The practice is currently referred to as female genital mutilation the world over.

-This was referred to as “*kũrua*” meaning “circumcision” or “*kũgimara*” meaning “becoming an adult”

The Kikuyu community has names to refer to the organ.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Rũng’ũthũ	Clitoris
Kagego	Clitoris
Kangura	Clitoris

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Karuhia	Horn
Noe	Butter bean

This taboo term” *rũng’ũthũ*” is mostly used by the elderly mostly in the rite of passage. The younger generation on the other hand uses the term “*karuhia*” meaning “horn” to refer to the clitoris and this saves the face of the listener and speaker though it does not say exactly what is being described.

### 2.3.8 Lexicon on Pubic Hair

Pubic hair is common to both male and female, and it is treated as unsafe term to be mentioned in polite company as it can damage the **self-image** of the speaker and the

listener. Consider the term used in Kikuyu for the same. The respondents of ages 18-35 are fond of using the term “njuĩrĩ” meaning a “hair” when referring to pubic hair. Most of the respondents were not aware of any other name used to refer to pubic hair. This could be from the influence of other languages like English and are comfortable using the English euphemisms.

<b>Taboos</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Huyo	pubic hairs

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Guoya	Fur
Njuĩrĩ	Hair

## **2.4 Conclusion**

From the above discussion on sex and sexuality in Kikuyu, it clearly comes out that this important topic is avoided if not greatly guarded. Not many respondents were free to tell the researcher what exactly were the names of the organs that form the totality of sex as a phenomenon. The Kikuyu culture does not apparently approve of saying matters of sex the way they are supposed to. One reason for this could be the fact that female circumcision that taught youthful women some of these so called taboo words has since been stopped by the government of Kenya or due to Western culture influences.

In the next chapter we look at euphemisms for bodily effluvia.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 EUPHEMISMS ON BODY EFFLUVIAS IN KIKUYU

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at euphemisms on sex and sexuality in Kikuyu. In this chapter, we will discuss taboo words and euphemisms on body effluvia in Kikuyu language. Terms such as shit, bloody and piss refer to bodily effluvia and acts of excretion that are generally regarded as expletives. Although completely natural and ever present in our lives, it is a mystery why these bodily emissions are an unwanted topic to discuss.

As Pinker (2007) tries to explain why, the most disgusting substances are also the most dangerous vector for diseases. For instance feces are a route to transmission of viruses, bacteria and protozoa that cause at least twenty intestinal diseases (Ibid, 2007:345). In addition, blood, vomit, mucus, pus and sexual fluid are carriers of diseases from one body to another. There is a strong opposition to drinking or eating bodily effluvia among human kind; even just thinking about it, generates a factor to disgust which might explain why the terms are seen as taboo.

Allan and Burridge (2006:144) state that the language one uses when referring to these tabooed parts and functions of the effluvia is usually figurative. For instance in English we say, lose your lunch instead of vomiting. This is a sweet talking idiom and figuratively used to avoid mentioning bodily effluvia.

Allan and Burridge (Ibid) argue that there is a strong connection between magic and bodily effluvia. They note that connector and practices are not only primitive rituals but also practiced in the twenty first century. For instance, in many cultures, Kikuyu being one of them, there are many instructions for women on how to use tabooed bodily effluvia such as menstrual blood to capture the sexual attention of a man by adding it to his food or drink.

Thus the aim of this chapter is to analyze, interpret and discuss taboo words and euphemisms on body effluvia in Kikuyu. As we try to fulfill this aim, the study will also try to find out how far true it is that Kikuyu tabooed parts and functions are usually figurative, when euphemized as is stated in one of these study hypotheses.

### **3.2 Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Taboo words and Euphemisms on Body Effluvia in Kikuyu**

There are various bodily functions which result in the emission of matter from the human bodies. Kikuyu cultural beliefs cause us to regard these functions with varying degree of disgust. Below is a discussion of the various bodily fluid/ excretions.

#### **3.2.1 Menstruation**

The reproductive cycle of the female human is cyclical with an average periodicity of twenty eight days. An ovum is produced once during this cycle in preparation for the reception of the fertilized ovum. If the ovum is not fertilized, the mass of cells that built in the uterus is shed off through the vagina. The process is somewhat messy and many

cultures have absorber material that are worn externally or internally to limit the spread of the menstrual flow. If the blood happens to be seen by the public, it is an act of embarrassment to the woman and she is seen as being careless and irresponsible. This is a **face threatening act**.

Human beings have been fascinated and perturbed by the menstruation process since time immemorial. On one hand, there is the virtually universal belief that women in their periods are unclean and consequently dangerous to themselves and to others. On the other hand, their menstruation is associated with the great mystery of fertility and life itself, and thus seen as being an important body process.

The researcher found out that among the Kikuyu people, it was a taboo traditionally to have intercourse with a woman who is her menses. If a man found out that a woman's menses had just started so that the blood has just touched his body, the two had to go to a traditional doctor to be purified. If they failed to do so, it was believed that one of them would surely die, for this is a great evil.

In the past the Kikuyu also believed that, if a woman menstruates in a hut, even if it has been built on that particular day, it is at once pulled down and destroyed as it was unfit for human habitation. Today, a number of taboos and other behavior patterns are still prevalent among the Kikuyu community regarding menstruation. The researcher found out that the menstrual blood is secretly served to a man in his food or drinks as a way of

capturing his sex attention. No ritual prayer or invocation is necessary for this is done without the man's knowledge.

With the coming of modern Western culture there is some slight enlightenment within the Kikuyu community as far as menstruation is concerned. For instance, the Kikuyu women are encouraged to take new hobbies like skating during those few days of menstruation. They are also advised to maintain hygiene and eat food rich in iron like liver, so as not to have heavy flows during mensuration. There are various terms in Kikuyu that are used to refer to the act of a woman in her menses.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Kuura</i>	Bleeding

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Kuona mweri</i>	Seeing the moon
<i>Machĩrũ</i>	Name of a woman (Wanjĩru)
<i>Kahinda ka mweri</i>	The time of the month
<i>Mĩthenya ya atumia</i>	Ladies days
<i>Mweri-inĩ</i>	In the moon
<i>Kirumi kia mweri</i>	Monthly visitors
<i>Ageni a mweri</i>	Monthly visitors
<i>Arata</i>	Friends
<i>Gũita</i>	Leaking
<i>Gũkorwo wĩna matangari</i>	Being on the rags
<i>Mweri mũtune</i>	Red moon
<i>Kuona utune</i>	Seeing red
<i>Ihinda rĩu ria mweri</i>	That time of the moon
<i>Murimu wa mweri</i>	Monthly sickness

<i>Kũgenerwo</i>	Visitation
<i>Kĩronda gĩtahonaga</i>	The wound that never heals
<i>Gũtinia kara</i>	Cuts one finger
<i>Kũigwa ũru</i>	Being unwell

Among the Kikuyu, different euphemisms are used by different age groups to describe menstruation. For instance, among the male to male talk they tend to use euphemisms like;

1. *Gũita* meaning “leaking”
2. *Kuura* meaning “bleeding”

If it is among women to men talk and vice versa, the following euphemisms below are used;

1. *Ndiraigwa wega* meaning “I am not well.”
2. *Gũkĩra iria itune* meaning “crossing the red sea.”

If it is among women to women talk, such euphemisms are used;

1. *Mashiru* meaning “name of woman.”
2. *Kuona* meaning “to see.”

Some euphemisms on menstruation in Kikuyu are restricted to some areas. For instance, when girls are being taught about their sexuality, the following euphemisms are used;

1. *Kũgimara* meaning to grow up.
2. *Ageni a omweri* meaning monthly visitors.
3. *Ihinda rĩa mweri* meaning that time of the month.

The above euphemisms are very polite as not to scare the young girls on what awaits them in the future, which is their menstruation. The researcher found that some euphemisms are historical, that is, before the advent of present day sanitary towels, girls traditionally used rags and skins but because of the technological changes that have brought sanitary towels, the concept of skins and rags are used as euphemisms for the period that a woman has her menstruation.

On the other hand the use of the term “the wound that never heals” is a metaphorical euphemism to mean menstruation and, the same applies to the term “*kuona*” meaning “to see.”

Some Kikuyu women use bizarre euphemisms and coded words when talking about their menses. For example when they use “*mashiru*” meaning “the name of a woman,” anybody who is not a woman would not understand what they are talking about.

The researcher also found that some terms are frankly used by respondents because they simply mean what they say. For instance if a person says “am bleeding”, this is exactly what is happening. The researcher found that euphemisms to do with menstruation like “*kuona*” meaning “seeing” are so used to hearing them, that respondents did not think of them as euphemisms anymore. Generally speaking however, euphemisms on menstruation are used because a lot of women as respondents put it are not comfortable with being direct about such things as menstruation.



Kikuyu women while in this state of mensuration, also use euphemism like “I am sick” in order not to disappoint their husbands and make them uncomfortable about the subject. From the study, the researcher found out that male respondents are uncomfortable with the entire concept of menstruation whether tabooed or euphemized despite their having girlfriends, wives, sisters and even mothers.

In the Bible the Old Testament documents, in Leviticus 15:19 the following statement.

### **In Kikuyu**

*“Ningĩ mũndũ wa nja angikorũo niekuura, na gũkorũo na thakame ya ihinda rĩake rĩa mweri-rĩ, agaikara e mũgiro mũthenya mũgwanja na mũndũ o wothe ũria ũkamũhutia agatinda e na thahu ngĩnya o hwaĩ-inĩ. Nakĩo kĩndũ o giothe kĩrĩa agakomera ihinda rĩu e na mũgiro nĩgĩkagwatwo nĩ thahu, o nakĩo kĩndu o gĩothe kĩria agaikarĩra nigĩkagwatwo nĩ thahu.”*

### **Gloss**

And if a woman has an issue, and her issue in her flesh is blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And everything that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: everything also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.

From the statement on menstruation above, we can find the euphemism, “a woman has an issue” used to replace the tabooed phrase “menstruating woman.” It is used

figuratively to keep the reference of tabooed bodily effluvia away. The euphemism of a woman having an issue in Kikuyu is *'kuona mweri'* and is literally translated back to English to mean “seeing the moon.”

### **3.2.2 Defecation**

This is the process of eliminating solid or semi-solid waste through the lower opening of the digestive tract. The act is generally regarded with a cultural distaste among the Kikuyu, and people in this community are fastidious about defecation and generally wish to perform the act in seclusion and in a designated location, known as “Kĩoro” meaning “toilet.” When in polite company, the word is avoided as it is considered as a **face threatening act** and instead one would excuse himself or herself and say; “*Ndathiĩ gwĩteithia.*” Literary meaning; “I am going to help myself”.

In case a person feels that he/she needs to defecate and is not in an appropriate place, the fecal matter is retained within the rectum by tension of the anal sphincter until an appropriate place can be found for release. Among the Kikuyu as the researcher found out the community treats it as a taboo for an adult to pass stool inside the house or at the doorstep. In such a case a fat goat known as “*ngoima*” is to be slaughtered and eaten by old men who are past the productive age to revoke the taboo created and the wrath of the gods led by Ngai.

It is also a taboo to defecate in water. The Kikuyu saying “*ũyũ ananĩte akamĩa rũĩ na igũrũ,*” meaning, this one is so naughty that he excretes in the river. The above saying

expresses two truths; first the saying expresses an extremely mischievous person who excretes in water. Secondly, it shows that the Kikuyu people possessed hygienic knowledge on the disastrous effect that could befall anybody who makes use of polluted water. For instance, Kikuyu people are aware of the fact that polluted water can lead to waterborne diseases. There are various terms used to refer to defecation in Kikuyu language. Consider the following;

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Kũmĩa	Defecation
Mai	faeces

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gwĩteithia</i>	to help oneself
<i>Kahinda kanene</i>	long call
<i>Guthiĩ bata</i>	Going for a need

In the Kikuyu community, due to the sensitive nature of the solid-waste, the people have given attention to the removal of faecal matter from the area surrounding the anus, following defecation. Traditionally, the most basic methods for this involved wiping with leaves, grass or wood ash. Today, in the modern culture, Kikuyu people have developed various methods including wiping with flimsy variety of papers and direct washing with jet of water, especially among Muslim Kikuyus. As it can be seen from the euphemisms for defecation, Kikuyu language tries and tends to be polite in the use of terms like going to help one's self. "*Guthiĩ gwĩteithia*"

### 3.2.3 Urination

Urine is a clear amber solution of the waste product resulting from the filtration process that takes place in the kidney. In order to survive, human bodies need to keep fluid and electrolyte balance and vital acid-base level regulated within very narrow limit. The kidney carries out this trash using filtrating and re-absorption process. Thus, this is a very important body process. The researcher found out that urination is not a process that one can talk about openly, especially in polite company, and if need arises to use it, one must get a euphemism for it, so as not to annoy or irritate those who are listening. In many cultures, Kikuyu being one of them, men urinate while standing and women urinate while squatting down, thus the difference of urinals and toilet seats for men and women. This must be in a secluded place away from the public, as urination in public is treated as a **face threatening act** which can result in punishment.

Consider the following lexicon on urination:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gũthuguma</i>	Urinate

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Kahinda kanini</i>	short call
<i>Gũtua mata</i>	Spitting
<i>Kũrũgama (men)</i>	to stand
<i>Gũĩteithia</i>	helping one self
<i>Guthia bata</i>	Going for a need

The researcher found out that a Kikuyu father can curse his children with his penis and urine. This is a very serious and weighty curse. This curse is triggered by overwhelming offending issues such as a son sleeping with his father's wife or wives. It can also be

triggered by extremely shameful deeds like that of a grown up daughter grabbing or deliberately touching her father's penis “*mũcuthĩ*” in a confrontation.

### **3.2.4 Ejaculation**

Ejaculation happens when the male genitalia are stimulated, provided it is done right; the seminal fluid is forced to flow down in the urinary tract and out of the body. From the study, the researcher found out that among the body effluvia processes the only one known to give consistent pleasure is ejaculation. In the Kikuyu community the main aim of ejaculation is reproduction but it has a secondary function too of a recreation session with a cooperative partner.

From the study, the researcher found out that men and women have also used the semen in negative ways. Men have used their semen as love spells. The men masturbate to orgasm and preserve the resultant fluid and put the fluid in food and drinks of the prospective victim. This is done to attract women. On the other hand, the researcher found out that women also use men semen to control their men or keep them faithful. The semen is gathered from a condom and used in a man's food. Thus after ejaculation, and in order to avoid the above, it was observed by respondents that the men should make sure it is properly disposed and hygiene should be maintained by taking a bath after the act of copulation to wash away all the fluid discharged.

In the Bible, and in the Old Testament, documents in Leviticus 15:16-18 says

*“na rĩrĩ, mũndũ ona ũrĩkũ angũmwo nĩ hinya wa urũme-rĩ, no mũhaka ethambe mwĩri wothe na maĩ, nake atinde ena thahu ngĩnya o hwainĩ. Nayo nguo irĩa yothe, kana rũũa*

*ruothe, harĩa hangikorũo hagĩte hinya ũcio wa ũrũme, no mũhaka hathambio na ,maĩ, nayo nguo iyo itinde ĩri na thahu nginya o hwaĩ-inĩ. Ningĩ mũndũ mũrũme angĩkorwo akomanĩte na mũndũ wa nja akoimwo ni hinya wa urume no mũhaka acio eri methambe na maĩ nao matinde me na thahu nginya o hwaĩ-inĩ.”*

**Gloss**

“When a man has an emission of seed, he must bathe his whole body in water and he will be unclean till evening. Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. When a man lies with a woman and there is emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

In this Bible verse, there is use of euphemism where instead of ejaculation the Bible uses “emission of seed” and it advices that the emission of seed should be followed by a bath regardless of how it came about. The Bible says that the one who comes in contact with somebody’s fluids then, the person should regard himself/herself as unclean and seek cleansing.

Consider the following terms as used in Kikuyu community for ejaculation.

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Ubai</i>	Semen
<i>Njokoyo</i>	Semen

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Hinya wa urume</i>	The strength of a man
<i>Mbegu cia arume</i>	The seeds of men

### **3.2.5 Lactation**

New born human babies receive nourishment in the form of fluid secreted by the lactatory duct within their mother's breast. Human milk is a highly nutritious element, but despite the obvious convenience of a ready-made food supply, many societies, Kikuyu being one of them have curious taboo about breast feeding, regarding lactation with distaste and being bothered about public breast feeding. In the course of the present research, the researcher could not help speculating that the origin of the taboo of breast feeding could be either a general distaste over bodily discharge or it could be the fatherly jealousy over forced sharing of what he regards as his personal possession. The researcher also noted that some women regard their breasts as sexual organs only and find the idea of breastfeeding repellant.

Traditionally, among the Kikuyu, sex or intercourse was prohibited during lactation which lasted 2-3 years. It was believed that semen, in breast feeding would poison breast milk killing the suckling child. Also adult consumption of breast milk was considered a taboo and was punishable. The term "*iria*" in Kikuyu is used to refer to breast milk.

### **3.2.6 Sternutation**

Sneezing is caused by irritation of mucous membranes of the nose. Despite the health aspect, in Kikuyu community there are few taboos about sternutation provided one uses a handkerchief to cover him/herself when sneezing. The researcher found out that when one sneezes, one is expected to name someone who he blesses, and sneezing once is seen as bad luck. The following term is used for sneezing in Kikuyu:

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Athimũra</i>	Sneeze

From the research, it clearly comes out that there are not many euphemisms for sneezing as body effluvia and the one used frequently is “*athimũra*”

### **3.2.7 Flatulence**

Farting is the release of gaseous material from the lower intestinal tract through the anus. It is often accompanied by a whistling or rasping noise caused by vibration of the anal sphincter.

Among the Kikuyus, it is socially unacceptable to flatulate in public and it is considered a face threatening act. This is due to the foul smell of the discharge gases. Flatulation can largely be controlled by voluntarily tightening the anal sphincter.

The researcher found out that Kikuyu children are taught from a young age, through songs, that it is wrong to fart in public and if they do it, they are mocked through songs. Although sometime it becomes hard to control farting, the noisy discharge is often heard causing embarrassment and if among polite company it is considered lack of respect and lack of good morals. Mostly, those who use euphemisms that look universal on this topic of flatulence are Kikuyu people with substantial amount of Western education.



Consider the following terms used for flatulation in Kikuyu

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gũthuria</i>	Flatulation
<i>Ndore</i>	Flatulation
<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Rĩera rĩũru</i>	Bad wind
<i>Gũthũkia riera</i>	Spoiling the air

### 3.2.8 Salivation

This is the emission of a fluid from the mouth. From the present study, the researcher found out that if one happens to leave the mouth open for instance during sleeping excess saliva can drool out. This drooling of excess saliva is a face threatening act and can cause embarrassment to the person and amusement to onlookers. This has therefore to be avoided. Public spitting is generally regarded as being disgusting and Kikuyu people are highly discouraged from doing it as the saliva may have some disease causing germs which may be passed on to other people.

In Kikuyu culture, it is wrong to spit on someone. This is considered as an assault and thus the act is punishable, that is, the person who is spat on can cause a fight. Although spitting in public is a **face threatening** act among the Kikuyu it is a contentious issue. The researcher found out if one gave an old person a present as a way of blessing the giver the old person would spit just a little saliva on his/her chest. The researcher also found out that the Muslims among the Kikuyu and elsewhere in the world are forbidden by the religion from swallowing anything during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.

This is interpreted by some to include swallowing saliva. So if they have excess saliva, the customary way to dispose of it is by spitting it out, and in order to reduce the **face threatening act**, they are advised to have a piece of cloth on which to spit on. The Kikuyu word for saliva is “*mata*”. The term “*mata*” is also euphemized to mean urinate in the phrase. “*gūtua mata*”

Saliva may also come out, unconsciously when normal adults are a sleep.

Being considered taboo “*rũta*” is highly forbidden and ridiculed among the Kikuyu as was reported by the respondents in this study because of the taboo associated with “*rũta*”. A person with “*rũta*” around the mouth is discouraged from cooking for anybody among the Kikuyu people unless he or she washes the “*rũta*” from the face. However it is interesting to note that, there are no euphemisms in Kikuyu language currently for “*mata*” and “*rũta*”

### **3.2.9 Lacrimation**

Human eyes are capable of moving within their socket. For this to happen smoothly, they have to be kept constantly lubricated by the secretion of the tears. For reasons un-known, humans, unlike other animals, lacrimate excessively in response to pain, sadness or extreme mirth. This appears to be partly a voluntary response. All healthy babies do it but the researcher found out that in the Kikuyu community this function is often suppressed in male humans from a relatively early age.

Men are not expected to cry or shed tears as this is seen as a way of being weak or being a coward which is against the norm in the Kikuyu society. Such a man cannot be respected by the people in the Kikuyu society. On the other hand, the researcher gathered that Kikuyu women are able to use crying as a diversionary tactic aimed at taking the moral on higher ground during an argument. They also use tears to gain attention, like it happens in copulation.

“*Maithori*” is the Kikuyu term for tears.

### **3.2.10 Regurgitations**

What goes down may come up, particularly digested food may on occasion be discharged vigorously upwards through oesophagus and mouth. In evolutionary terms, this is vomiting; it presumably develops as a productive mechanism against poison. It can also be triggered by other causes. Example includes gastritis which in turn includes those not directly linked to digestive tract function and examples include; motion, sickness and brain tumor. Babies also regurgitate milk frequently, but this is generally considered to be normal and convenient among the Kikuyu.

Among the Kikuyu, there is distaste for vomit especially by mature people when in public and people tend to react in disgust once it happens. The vomiter, though, is generally accorded sympathy being a sufferer of a disease. In Kikuyu language the term for vomit is “*gũtahika*”. However the language has euphemisms for this act so as not to hurt the audience which may turn out to be offended or even over sympathetic. The terms as euphemism are:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gūtahika</i>	Vomiting

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Kūrūta kīrīa ngūrīte</i>	Remove what I had eaten
<i>Kuruta kīrīa kiuma nda</i>	Remove what was in the stomach.

As can be seen those two terms above for vomiting are a politer way of saying the actual thing, which is considered as a FSA. This is the essence of euphemisms.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

From the above discussion on body effluvia in Kikuyu, it is clear that body effluvia words bring on emotion of disgust and repulsion. This is a natural defense mechanism since epidemiologists teach us to stay away from these liquids as most of them are abundant in parasitic organisms and bacteria. However, their roles in the human body are very important. That is why the study sought euphemisms for them. The study has found out that although offensive in nature, body effluvia is an important topic that we cannot do without.

In the next chapter we look at euphemism for death and disease.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 EUPHEMISMS ON DEATH AND DISEASES IN KIKUYU

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at euphemisms on body effluvia in Kikuyu. In this chapter we discuss taboo words and their euphemisms on death and diseases in Kikuyu language.

In Kikuyu culture, like it is in many cultures the world over, death is a fear – based taboo, with associated fears relating to loss and uncertainty about what happens to the body after death.

Allan and Burridge (2006) suggest that death may be a 20<sup>th</sup> century taboo phenomenon, though many euphemisms of death are found in the classical Latin and Greek world. Cook and Walter (2000) do provide some evidence that taboo around death, if measured by use of euphemisms, may be more pronounced in the contemporary culture. They used discourse analysis to examine the communication within rituals, namely funeral rites associated with death and found out that the late twentieth century funeral rituals have more death euphemisms compared with early – twentieth century and Victorian time.

In Kikuyu culture, diseases too are often treated with superstition and as sources of misfortune, likely because of their association with death or generally with misfortune.

This is reflected in euphemistic references to illness in English that are softened to terms such as “under control weather”, “out of danger”, or “doing as well as may be expected”.

Thus the main purpose of this chapter is to analyze, interpret and discuss taboo words and euphemisms on death and diseases in Kikuyu language. In Kikuyu community, the use of euphemisms, on the topic of death and diseases is welcomed as it is seen to lessen bodily stress reaction to the tabooed topic.

## **4.2 Analysis, Interpretation, Discussion of Taboo and Euphemisms on Death and Diseases**

### **4.2.1 Death**

Death has fascinated and frightened the broad range of humanity. Due to the fact that death must strike, people have come up with explanations beyond physical causes and effects, hence the many myths on the origin of death are found in the folklore of many of our African cultures including Kikuyu. Since the basic message being that human species brought death upon themselves through their own disobedience to God as the Bible tends to suggest, man tries his or her level best to avoid it .See Genesis 3:19 and Romans5:12

From the study, the researcher found out that traditionally among the Kikuyu, it was a great taboo to have any contact with a corpse. This act of having contact with a corpse resulted in a ceremonial cleansing so as to get rid of it, and one had to sacrifice a sufficient number of animals, mainly rams and also pay generously to the “ *mũndũ mũgo*” (medicine man). In such an event, what used to happen was that, when the sick person

was in his “*ihinda rĩa mwico*” last agony but before he had “expired,” his relatives would carry him or her to the bush and leave him or her there to die, but this custom has since changed and now the Kikuyus bury their dead.

In the Kikuyu community, the dead person is referred to as “*kĩiba*” and in politeness terms, this is a **FTA** which often requires a mitigating statement and verbal repair. Thus one should engage in **FSA** which are the euphemisms. If it is a man who has passed on, he is referred to as “*mutigairĩ*” literally meaning “someone who has left something”. The person is seen to have left his family and all his wealth. If the dead is a woman, she is referred to as “*mwendwonĩrĩ*” literally meaning somebody who is loved. This means that she has left behind people who loved her.

The above euphemisms show that politeness is vital in referring to the dead in Kikuyu community. From the study, the researcher found out that among the Kikuyu community, there are four main categories of death as discussed below.

#### **4.2.1.1 Natural death**

Natural death is where the body just ceases to function on its own accord or if there are mitigating medical factors. Though hard, it is generally accepted and does not raise too many questions and the Kikuyu people tend to use such euphemisms as below:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gukua</i>	Death

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Niarahurũkire</i>	He/she rested
<i>Niaratũtigire</i>	He/she left us
<i>Gũthiĩ igũrũ</i>	Going to heaven
<i>Gwũitwo</i>	To be called
<i>Gũthiaga</i>	To go before
<i>Gucarĩka</i>	To crack
<i>Ihurũko ria tene na tene</i>	Permanent peace

#### **4.2.1.2 Homicide**

Homicide involves the taking of one's human life by another human being by means of pre-meditated murder. The Kikuyu people believe that the spirit of the dead persons will come back to haunt the person who committed the murder. This kind of death leaves people with so many questions on what could have triggered such an evil act. The following euphemism on death is used in such an event:

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Egiathayũ</i>	Permanent peace has been granted

#### **4.2.1.3 Accidental death**

Accidental death involves death of an individual by means other than natural death. It is seen as untimely death.

The respondents used in this study associate such death with witchcraft and curses and devil worshipping.



#### 4.2.1.4 Suicidal death

Suicidal death is deliberately taking one's life by oneself. The Kikuyu people look at it as being cursed or in possession of evil spirits and this causes great fear among the relatives of the deceased as they try to look for explanations and such terms as the following are used to describe this kind of death;

Though death is in-avoidable, Kikuyu people and all humanity in general, have a denying attitude towards it. The Kikuyu have come up with terms to conceptualize death with metaphorical euphemisms. Consider the following:

“*Gũthiĩ gwitũ kwega*” meaning “going to a better place”. Here death is represented as a “place” in which to some is better than where he/she currently is. This euphemism delineates death as some sort of exchange when one exchanges this life for a better place and take refuge in a better world.

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Nĩaretirwo</i>	He was called
<i>Nĩaraheneirio</i>	He was summoned

In the examples of euphemisms above, the Kikuyu mask the term death in order to relieve the horrifying effect of uttering it. The dead person has to inevitably answer the call. The act of summoning calls for somebody to move to another location and it is seen as being a regular step that everybody has to take.

Death is compared to a journey of departure. The euphemisms of it in Kikuyu are;

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Nĩarathire</i>	Departure
<i>Nĩarakinyire mwico wa rugendo</i>	He reached at end of his journey
<i>Nĩaratutĩgire</i>	He left us.

Someone who dies is said to have left, departed, or he is no more.

Moving from life to death is seen as an inevitable journey that everyone has to undertake, an act which softens the horrifying effect of mentioning death.

The respondents also compared death to sleep.

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gũkoma</i>	To sleep
<i>Kũhiga maitho</i>	To close one's eyes.

The researcher found out that, death's effects are mitigated by replacing it with the term "sleep". So, the event of death is alleviated by being replaced by expression such as "sleep" and "closing one's eyes". The fact that Kikuyu language has a number of metaphoric euphemisms on death indicates that the fear of death is instilled in the human nature and as humans we try every possible way to mitigate the experience of death. The following euphemisms are used to mask the term death and make it at least tolerable;

### **4.3 Diseases**

Since most deaths in the Kikuyu community are caused by diseases, in the next subsection of this chapter we look at euphemisms to do with diseases. Diseases can be broadly defined as any illness or sickness that impairs or disrupts the normal function of the human body.

From the study, the researcher found out that traditionally in the Kikuyu community most diseases were seen as having been triggered by something; which could be either an evil deed, or being bewitched. Re-occurrence of diseases in a family made the members move from the compound they were living in to find somewhere else where they would start living, so as to break the curse.

Today there are traces of such beliefs in the Kikuyu community, but they are few and fading away. The following is a discussion of some of the diseases in the Kikuyu community and their euphemized versions;

#### **4.3.1 HIV and AIDS**

This is a sexually transmitted disease, which was first diagnosed in Kenya in 1984, and up to date it does not have a cure.

Simmon (2007) while quoting Tessa (2006) in a research on HIV/AIDS and African languages noted that HIV/AIDS is a modern taboo. The emergence of the pandemic has

brought about the creation of euphemistic terms as communities try to come to terms with the menace.

From the study, the researcher found out that the Kikuyu speakers get their euphemist terms of HIV/AIDS mostly from the linguistic environment among other sources.

The researcher found out that among the first euphemistic terms to refer to the disease HIV/AIDS was the term “*mũkingo*” meaning long neck. The disease resulted into a thin lean figure and a long neck and thus the name focused on the negative appearance of the AIDS patient. This name “*mũkingo*” caused great discomfort and embarrassment to the person being referred to. It lacked politeness. In essence, the term was used to warn of the danger of contracting the disease that is usually associated with unprotected sexual intercourse.

The respondents noted that most of the terms which were initially invented after the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS were aimed at showing how dangerous the disease is, and this gave no hope to those who had already contracted it, Consider the following words that kikuyu people might use thinking that they are euphemisms.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gathitima</i>	Electrocution
<i>Kĩmemendi</i>	Destroyer
<i>Kĩmiri</i>	Crasher
<i>Kĩgũtha</i>	Hard hitter

The above terms are **FTA** especially to the person who is suffering. They do not take care of **face needs** of the AIDS patient. This means that as much as we may look at their use as euphemisms, they are one sided.

The researcher noted that in due time after diagnosis of HIV/AIDS the stigma on the disease went on reducing and milder terms were invented in Kikuyu language and they were politer and more friendly thus reducing FTAs. Consider the following;

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Mukingo</i>	HIV/AIDS

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Homa</i>	common cold
<i>Mũrimũ ũyũ</i>	this disease
<i>Mũrimu wa thirikari</i>	government disease
<i>Mũtino wa ũrĩrĩ</i>	bedroom accident

The above terms are less offensive when compared with the earlier ones with the use of terms like “common cold” showing that it is not “a big deal” and it is now seen as any other disease. The above euphemistic terms are used to dispel fear and condemnation. HIV/AIDS is seen as an “accident” for anybody can get infected with it. Thus, it is no longer a disease of the promiscuous. Here we see positive politeness at work.

When discussing a disease like “*mũkingo*” that is HIV/AIDS the youthful respondents and who have some Western education, use borrowed terminology from English like is the use of “*gathitima*” which means “one has been electrocuted.” This is a loan translation from English. On the other hand, elderly respondents of both sexes will use terms like “*mũkingo*” meaning a long neck to warn the society that Aids as a disease comes with stigma and so it should be avoided by not engaging in unprotected sex.

### 4.3.2 STDs

Common sexually transmitted diseases are infections that spread through sexual contact. From the study it comes out clearly that STDs are a source of shame to most sufferers; this is because of the part of the body affected, and the patient is embarrassed to disclose his/her condition to anyone else.

The respondents are aware of Kikuyu names for just two of the STDs that is; gonorrhoea and syphilis though there are many others STDs.

Consider the following terms:

<b>Taboo</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gatego</i>	Syphilis
<i>Gĩchununu</i>	Gonorrhoea

Few of the respondents could use the above terms but conservatively, most of the respondents preferred to use the euphemisms of syphilis and gonorrhoea. The researcher found out that women are blamed as the carriers of the diseases and a woman who suffers from them is seen as being promiscuous.

Consider the following examples for STDs as euphemized in Kikuyu.

<b>Euphemism</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Mũrimũ wa atumia</i>	women's diseases
<i>Nĩndĩrahĩire</i>	I got burnt
<i>Nĩndĩracinirwo</i>	someone burnt me
<i>Mũrimũ wa kũngũrũkia adũ</i>	That disease that makes people mad
<i>Mũrimũ ũria adũ maigua ruo magĩthuguma</i>	That disease that people feel pain when urinating

The phrase “someone burnt me” as a euphemism for STD is in agreement with the earlier observation in that the term someone is of course a woman. This is according to the respondents from the study. The presupposition here is that a Kikuyu man gets the STDs because he slept with a loose woman.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have analyzed euphemisms on death and diseases in Kikuyu language. From the discussion and examples on euphemisms for taboo words for death and diseases in Kikuyu, it clearly comes out that the topic of death and disease is dreaded. The Kikuyu will opt for metaphorical language to describe diseases like AIDs and Syphilis because of fear of saying exactly what these diseases are. Thus, the essence of euphemizing taboo terms for diseases and death is to play down the connotations that are otherwise implied. The use of “homa” that is common cold for such a killer diseases as HIV/AIDS is meant to play down the seriousness of the disease. In essence, not all taboo words and topics in Kikuyu are taboo. The tabooeness of the word in Kikuyu depend on such factors such as age, relationship, occasion and timeframe

In the next chapter we summarize the study’s findings and give recommendations for further research on taboo words and euphemisms in Kikuyu – Kabete dialect and give general concluding remarks on the topic.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter we give a summary of the findings of the study, recommendations for further research on the topic of euphemisms in Kikuyu language and a general conclusion.

#### 5.2 Summary and Conclusion

We, in this project work, set out to achieve the following objectives;

- i. To identify and describe the euphemisms and taboo words those are popularly used by speakers of Kikuyu.
- ii. To establish the informativity and semantic attributes of euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu language.
- iii. To analyze the function of euphemized taboo words in which are used by speakers of Kikuyu.

The study has found out that euphemisms in Kikuyu language are motivated by their tabooess. Data on euphemisms on sex and sexuality in Kikuyu uses terms like “*kũneo indo*” *kũneo ndũrũme*” for “giving something” or “giving a ram” for the act of engaging in sex.

When it comes to data on euphemism on body effluvia the concept of menstruation for instance is euphemized as “*kuona mweri*” “*gũkĩra Red Sea*” or “*ageni a omweri*”



meaning “seeing the moon”, “crossing the Red Sea” and “having monthly visitors” respectively.

The study also found out that euphemisms in Kikuyu language are presented mainly in figurative language. Euphemisms like *kuhura ndati* and *kũhinya wĩra and* meaning “a game of dart” and “working thoroughly” respectively are idiomatic expression for the act of having sex. The same obtain for “*gũkorwo wĩna matagari*” and “*kuura*” meaning “being on the rags” and “raining” respectively for the act of menstruation.

When it comes to death, euphemisms like permanent peace has been granted and resting are euphemized as “*egiathayu*” and “*niarahurũkire*” which are idiomatic expressions.

To some extent, the study has also found out that euphemisms in Kikuyu language are used to hide the truth and legalize wrong behaviour. Consider an act of forceful sexual intercourse being referred to as *kũnyitwo kĩahinya* or having sex with a minor being called *kũgwata*. These terms in themselves try to depict these acts of sexual behaviour more politely than they indeed are, that is the essence of hiding the truth and legalizing wrong behaviour.

In essence these points about legalizing wrong behaviour by hiding the truth tries to say how much euphemisms in Kikuyu language influence the sense of right and wrong as well as the Kikuyu people’s understanding of their objective world. Consider the use of “*homa*” that is common cold for such a killer disease as HIV/AIDS. The study has found

out that not all taboo words in Kikuyu are taboo. The tabooeness of the words depends on such factors such as age, relationship, occasion and timeframe.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

The present study had sex and sexuality, body effluvia and death and diseases as its scopes. In the course of the study the researcher noted that, there is a lot that can be studied on these sub – topics and we wish to make the following recommendation for further research.

- i. A comparative study on euphemisms and taboo words on sex and sexuality be undertaken on Kikuyu language but from the historical point of view. In this case, the use of such terms like “rags” and “skins” for sanitary napkins during menstruation will be put into perspective historically.
- ii. Body effluvia topics like sweating which were not handled by the present research be looked into so as to find their euphemisms and corresponding taboo words. It is only by such a research that the topic of body effluvia will be handled to its conclusion in an adequate manner.
- iii. Diseases like ebola that are a recent phenomenon in Kikuyu culture be researched so as to find euphemisms and taboo words that go with them. Such a research will show that Kikuyu as a language is dynamic and capable of going with changing times.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

In this concluding chapter we have given a summary of the study's findings. All the hypotheses that the study set out to test have been found to be true. Due to the fact that the scope of the study appeared to be wide, the study has also given recommendations for further research on the topic of euphemisms and taboo words in Kikuyu.

## REFERENCES

- Allan, K. and K. Burridge (2006). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.s
- Allan, Keith and Kate Burridge (1991). *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as a Shield and Weapon*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Austin J. L. (2002). *How to do Things with Words: Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press*.
- Bonvillian, J. D. (1997). *Theoretical Approaches to Language Acquisition*. In J. B. Gleason (Ed) *the Development of language* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brown P. and Levinson; S. (1987). *Some Universals in Language Use*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. and C. Levinson (1976). *Universal in language usage: Politeness phenomena*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook J. and T. Walter (2005). "Rewritten Rites: Language and Social Relation in Traditional and Contemporary Funerals" *Discourse and Society* Vol. 16 (3): 365-391.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Cuddon, J. A. (1974) *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York.: Harper and Row (1971).
- Evans, R .and Velde Peterson (2000). *Taboo topics*. New York: Atherton Press, 8-21.
- Githrie P. (1967) *Classification of Bantu Languages*. London Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.

Good News Bible (1994). The United Bible Society: English Bible GNBO53P UBS

Africa 1.

Grady, W. Dobrovolsky, M. Aronoff, M. (1997) *Contemporary Linguistics*. St. Martin's Press, Inc. New York. U.S.A

Grady, J. (1997a). *Foundation of Meaning: Primary Metaphor & Primary Scenes* (unpublished PhD dissertation). University of California, Berkeley.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic. The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Haug J. and A. Bria (2006). *Study of the origin, forms and change of English euphemism*. US-China foreign language, 46-48.

*Ibuku Rrta Itheru Ria Ngai*. United Bible Societies (1965). Published by the bible society of Kenya.

Ivy, D. K. Backlund, P. (1994) *Exploring Gender Speaker*. USA: McGraw – Hill.

Kikuyu – English Dictionary 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Laitinen M. (2009). Ajantabut. In M. Laitinen and Pohjola (eds.), *Tabujen Kahleet*. Tampere: Vastapalno, 5-15.

Leech Rawson, H. (1995). *A Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Double Talk: Being a Compilation of Linguistic Fig Leaves and Verbal Flourishes for Artful Users of English Language* (Rev. Ed). New York: Crown.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). London: Sage publication.

- Mbaya, M. (2002). "Linguistic Taboo in African Marriage Context: A study of the Oromo Languu Nomadii". *Journal of African Studies* II (2) 224-235 (Polite- 2 )-revisit.
- Munyiri, J. N. (2006) *Gender and Language. A case of the Gi. Kabete variety of Kikuyu.* M. A. These. University of Nairobi.
- Muriuki G. (1974) *A history of the Kikuyu "1500-1900"* in Oxford University Press. Nairobi.
- Mutahi K. E. (1977) *Sound change and the classification of southern Mt. Kenya Dialect.* University of Nairobi: Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Nguti, M. (2013). "Tasfida za kinyumbani za waswahili na wakamba". Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Njeri S. (2007) *A Pragmatic Analysis of Gikuyu Lexical Euphemisms in HIV/AIDS Discourses.* Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Pinker, Steven (2007). *Stuff of Thought.* London, England: Penguin Books.
- Qadi-Al Nasser, S. (2009). "A sociolinguistic comparison of Euphemisms in English and Arabic": Taibah University. Al- Munuwarah. Saudi Arabia.
- Qanbar, N. (2011). *Sociolinguistic study of the linguistic taboos in the Yemeni society.* London:
- Richard J. and Schmidt R. (2010). *Longman Dictionary of Language.* Teaching and Applied Linguistic, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.
- Stock Well P. (2002) *Sociolinguistic: A resource book for student.* New York: Tailor and Francis.

Tessa (2006) "HIV/AIDS and African Language" in Journal of African voices.

<http://www.africanvoice.co.za/research/aidsresearch>

The American Heritage Dictionary of English language, Fourth edition. 2009. Boston:

Houghton Mifflin Horcourt.

Theory of Politeness Strategy. Retrieved October 20, 2011, from

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/49819649/theory-of-politeness-strategy>

Wambua R. (2009). *A sociolinguistic variation in dialectal use of and attitudes towards taboo words and Euphemisms in Kikamba*. Unpublished M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi.

Webb & Kembo Sure (2000) *an Introduction to the Language and Linguistic*. Cape Town South Africa. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, K. G. (1993). *The Columbian Guide to Standard American English*.

[www.bratley.com](http://www.bratley.com)

## GLOSSARY

**Bald on record:** This strategy is most often. Utilized by the speakers who closely know their audience. It does not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearers face.

**Face saving act:** Anything said that lessen the possible threat to a person's self-esteem.

**Face threatening act:** Anything said that present a threat to another person expectation regarding self-image.

**Face:** Public self – image of a person that is; the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize.

**Kikuyu:** The Anglicized form. For both the language Gi-gikuyu and the speakers who are known as Gikuyu.

**Negative face:** A person's need to be independent to have freedom of action and not to be imposed on by others.

**Negative politeness:** The speaker imposing desires to be autonomous and independent and care little about the hearer's face.

**Politeness:** means employed to show awareness of another person's face.

**Positive face:** A person's need to be accepted even liked by others to be treated as a member of a group.

**Verbal repairs:** Mitigating utterances like.....sorry to say this, on a right touch .....which portrays the speaker as polite.



## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

### 1. Personal information

- i. Age \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. Marital status \_\_\_\_\_
- v. Religious affiliation \_\_\_\_\_
- vi. Place of residence \_\_\_\_\_
- vii. Level of education \_\_\_\_\_
- viii. Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Item for which questions are posed

What Kikuyu words are used for the following terms?

#### Group I: On sexuality

- Sexual intercourse \_\_\_\_\_
- Male sexual organ \_\_\_\_\_
- Female sexual organ \_\_\_\_\_
- Erection \_\_\_\_\_
- Pregnancy \_\_\_\_\_
- Giving birth \_\_\_\_\_
- Homosexuality \_\_\_\_\_
- Lesbian \_\_\_\_\_
- Orgasm \_\_\_\_\_
- Clitoris \_\_\_\_\_

Pubic hair \_\_\_\_\_

Rape \_\_\_\_\_

**ii) Group II: Body Effluvia**

Menstruation \_\_\_\_\_

Defecation \_\_\_\_\_

Urination \_\_\_\_\_

Ejaculation \_\_\_\_\_

Lactation \_\_\_\_\_

Sternutation \_\_\_\_\_

Fluctuation \_\_\_\_\_

Salivation \_\_\_\_\_

Lacrimation \_\_\_\_\_

Regurgitation \_\_\_\_\_

**Group III: death and disease**

Death \_\_\_\_\_

Corpse \_\_\_\_\_

Corpse if a man \_\_\_\_\_

Corpse if a woman \_\_\_\_\_

HIV and AIDs \_\_\_\_\_

STDs \_\_\_\_\_

Pneumonia \_\_\_\_\_

TB \_\_\_\_\_

Of the terms above which one would you conformably use in the presence of?

1. Close friends \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your parents \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your seniors \_\_\_\_\_
4. Age mate \_\_\_\_\_
5. A person you have met for the first time \_\_\_\_\_

3. Why can't you use the actual name and expression to refer to the above item in Kikuyu. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following terms will you feel embarrassed if a speaker who is not an acquaintance use them \_\_\_\_\_

5. Some terms although vulgar, have to be said, the way they are. Which ones are these and when are they used, with whom and with what impact? \_\_\_\_\_