A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF OLUNYOLE IDIOMS

BY

ATICHI REGINALD ALATI

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. P.A. MULAUDZI

JOINT-SUPERVISOR: DR. B. J.O. MBORI

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Declaration

I, Atichi Reginald Alati, student number 46123849, declare that A Pragmatic Analysis of Olunyole Idioms is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been acknowledged through the conventional referencing.

Signature

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

ATICHI REGINALD ALATI
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late brother, Dr. Olukoye Godfrey Alati, for his inspirational mentorship.
Acknowledgement

I am indebted to all the people who have contributed to the research and writing of this thesis. I thank my family for the solidarity and prayers during the entire period. I thank my supervisor Prof. Phalandwa Abraham Mulaudzi and co-supervisor Dr. Bob John Obwang’i Mbori for their guidance, encouragement and support. I also thank Dr. Omuteche for the initial brainstorming on the topic and later reading of the draft chapters.

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Summary

A Pragmatic Analysis of Olunyole Idiom examines the functionality of Olunyole idioms in socio-cultural interactional contexts. The study investigates the relationship between the construction and interpretation of Olunyole idioms and the representation of the social reality as reflected in the native speakers’ (Abanyole) world view. The study employs the descriptive qualitative research design and builds on the functional approach to the study of language. The Olunyole idioms are collected from the initial sample of over 240 native speakers through language elicitation tests. The idioms collected are subjected to confirmation through ethnographic observation and questionnaires involving a further 30 native speakers. Interviews and focused discussions with a purposively selected sample of sixteen elderly native speaker informants provide further confirmation and linguistic insight into the functionality of the Olunyole idioms.

The study is grounded in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theoretical framework in interrogating the role of language in social structure and organization within contextualised interactional conversations involving Olunyole idioms. The data of idiomatic expressions is analyzed into pragmatic domains that characterize the Abanyole perceptions of their world view as a speech community. It is concluded that the idioms project the people’s cultural beliefs and perpetuate the norms and values of the speakers in their mutual interactive use of language. The Olunyole idiomatic utterances regulate the people’s behaviour for harmonious co-existence. The composition and comprehension of the idioms is therefore context-dependent in realizing deliberate acts that control social interaction. The study contributes to the attempts to preserve and promote the African Languages. It is recommended that studies need to be carried out on the other systems of Olunyole idioms such as the syntactic structure. Furthermore, the investigation between idioms and other levels of indirect language could provide enriching insights in Language and Linguistics.
Key Terms

Olunyole Idioms, Contextual Social Reality, Social Construction, Enculturation, Social Control and Acts, Domains of Use, Ethnolinguistic Accounts, CDA.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This study focuses on the functionality of the Olunyole idioms from a linguistic perspective. The Olunyole language consists of linguistic entities that are constructed to systematically perform diverse functions that facilitate communicative interaction. Functionality as an approach in linguistics derives from the interface between the dynamic composition of language and the wide range of functions. These include stylistic, social and referential functions. The speech code under study, Olunyole, part of the wider Luhya language, realizes these universal functions through the creative utilization of a number of strategies by its speech community.

This study investigates idioms in socially situated utterances and their communicative value within diverse social contexts. The study thus falls within the domains of language use, specifically the realms of discourse analysis and pragmatics. On functional discourse, Schiffrin (2006:172) notes:

Most linguists who analyze discourse adopt, at least partially, a functional approach to language. This is not surprising: observing and analyzing what people do with language leads partially to an interest in the “work” that language can do the functions it enables people to perform.

Language therefore serves individual and collective interests of the speakers in their social groupings of existence. Idiomatic expressions of Olunyole reflect the interactive significance of the language within the speech community that is bound by a distinct cultural identity.
The focus in this study is the Olunyole idiom as a functional linguistic expression for communicative interaction within the Abanyole speech community. Gallab (1999:70) defines an idiom as an expressive linguistic unit whose interpretation accrues not from its internal lexical content but from the relationship between that unit and the expressed world of ideas, experiences and knowledge as shared by the interlocutors in a communicative event. In other words, the semantic value of the lexical items that form the item cannot be relied upon to provide the meaning of the expression, in this case the idiom, in its entirety. Indeed, Olunyole has a repertoire of idioms that forms the means by which its speakers express their inner personal feelings, convey information and influence one another at various levels of interaction. Such habitual collocations, what Crystal (1991:170) considers as ‘‘ready-made utterances’’, are part of the knowledge that a native speaker is expected to possess in order to use language functionally as an instrument of interaction. The construction and comprehension of idioms would thus be considered as part of the creative competence of the native speaker of the language. The pragmatic communicative dimension to the analysis of any aspect of language, such as Olunyole idioms considered in this study, is concerned with the world of knowledge that the speakers of a language collectively and continually bring into language use. Coulmas (1981:5) supports this pragmatic approach by asserting that ‘‘…all expressions are better explained in terms of their use rather than their semantics.’’ Pragmatic analysis in linguistics is therefore critical in understanding how social structure, shared knowledge, belief system and attitudes aid the interpretation of messages. Therefore, the present study is concerned with the Olunyole idioms as aspects of language use.

An individual using a language as a native speaker has a myriad options for communicating intended messages. As the competence levels deepen, the native speaker constantly makes decisions to either express messages plainly and directly or ‘‘…stylistically and with flavour that reflects close interaction and accumulated knowledge of the lives of the speakers’’ (Scarcella and Brunak, 1981:63). Apart from the phonological, syntactic and morphological levels of competence that focus on the sound, sentence and word structure respectively, the native speaker has internalized strategically pragmatic competence that ensures appropriate use of language. Appropriacy in language
use entails more than just the transfer of messages among interlocutors; it encompasses the linguistic choices that speakers make while ensuring that language use conforms to “…the matrix of the people’s conventionally acceptable daily activity, habits of thought and socially regulated behaviour in interaction” (Psathas, 1979:32). The use of idioms in a language is pegged on pragmatic variables that are determined by social behaviour. Language in this sense is therefore inextricably bound up with culture; it is an expressive product of culture and reflection of the speakers’ cultural orientation and inclinations.

The study seeks to investigate how the idiomatic texts reflect the cultural identity of the Abanyole, the speakers of Olunyole. Additionally, the study considers the capacity of a language to communicate meaning both implicitly and explicitly. Idiomatic expressions would be one of the means by which indirectness of messages culturally manifests itself. Tannen (2006: 348) observes on indirect interpretations:

> Everything said in a conversation includes clues to how listeners should interpret the words spoken, so that participants understand not only what is said but also what is going on. Metamessages are signalled by how you say and what you mean…Idiomatic words and phrases can also signal how a remark is intended. Anyone who has a dictionary and grammar book could potentially understand what the individual words mean, but in order to understand how to interpret those words, a conversationalist needs to map expressions to real contexts…

The study of language from the “‘conversationality’” approach as adopted in this study recognizes that speech is primary and writing secondary in language creativity. It is in this regard that the present study investigates Olunyole idioms as they are uttered in socially situated contexts.
1.2 The Location of the Study: The Physical Area of the Study

1.2.1 Physical Location

The Abanyole are the speakers of the Olunyole dialect of the Luhya language. The Abanyole people occupy the present day Emuhaya sub-county in western Kenya. Emuhaya used to be a division within Vihiga District, as (figure 1 p.8) shows, before it was elevated to the district status. The administrative structures in Kenya were reviewed and the then Vihiga District transformed into the Vihiga County. In 2010, when a new constitution was promulgated, Emuhaya became a sub-county of the Vihiga County. Emuhaya sub-county borders Siaya and Kisumu Counties to the North. The occupants of Kisumu and Siaya that border Emuhaya sub-county largely speak Dholuo language. To the South of Emuhaya are the Maragoli, speakers of Lulogoli which is another dialect of the Luhya language. The Abanyole speech community mainly occupies an area of 173.3 square Km, with a population of 161,721 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

According to Alembi (2002:8), the Abanyole, a sub-group of the larger Luhya community, are believed to have migrated from the Niger-Congo region in West Africa and entered the Eastern region of Kenya through Sudan. They then crossed to Lake Victoria through Uganda and settled around Maseno region until they were displaced by the Luo after a series of ethnic battles over farming and grazing land. The Abanyole are therefore a subset of the Luhya group that is part of the larger Bantu linguistic groups that historically occupied the Congo region before migrating to various parts of the continent.

Generally, the speakers of Luhya, which has Olunyole as one of its dialects, occupy what was recognized as Western Province in the old Kenyan Constitution. With the scrapping of the provinces in 2010, the Luhya speech community occupies four counties-Kakamega, Bungoma, Busia and Vihiga. Vihiga County is populated by the Tiriki, Maragoli and Abanyole people that speak Lutiriki, Lulogoli and Olunyole respectively. The other
notable Luhya dialects include Lukisa, Lumarama, Lwidakho, Luwanga, Lwisukha, Lunyala (Ndombi) and Lukabrasi spoken by occupants of Kakamega County. The Luhya dialects spoken in the Bungoma County are the Lubukusu and Lutachoni, while those used in Busia County are the Lusamia, Lumarachi, Lukhayo and Lunyala. Grimes (1988:246) lists NYORE as one of the world languages spoken in Kenya and makes an entry:

NYORE: (OLUNYOLE, LUNYORE, NYORE, NYOOLE, NYOLI, NYOLE).

The entry further indicates that a similar code is spoken in Uganda and the area around Benin and Congo. One of the key informants in this study notes that Olunyole and Lunyore are used interchangeably, depending on whether one is using a single code or mixing the codes in conversations.

The study chose the first entry ‘Olunyole’ as the native speakers’ reference to their language. Otieno, an informant, says that ‘outsiders’ (non-native speakers) tend to drop the initial vowel. Furthermore, a speech experiment with the informant reveals that code-mixing in reference to the language produces ‘Lunyore.’ A conversation without code-mixing articulates the language as ‘Olunyole.’ For example:

Nonomanga Olunyole (without code-mixing).

I am speaking Lunyore (with code-mixing).

Although the Luhya dialects have identifiable similarities at the phonological, semantic and syntactic levels, there are variations that give each dialect of the Luhya language a linguistically distinctive character. The variations, however, do not compromise mutual intelligibility among the speakers of the Luhya dialects. It is necessary to note that some of the idioms of the Olunyole that this study hinges on cut across a number of the Luhya dialects because the speakers of the Luhya language share some socio-cultural aspects of life.

The study seeks to interrogate the Olunyole idioms in relation to the entire range of extra-linguistic variables that are products of culture, as Schiffrin (2006: 17) notes ‘…language is pragmatically embedded within social norms and cultural prisms.’
The following figures from Alembi (2002:12-13) capture the location of the area of the study:

Figure 1.1: The study area (Emuhaya Sub-County)
Inset: Location of Luanda in Vihiga County (Source: Alembi,2002:12)
1.3 Background to the Study

The present study focuses on idioms from the pragmatic dimension of the study of language as a means of expressing feelings and perpetuating cultural values, as well as performing referential and propositional functions of communicative interaction (Coulthard, 1985:79). Idioms are thus highly culture-specific; they contribute complex meanings to conversational utterances at culturally situated denotative, connotative and pragmatic levels of language (Emery, 1988:168). Idioms are interpretable within a social context through what Leech (1981:9) calls “semantic viability.” Meanings of idioms in this regard accrue from the bonding of a speech community through continuous interaction in varied situations and life-long shared experiences.
Idioms form part of the stylized systems of language used beyond the ordinary level. Apart from idioms, there are other systems that are used to communicate ‘...with the colour that reflects the native speaker’s competence’ (McCarthy, 1998:42). Such other systems include proverbs and metaphors. These proverbs and Metaphors of a language complement idioms in communicating messages. Indeed, there is notable communicative affinity between idioms and metaphors. Shivtiel (1976:168) observes that ‘...both idiom and metaphor are characterized by figurativeness and picturesqueness. These forms of language convey meanings which are not their original meanings and have literal as well as figurative ones.’ However, Emery (1988:64) draws a line between metaphor and idiom by pointing out that the metaphor has more striking imagery. In the present study, the focus is the Olunyole idiom in relation to the life of the Abanyole people.

In the Olunyole dialect, there may be no clear distinction between idioms, metaphors and proverbs (Otaro, 1927). Olunyole uses the same word (tsingano) to refer to the three aspects of creative figurative language. Despite their distinct functions of communicating information indirectly and figuratively, these forms have specific differences that have not been widely documented. Attempts have been made to compile a collection of Olunyole proverbs and sayings without analyzing the structural composition and showing how their function is a product of the cultural set-up of the Abanyole. Many years before Kenya’s Independence, Otaro (1927), working as a translator with Christian missionaries, merely chronicled the Olunyole sayings. Generally, the figurative forms of the Luhya language may not have been subjected to linguistic study. The present study therefore sought to not only collect but also analyze Olunyole idioms as integrated forms of linguistic communication in compositely reflecting the cultural set-up of the speech community.

Studies on the Luhya language have dwelt on their formal linguistic systems, without linking these systems to functionality in interactive communication. Abule (1988:43) notes that there is need to find a common ground between theoretical formalism and practicability of language forms. The current study ties theoretical formalism and the communicative practicality of Olunyole, a dialect of the Luhya language.
1.4 Statement of the Problem

The study sought to investigate how the idioms of the Olunyole, a dialect of the Luhya, reflect the socio-cultural aspects of the speech community. The processing, internalization, comprehension and interpretation of the Olunyole idioms are related to the cultural ecology of the speakers. Idioms of a language do not operate as autonomous entities; they are lexical entities that rely on a wide range of extra-linguistic variables for their interpretation in social interaction. Whereas a lot of effort in linguistics has been directed towards describing the formal systems of languages at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels, these linguistic systems are often studied independent of their communicative function in the social domain, and are only described in terms of their structure within the core language. Fowler (1974:234) observes:

Descriptive linguists are, I think rightly, unwilling to take account of facts about social behaviour, about the physical context of utterance, about personal attributes of speakers. So there are many aspects of linguistic performance which go unexplained.

This study took cognizance of the fact that linguistic expressions do significantly convey a great deal of the social circumstances of their use. The idioms as linguistic expressions are features of language that reveal something about the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer, and reflect the personal feelings that the speaker brings into a communicative event. The ‘socio-expressiveness’ of idioms of a language is grounded within the shared cultural beliefs and common knowledge accruing from years of interaction among members of the speech community. Thus, Olunyole idioms are considered products of enculturation. This is the process of culture becoming integrated within phenomena that informs human life (Crystal, 1991:103). The enculturation process is determined by a number of extralinguistic factors. These factors include the belief and custom systems, the people’s values and the nature of the speakers’ social relationships. The idiom, like the vast majority of other linguistic elements, has the capacity of being chosen from determinate ranges and for determinate functions. The language choice is a reflection and “…product of the speaker’s perceived competence and fluency in the
language used’’ (Mbori, 2008). The choice of idioms as linguistic expressions is a manifestation of the level of competence of the language users.

The sub-conscious decision to either communicate ‘‘plainly’’ or encode messages in idioms could be as a result of a combination of a number of extra-linguistic factors. Key among these factors is the age of the interlocutors. It is likely that the older generation will much more easily utter and interpret messages embellished with idiomatic expressions than the younger speakers of the language. Closely related to age is the availability of other options; the speakers may choose to communicate in other codes with successful comprehension. The study sought to investigate the interaction between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic factors in the use of idiomatic expressions as aspects of the indirect language among the members of Olunyole speech community.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

a) To determine the pragmatic usage of Olunyole idioms.

b) To investigate how Olunyole idioms reflect social reality.

c) To interrogate the extent to which Olunyole idioms enhance social control.

d) To examine the ethnolinguistic factors which determine the use of the Olunyole idioms.
1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

a) What relationships exist between the use of the Olunyole idioms and the pragmatic interaction of the speakers?

b) What aspects of social reality are manifested in the use of the Olunyole idioms?

c) How do the idioms of Olunyole enhance social control among the speakers?

d) What extra-linguistic factors determine the use of idioms in the Olunyole dialect of the Luhya language?

1.7 Significance and Justification of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the functionality of the Lunyore idioms. Thus, the idiom as a linguistic expression may be interpreted as a mere assertion, a request, a caution, a reprimand or an apology. In the study, the idiom is considered as a social act that enhances the interpersonal interaction of people with a common socio-economic and political background. The diverse functions of an idiom, as an utterance, may be discerned from the social reality that informs its manifestation. The extra-lingual and relatively constant distinctive value of the idiom in expressing social meaning is crucial to its overall communicative function in language. Fowler (1974:223) notes:

…..each piece of language is an integral component in the ongoing social and physical texture of life. The full value of an utterance and the motivation for its specific form can only be realized if it is seen as actively functioning within, and responding to, the framework of characteristics set by the situation in which it is produced.
This study recognized various functions of language, and specifically focused on Olunyole dialect of Luhya. The usage of idioms, just like other non-literal forms, within a speech community in communicating transactional meaning is necessitated by the fact that some meanings must be stated indirectly. On indirectness, Tannen (2006:361) notes:

> It is not possible to articulate everything we mean in every utterance. Some of the meanings must be ‘read between the lines’ based on past conversations and expectations about what will be said, and from culturally agreed upon meanings that are associated with particular expressions. Cultures differ in how much indirectness is expected, when it is expected, and what form it will take…

The study significantly related the construction and actual usage of the Olunyole idioms to the speakers’ perceptions of their distinct cultural identity. The associated meanings of idioms are thus culturally conditioned and stem from particular attention to the context of usage; the meanings are “pragmatized”. In emphasizing the ‘inseparability of language and culture’, Agar (1994:103) coins the merger term “languaculture.” This is the complementary interface between language and the socio-cultural reality it reflects and preserves. The usage of Olunyole idioms would be considered the communicative expression of the speakers’ cultural dispositions.

The study took the view that Olunyole idioms, though little “chips” of language, coherently reflect and functionally express the speech community’s experiences realized from the shared cultural ecology. The transactional function of language involves the convergence of information for the sole purpose of informing members of the society about various developments in various spheres of human endeavour (Halliday and Hassan, 1985). Language in use is regarded as reflecting social reality embraced and shared by the
speakers of any language. The idioms are conditioned by ‘fields’ of life as shared by members of the speech community. The idioms focus on fields such as death, birth, initiation and nutrition. The interactional function of language, on the other hand, involves the transmission of information in order to control or manipulate the behaviour of the members of the society. This study pursues the view that language is shaped to satisfy varying diverse needs-regulatory, instrumental or heuristic in the social interaction of the speakers. The Olunyole idioms, in this regard, are functionally patterned to facilitate interaction by reinforcing the shared heritage, and conveying the attitudes and feelings of the members of the speech community in varied contexts. The structures of any language inevitably relate to the functions that the given language performs in the speech community. Halliday (1978:10), in support of this view notes that “...a child knows what language is because he knows what the target language does, and that language is what it is as a result of the functions it has evolved to serve in the speakers’ lives.” It may be argued that language evolves with the in-put of the speakers to ensure the social continuity of the speech community as a distinct cultural entity.

In addition, the study sought to objectively link language to the socio-cultural context of the users-the speakers’ world view. As McCarthy (1998:144) notes, “...idioms always comment on the world in some way, rather than simply describe it.” The study examines the world view of the speakers from their own “lenses” as evident in their use of the idioms. The idioms of Olunyole, their shortened form notwithstanding, are considered communal tokens that express cultural and social solidarity and commonality.

While extensive studies have been carried out on the formal analysis of the Luhya language at the phonological, syntactic and morphological levels, these studies have however been carried out independent of the communicative function of language as a social construct. The line adopted by this study attempts to link language to the socio-cultural context of the users. It is a departure from the inventory approach that merely records the language forms. Further, the study empirically scrutinized those expressions as contextually-situated means of reflecting social strands - the essence and viability of interaction among the speech community.
The study sought to take idioms as a crucial component of a language; the idioms in Olunyole, as in any language, are a product of a people’s heritage and generational history realized through mutual interaction within shared cultural strands. The known documented studies on idioms have mostly dwelt on non-indigenous languages. McCarthy (1998:131) seems to stress the existence of gaps in the study of idioms by asserting:

What is almost lacking, though, is an attempt to examine function and distribution in real contexts of use…There is often an underlying assumption that idiomatic expressions are merely rather informal or colloquial alternatives to their semantically equivalent literal free-forms.

Idiomatic expressions, like the other elements of language such as proverbs and metaphors, become part of what a speaker of the language acquires. The fluency of the native speaker in the usage of the language becomes evidence of the speaker’s identity with the specific speech community. It would be necessary to relate the competence of the speakers to their actual situations of purposeful interaction.

This study will spur the speakers of indigenous languages to take keen and conscious interest in the fixed expressions of the local languages and appreciate their aesthetic expressiveness. It may ultimately disapprove of the thought among speakers of indigenous languages that knowledge of foreign languages brings with it many opportunities, and therefore contribute to reversing the relegated position that these local African languages are assigned by the speakers. Abule (1988:48) notes, “...ironically there are more foreign linguists that are interested in the studies of local languages than the Africans themselves are.” With more focus on foreign languages as preferred media of scientific advancement, many local languages such as Luhya, together with their dialects, are likely to be ignored and may become extinct. This study is therefore part of the effort to preserve and strengthen indigenous languages which are threatened with extinction. The linguistic
documentation of the Olunyole idiom will hopefully preserve the heritage of the Abanyole for posterity. Crystal (2000: 102) on language preservation notes:

For real progress in an endangered language, it is clear that several elements need to be in place. There needs to be an indigenous community interested in obtaining help, and with a positive attitude towards language rescue. There needs to be a positive political climate, committed to the preservation of ethnic identity and cultural rights, prepared to put some money where its principles are, and where the political implications of language maintenance have been thought through, and there need to be professionals available to help with the tasks of language selection, recording, analysis, and teaching.

Sociolinguistically, the Abanyole are largely multilingual, as confirmed by Oyule, one of the informants in this study. They use a number of language codes with varying levels of competence for communication. There are those who, apart from using the indigenous Olunyole language, also speak Swahili, a Bantu language, with impressive fluency. The younger generation also speaks “Sheng”, one of the emerging language codes associated with the urban youth. Although there may be other instances of mixed languages, “Sheng” in Kenya is the known mixed code of Swahili and indigenous languages, that is not a pidgin or creole but “has pidginized or creolized features” (Kembo and Webb, 1998:37). The mixed codes have a social significance of usage among youths, often city-dwellers, that have no or little regard for the traditional cultural life (Kembo-Sure and Webb, 1998:37). Still, the Olunyole speakers who have gone through formal education speak the Kenyan official language, English. In their strong call for the compilation of the Olunyole Dictionary, the Abanyole elders in Makokha (2012: i) note:

...chances are that within the next two or so generations the language will be more-or-less extinct, inasmuch as we note from the current younger generation more and more of the language is
becoming rapidly adulterated with English and Kiswahili, and only shallow vocabulary of it is remembered.

With a number of language codes available to them, the generation of educated Abanyole youths rarely uses the indigenous languages. Consequently, it is largely the older non-literate generation that uses the indigenous languages. This trend portends a precarious situation for the existence of the indigenous language (Abule, 1988:73). As the older generation disappears through natural attrition, it is feared that expressions such as Olunyole idioms will no longer be recognized as components of the indigenous languages.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study restricted itself to idioms and the aspect of their use in the speakers’ contexts of speech community co-existence. The study makes a cursory reference to the structure of the idioms only in relation to function. It is expected that some of the idioms in Olunyole could be evident in the other Luhya dialects, either in the exact forms of equivalence. Even with this assumption the study focused on the Olunyole idioms and did not therefore attempt a comparative analysis. In addition, the study is restricted to language use in contexts of the Abanyole cultural group and does not delve into the structural compositionality of the idioms.

1.9 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one focuses on the background of the study and the statement of the problem. In this chapter, the research objectives and questions are also stated. The study undertook to investigate the functionality of Olunyole idioms in reflecting and constructing social reality, and enhancing social control in pragmatic interactions. In addition, the justification and significance of the study are provided.
Chapter two presents the theoretical framework and the literature review. The study blends the Functional and the CDA approaches to analysis of language study. The idioms are viewed as utterances that portray functional interaction as socially conditioned.

Chapter three presents the research design and methodology for the study. The qualitative descriptive design was adopted in the study. The idioms collected were further tested on a purposively selected or a voluntary sample through the ethno-discursive approach. The functionality of the idioms is checked through confirmation by use of questionnaires and interviews (Appendix C). The sample of native speakers used in the collection and analysis of the idioms is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the cultural world view of the Olunyole speakers and the relationship between the Abanyole world view and the Olunyole language in use. The expressions of a language enrich the cultural heritage of the socio-cultural group. The excerpts of the ethnographic accounts are discussed as ideational texts (the idiomatic content) in line with the Halliday’s functional study of language.

Chapter five of the study provides the data presentation, analysis and discussion. Olunyole idioms are related to the socio-cultural orientation of the native speakers in terms of domains of context. The chapter is hinged on the sociolinguistic and ethno-linguistic issues emerging from the use of idioms. The idioms are analysed as instances of social acts that regulate interactional behaviour.

Chapter six presents a review of the whole study and the conclusion resulting from the data and analysis. It also provides recommendations and the areas that could be the focus of further studies.
1.10 Conclusion of the Chapter

Chapter one provided the introductory background to the pragmatic study of Olunyole idioms. The chapter also discussed the problem of the study and located the study within the Emuhaya Sub-county that is populated by the Abanyole speakers of Olunyole. In addition, the research questions and objectives were formulated. Particularly, the study sought to investigate the correlation between the use of idioms and the speakers’ collective social reality, and their functionality in structuring social behaviour. The chapter also gave the justification and significance of the study in preserving the value of indigenous languages, in this regard Olunyole. Finally, chapter one highlights the structure of the whole thesis in terms of chapter progression.
CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework that informs the study. The study is hinged on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework that is a development of the earlier non-formal functional theory proposed by M.A.K Halliday. This chapter discusses the interrelatedness between the CDA and the general functional theory, and further explores the pragmatic dimension of language use, with particular reference to frames and schemata, and how they determine the construction, use and interpretation of Olunyole idioms in their reflection of the world-view of the native speech community. It also examines how idioms draw from and are related to other forms of figurative language, like metaphors, proverbs and sayings. Furthermore, the relevant literature concerning idioms and idiomaticity is discussed. Generally, the theoretical framework and literature review in this chapter are grounded in the sociolinguistic and pragmatic planes of language study.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework

The Critical Discourse Analysis vouches for language-in-use as the key target of analysis. As Blommaert (2006:7) notes, the Critical Discourse Analysis is “a linguistically oriented discourse analysis firmly anchored in social reality and with a deep interest in actual problems and forms of inequality in societies.” The study examines the socio-interactive functionality of idioms in reflecting the heritage of the Olunyole speech community. Idiomatic expressions thus portray the interactional networks among various social strata. The CDA, which the study adopts, traces its origins from the work of critical linguistics. This is a branch of language study that analyses socially motivated language usage
(Fairclough, 1995:6). On the link between the CDA and Critical linguistics, Blommaert (2006:23) notes:

…the work of critical linguistics was based on the systemic functional and socio-semiotic linguistic of Michael Halliday, whose linguistic methodology is still hailed as crucial to the CDA because it offers clear and rigorous linguistic categories for analysing the relation between discourse and social meaning.

The social meaning of idioms and other forms of figurative language is interpretable from social interaction. The messages and meanings of the idioms are constructed as speakers interact at various levels of relationships and social categories created by culturally defined power and authority relations. Martin and Rose (2003:15) on language, power and ideology note:

Ideology and power run through the whole ensemble of language and culture, positioning people within each social context as having more or less power, and opening or narrowing their access to resources of meaning.

Accessibility to such resources of meaning is determined by the diverse characteristics of the speakers. The expressions therefore not only enable speakers to perform certain social acts, but also reveal and reflect specific relationships among participants in discourse. In addition, apart from being constituents of discourse texts, idiomatic forms accomplish the speakers’ wide range of intentions, purposes or desires that are related to the users’ inner consciousness within varying pragmatic contexts. Speakers and hearers are able to manipulate, control or influence the conduct and behaviour of one another. The following three Olunyole idioms illustrate the relationship between context of discourse and social meaning:
1. *Okhu-luma musikalo*: to bite one’s palm.

2. *Okhweya omunwa hasi*: to wipe one’s mouth on the ground.

3. *Okhu-sena mwisasa*: to stir the army ants.

The first expression *okhu-luma musikalo* is used in situations and circumstances that require endurance or resilience. The utterance of the idiom assures the hearer that such situations of physical, emotional or psychological pain are only temporary. The idiom demonstrates social solidarity in the face of difficulty; it is indeed a morale-booster. Whereas the *okhuluma musikalo* idiom binds the interlocutors in social conversation, the other two reprimand undesired behaviour considered as greed for item 2 and provocation for 3. The resultant social meanings of the idiomatic utterances and their functions are worked out from the contextual knowledge that obtains from the participants’ continued interaction. The interpretation of the expressions as actual language structures is conventionalized in “their cultural differentiation, social function and cognitive bias” (van Dijk, 1977:1). The conventionalized knowledge that guides and determines the processing of the idiom *okhweya omunwa hasi* ‘to wipe one’s mouth on the ground’, for example, must be shared by the members of the speech community in verbal communicative situations for the speakers to decode the appropriate social function of the idiom as ‘disapproval of greed or lack of contentment for what one possesses.’

As part of the social integration, a child growing within a speech community therefore gradually learns to relate the indigenously acquired knowledge to the contextual interpretation of implicit language. Such knowledge is regarded as indigenous because it is drawn from the natural setting and authentic practices of the speakers as they interact. The expression, *okhw-eya omunwa hasi*, ‘to wipe one’s mouth on the ground’ is related to the feeding behaviour of fowls; after a mouthful, they wipe their beaks on the ground as if they are contented but they still keep on searching for more food. It is constructed by relating human behaviour to that of poultry that the speakers rear for food. The speaker who has had real time experience with such a practice has therefore the adequate
knowledge to project the interpretation of the idiom from the feeding of poultry to other forms of human behaviour.

There is therefore a discernible interplay between the formalist textually-oriented and the empirically pragmatic context-oriented approaches to the study of language. Halliday (1970:42) corroborates this by noting that “…particular forms taken by the grammatical system of language are closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve.” The structure of linguistic units, including idioms that this study addresses, is a product of the functions that linguistic manifestations serve in the speakers’ lives. Since the CDA is premised upon the social nature of discourse, it is also concerned with the likely relation between the linguistic units and functional social variables such as age, gender and class. Thus, language expresses and reflects the networks of relationships as structured along the socially conditioned attributes of the speakers.

The idiomatic expressions of the language capture the levels of authority between the interactants in the discourse of conversation. Such authority is drawn from socio-cultural considerations such as age, kinship relationships and the special position of influence that speakers hold in the social set-up. Okhu-haambia lisafu ‘to hand a leaf to somebody’ in Olunyole, is for example, uttered by a speaker that is older than the hearer in a situation where the former is irritated by unexplained laughter from the latter. The Olunyole speakers traditionally used leaves to wipe themselves in the toilet; in fact responding to a call of nature is referred to as okhutsia mu bulimo ‘to go to the bush.’ This is because the speakers would walk to bushes to answer to calls of nature long time before the construction of toilets became part of their life system.

In the case of the use of the Olunyole idiom okuhambía lisafu, ‘to hand one a leaf’, one would be inviting an addressee to wipe the source of ridicule of the elderly speaker, and this would be a curse for the younger interactant. This ‘leaf’ idiom is a deterrent for disrespectful behaviour toward the elderly. Age in this case is a determinant in the usage of indirect language; language imposes a code of expected behaviour on the interaction
between the youthful and older members of the speech community. The older speakers, for example, are likely to package messages, on certain topics, in figures of speech to ensure that only the intended recipients get the information. For example, a woman whose husband remains ill for a long time may be asked *anywetsaakho obusela*, ‘does he take some porridge?’ As Otieno, an oral informant puts it, this is asked by elderly people to ascertain the recovery of the sick person. Porridge in this context is the act of sex. It is assumed that any sick man who attempts to perform conjugal responsibilities is on the sure path to recovery. The younger speakers are likely to give the idiom a literal ‘food’ interpretation.

Kress (1985:32) argues that what are considered as languages, sociolinguistically speaking, in actual fact are classified along a set of the following functional parameters:

i) The mode or channel of communication which recognizes that language is realized in speech or written forms, direct or indirect (mediated) communication. The choices of language usage that speakers make are partly determined by the proximity of the target recipient, which in turn informs the medium of communication that a particular speaker selects.

ii) Sociolects include socially related varieties such as class, professional jargons, peer-group talk, age and gender. The present study investigates the correlation between these social variables and the usage of idioms among the speakers of Olunyole. The younger members of the speech community, for example, use language codes that distinguish them from the older speakers.

iii) The domain related varieties are based on particular occasions or social domains within which language is used. Such domains include social functions - funeral and burial, initiation rites, local gatherings, informal peer talks and ordinary conversations. The idiomatic expressions communicate messages that are contextualized within these domains. For example, *okhuleera obusela*, ‘to bring porridge’ is an idiom related to
the burial rites. The female married relatives to the deceased return to the burial site as part of the cleansing process. On this occasion, no real porridge is carried to the home. The expression culturally refers to the subsequent visit made to the home of the deceased immediately after burial.

iv) Stylistic varieties are genre formats of communication. In this regard, language use falls within a number of genres such as story-telling, jokes, casual chat and public speech. The genre determines the choice of the expressions to be used. The proverbs are the most restricted of the forms of indirect language; they are usually situated in formal contexts such as ritual ceremonies presided over by elders and people in authority. Idioms and sayings could be common in ordinary informal conversations and chats.

It is worth noting that as Kress (1985) observes, language in its social meaning transcends all the above ‘‘diatrics.’’ Diatrics, in this sense, are the functional subcomponents that inform the levels of pragmatic use of language as a tool for verbalizing social action. They encompass the social domains, mode of communication (speech or written, direct indirect) and genre-related varieties. The use of idioms simultaneously relies on and draws from each of these levels. The motivation to resort to an expression stems from the social characteristics and relationships of the participants in regard to language function (sociolects) and intended impact of the idiomatic form. The intended expressive effect may not be achieved with the use of the plain literal language. Indeed Blommaert (2003: 17) on an utterance as an instance of language in context says:

Any utterance produced by people will be, for instance, an instance of oral speech, spoken with a particular accent, gendered and reflective of age and social position, tied to a particular situation or domain and produced in a certain stylistically or generally identifiable format.
The Olunyole idiomatic utterances are therefore shaped to bind the speech community participants in certain social relationships and reveal their intentions and attitudes by engaging them in contextualized acts. The idioms *Okhu-kwa m’munwa*, ‘fall in the mouth’ and *okhu-liinda olulimi*, ‘to guard the tongue’, should be understood in the context of the entire instance of interaction as performing acts such as compliment, admonishment, advice and doubting. These idioms would be uttered to control the verbal behaviour of the speakers in various social interactions.

The CDA, the core theoretical framework of this study, is characterized by a number of fundamental principles. First, the CDA focuses on what language use means to its users, specifically how language matters to the people who use it. Fairclough (1995:15) notes that the “insider’s view” as advanced by Boasian anthropology is crucial in understanding the dynamics of language in society. It is also the cornerstone of ethnography as a methodological strategy. Thus, language is objectively studied from the people’s own experiences that have a broader social implication. The use of expressions is a clear demonstration of closer and cemented relationships among the speakers of a language, and being an insider entails the ability to contextually relate the expressions to the cultural experiences as collectively shared. The Olunyole idiom, ‘ingokho ne-ramila lituma’ with the literal translation as ‘before a hen swallows a grain of maize’ is only accessible to speakers of the language who are able to understand the feeding habits of hens, and are therefore able to relate such habits to specific human behaviour.

The second point takes the view that language operates differently in different environments. Thus, in order to understand how language works, there is need to contextualize it appropriately in order to determine the relations between language usage and the various purposes for which and conditions under which it operates. An utterance of the idiom only makes sense, that is, it is meaningfully interpretable, if it is considered within the situation and circumstances that motivate the language use.
The third principle is sociolinguistic. Language is not an abstract entity but one that is concrete and contextualized in society. This principle supports the empirical study of the language phenomenon. Members of the speech community have within their innate communicative competencies and repertoires containing different sets of varieties within the community, and these varieties are the speakers’ tools of communication; the repertoires determine what people can do with language. People are thus constrained by the availability of a range of socially determined structures that characterize the speech community. The members of the speech community exploit their creativity and competence to perform actions that define the identity of the community in propagating the cultural values and norms. Idioms and conceptual metaphors therefore constitute part of the verbal repertoires that a native speaker utilizes to express meaning and pass messages in communicative interactions. Of course languages have other recognized figurative forms such as proverbs and sayings, which speakers of a language choose to use for vivid expression. Giles and Clair (1979:17) in highlighting language diversities and repertoires note:

Language is not a homogeneous, static system. It is multi-channeled, multi-variable and capable of vast modifications from context to context by the speaker; slight differences are often detected by listeners and afforded social significance.

The CDA therefore focuses on the socially conditioned constraints and inequalities reflected in the diverse uses and functions of language. Lastly, the state and structure of the world plays a pivotal role in shaping communication events. Language is a product and reflection of the world as structured and perceived by the language users as they build social networks for their continued survival. This interactionist perspective echoes the fact that social relations among groups of people, who share identities and expectations regulated by the social norms of behaviour, are cultivated and enhanced by the functions to which language is put.
This section has highlighted the general principles of the CDA which the study uses as its underpinning framework. The CDA is prudent to the study because it analyses language as a heterogeneous entity used for reflecting and (re)constructing reality in society. The CDA itself draws from Halliday’s functionalism which is discussed in 2.2.1 below.

### 2.2.1 Hallidayan Functionalism

Critical Discourse Analysis draws insights from the earlier functional approaches to the study of language. Functionality of language is traced from the angle that natural language has certain functions for a socially defined group. Although the functional perspective to language was initiated by M.A.K Halliday, other scholars have made immense contributions to the description of this view of language. Dik (1980) in Functional Grammar, for example, focuses his postulations on the interpretability of language by reference to how it is used. van Dijk (1998:76) notes:

> A language is regarded in the first place as an instrument by means of which people can enter into Communicative relations with one another (sic). From this point of view, language is primarily a pragmatic phenomenon - a symbolic instrument used for communicative purposes.

Halliday’s functionalism is based on the assumptions that language serves two broad functions for its users; language is a means by which people reflect on things and secondly a means by which its users act on things. Halliday refers to the functions as the ideational function and the interpersonal function (Halliday, 1985:41). In this case, it is the social action and the social engagement of the participants interacting with the aid of language. The ideational and interpersonal functions are concretized through the third function - the textual function. The textual function is responsible for shaping language into relevant coherent communicative units within diverse contextual potentialities of the speech community. The three functional levels identified by Halliday are components of the semantic form of language. The systemic theory, another theory related to the CDA, is a
theory of “meaning as choice’” (Halliday, 1985: xiv). Thus, the meanings encoded by the
initiator of the communication process are deliberately and consciously selected from a
wide range of items from the lexicon. The creative compositionality that is responsible for
expressions such as the idioms of a language is guided by social contracting; their
processing and interpretation operate within the conventional cultural ecology of the
speech community (Christina, 2005:17). Relating the functional view to the present study,
it is possible to abstract specific elements and expressions that characterize a language in
order to display and analyse them in terms of their metafunctionality. Idioms, for example,
are meaning representations of the processes of consciousness, events, actions and
relations. This falls within the ideational function which represents the user’s experience
of the world that is about us, and also inside us, the world of our imagination.

Another functional level is the interpersonal function of language that considers idioms as
a means of action, in this case the speaker doing something to the hearer using the
idiomatic expressions. Related to functionality, Halliday and Hassan (1985:12) document
three dimensions of language use: field, tenor and mode. The field, which corresponds to
Halliday’s ideation, is the subject matter. This concerns what the speakers and hearers are
engaged in and all that is happening in entirety. In the study of Olunyole idioms, the field
may be viewed as the aggregate experiences and knowledge that socio-culturally binds the
members of the speech community. The idioms are uttered in the context of concrete
happenings to which the speakers relate. These are the social occasions and events that
inform the speakers’ interactions in the group membership. Collectively these dimensions
are referred to as metafunctions that overlap in the realization of the social context of
language in specific situations.

The tenor dimension of idioms as utterances reinforces the relationship among speakers;
the relationships, roles and status of the speakers will determine the usage of Olunyole
idiomatic expressions such as okhwikhala khusisokoro, ‘to sit on a maize cob’. This idiom
is used in an informal setting among peers or friends when a speaker wishes to depart
from friends because there are pressing issues calling for one’s attention. Such expressions
facilitate the exchange of roles in the course of interaction, in giving commands, instructions, compliments, admonishments, ordinary informative statements and making inquiries. Under the textual function (the mode) the idiom does not occur in isolation. Rather, the idiom embodies meaning that is relevant to the context by fitting it within what precedes and (or) what follows it, as well as the context of situation. The textual function underlies what Halliday and Hassan (1985:12) note as ‘... the symbolic organization of the text, the status it has, and its function in the context.’ Thus, the interpretation of idiomatic utterances is therefore a product of metafunctional variables that are components of social contexts.

The model of language metafunctionality in the social context is illustrated in the figure below:

![Figure 2.1: Language Multifunctionality](image)

Source: Martin and Rose (2003:244)

The figure depicts language as a system of components that create relations between the linguistic and material resources. The idiom *okhufunaka omukongo*, ‘to break one’s back’, is used to recognize the age difference of the participants. The social context of sharing any available resources requires that people take turns to pick up their shares according to the order of their age. It is believed that when a younger person takes up a
turn before the older people then the latter’s back will bend with time. This idiom is therefore used to remind participants to observe respect for age when the older speaker says to the younger one: *witsa okhuufunaka omukongo*, ‘you will break my back.’ It involves participants of varying ages taking up social opportunities in turn, and required by cultural etiquette to remain patient until one’s turn comes. The utterance is therefore contextualized as the social action of regulating the behaviour of unnecessary haste.

Halliday (1975:18-21) further lists functions of language, which also apply to the use of idiomatic expressions for critical socializing contexts as follows:

i) Instrumental; the “I want” function, by means of which users satisfy their material needs in the sense of making things happen so as to survive in the physical and socio-cultural environment.

ii) Regulatory; the “I do” that function, by means of which the user regulates the behaviour of others. The users carry varying levels of influence upon one another, depending on’ power’ levels dictated by the political, economic and socio-cultural strands.

iii) Interactional; the “me and you” function, by means of which people interact with others. It is the interactionist function of language that creates identity awareness and enables the members of the speech community to reconcile with the challenges that face them in society.

iv) Personal; “the here I come” function, by means of which one expresses one’s uniqueness. This corresponds to the emotive function of language in which speakers express their personal feelings towards their encounters (events, people experiences and surroundings).
v) Informative; “I’ve got something to tell you” function of language by means of which information is conveyed. The information relaying function satisfies the human desire to expand frontiers of knowledge in order to manipulate the world within (inner consciousness) and the world outside (state of affairs) for continued survival.

vi) Imaginative; “the let’s pretend” function, whereby the language users (re)create the world. Language is used stylistically to represent meaning impactfully by “colouring the world” through creative choices.

The functionality of language relies on its potential to simultaneously reflect and construct communicative contexts that enable social interaction. According to Hymes (1974:51), the manifestation of the interactive functions of language in social situations involves related aspects. The semiotic aspect views language as a system of symbolic occurrences that “...package operative forms of knowledge by which interactants access reality” (Hymes, 1974:51). These symbolic systems attain their form from the collective social experience of the members of the speech community. Idioms, metaphors, jokes and indirect speech acts have distinct compositional structures as semiotic units, which are analysable in larger stretches of language (discourse) as “... structure in the light of functional requirement and function in the light of structural requirement” (Cutting, 2000:3). These semiotic units could be realized as phonic symbols that are functional utterances in actual contexts of use.

The second aspect that informs the functionality of linguistic interaction, as suggested by Hymes (1974), is the activity aspect. The participants while using expressions such as idioms and metaphors engage in social activities comprising certain actions. Linguistic expressions in this sense are regarded as a means by which participants in discourse are involved in physical and mental acts for both transactional and interactional purposes. The acts depicted in the expressions capture the inner mental state of the speakers and the emotive attitudes that characterize conversational discourses. For example, the idiom
*okhu-luma mu-sikalo* ‘to bite one’s palm’ is used in discourses that empathise with listeners going through difficult times and emotionally exacting moments. In particular contexts, it expresses solidarity with those experiencing physical and emotional pain.

Another aspect linked to the functional usage of expressions of a language is the material aspect. Communicative events are premised upon the concrete and abstract materials that fall within the conscious and subconscious environment of the speakers and listeners. The speech community relates the surrounding material to human relationships, and figuratively encodes messages involving people, objects, phenomena and parts of animal bodies. The idiom *okhwoola khu-sisina* ‘to get to the root’ is formed from the part of a plant that holds it firmly in the ground. ‘The root’ of a plant is thus given a figurative bearing in advocating for the identification of causes rather than symptoms in seeking credible solutions to problems. Interpreting the expressions therefore involves mapping the materials onto the collective experience of the members of the speech community.

The fourth aspect according to Hymes (1974), which is related to the usage of figurative expressions, is the political aspect. This aspect concerns the distribution of “social goods” such as power, status, beauty, intelligence, strength and sexual orientation. It touches on the social features and portrays their unequal distribution in the society. These social features determine the construction and comprehension of the various instances of figurative language. There are, for example, Olunyole figures of speech that focus on beauty, attraction and marriage. The idiom *okhuboha* ‘to be round’ is exclusively used to indicate that a girl is ready for marriage. The girl is seen to have fully grown in age, physical appearance and mental maturity. Such idioms are therefore gender-specific in addressing issues of sexuality.

Language therefore dynamically creates figurative expressions such as metaphors, idioms, sayings and proverbs that simultaneously fulfill and serve a number of the aforementioned functions. Every idiom, for example, is a product of culturally constrained imagination, in
which case the human mind expresses inner consciousness using the familiar surroundings as collectively experienced by the speakers of the language code.

Furthermore, the idiom shapes interaction by regulating behaviour and creating ‘power’ relations. Language in this sense reflects the unequal nature of society; people wield and exercise varying degrees of power and authority in ensuring desirable levels of harmony in society. These inequalities result from social variables such as age, gender, kinship and cultural roles. An idiom, *okhu-seena-khumusila* directly translated ‘as to step on someone’s tail’ means any act, verbal or deed, that causes provocation through emotional injury. This particular idiom performs ‘a cautioning’ speech act in regulating people to be sensitive to the feelings of other interactants. The tail could be figuratively interpreted as the most sensitive portion of information or behaviour that could cause negative reaction. The English language has an equivalent idiom ‘to step on someone’s toes’ which shares the same meaning as the one in Olunyole, ‘to deliberately make someone angry through open provocation.’

The speaker of a language subconsciously “embeds” figurative expressions into the communicative intentions with the assumption that the receiver has the necessary socio-cultural knowledge and linguistic competence to facilitate the desired interpretation. Indeed, the moment a speaker realizes that the receiver in a communicative event does not demonstrate a shared level of native speaker competence and fluency, then that speaker endeavours to use the “plain” ordinary language, devoid of what Hulmann (1992:65) calls “the embellishments of language.”

Generally, in analysing language as a functional entity, analysts focus on people’s actual utterances in texts and contexts, and endeavour to figure out the processes that determine the structure of those utterances. Schiffrin (2006:171) suggests that language systematizes rules and “simultaneously embeds itself within social norms and cultural prisms.”
linguistic expressions, apart from communicating messages, serve a regulatory purpose in ensuring the participants’ conformity to the social norms.

The functionality of language in its contextual use is interactive creativity that draws from various levels of competence (Pulman, 1993). In this regard, linguists have formulated the concepts of linguistic competence and communicative competence in analysing language as a concerted human activity. Linguistic competence is rule-oriented creativity that precedes the communicative competence. Communicative competence, on the other hand, is the inherent performance-potential within constructions and expressions in the actual usage of language. Krishnaswamy and Verma (1989: 321) observe that communicative competence manifests itself in the speakers’ grammatical, psycholinguistic, socio-cultural and de-facto innate knowledge and ability to use language. They further explain that this competence, as reflected in the native speaker, is “formally possible, implementationally feasible, contextually appropriate and actually occurring in all strands of communicative interaction” (Krishnaswamy and Verma, 1989:321).

Although linguistic competence is largely considered a part of communicative competence, some areas of the linguistic competence may not necessarily apply to the communicative competence of the native speakers. Krishnaswamy and Verma (1989:319) further note:

… no normal person and no normal community is limited in repertoire to a single variety code to an unchanging monotony which would preclude the possibility of indicating respect, insolence, humour, mock-seriousness, role-distance, etc. by switching from one code variety to another.

Apart from the linguistic and communicative competence, there seem to be other forms of abilities that determine appropriateness in language use. The following reconstructed interactive model recognizes that there is an interplay between a number other levels of
From the above model, the discourse competence and strategic competence complement the communicative competence. The discourse competence is considered the native speakers’ ability to construct continuous connected language that communicates in diverse contexts. The strategic competence is the ability of the speakers to make choices that effectively expresses the intended meanings with the desired impact. It also ensures that speakers are sensitive to the feelings of other interactants, and that the ‘good manners’ of language use are also adhered to. The pragmatic interpretation that this study adopts cuts across all the other levels of competence. Within the pragmatic realm of interpretation, idiomatic expressions are therefore a means of communicating messages with strategic intentions in conversational contexts.

Hymes (1974:79) in supporting Halliday’s language functionality recognizes that the structural (formalist) and functionalist approaches to language apply differently in a number of ways summarised in the following table:
Table 2.1: Approaches to the study of language in use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Approach</th>
<th>Functional approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on structure of language (a code) of grammar.</td>
<td>Focuses on structure of speech acts (as acts, events) as ways of speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzes language structure before any (option analysis of language use. Assumes that language use derives from language structure.</td>
<td>Analyzes language use before analysis of language. Assumes that language structure and use are integrated; organization of language use reveals additional structural features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes that the most important function of language is referential, i.e. the use of language to describe the world through proposition.</td>
<td>Assumes that language has a range of functions, including referential, stylistic and social functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies the elements and structures of language separately from contexts of use; ignores the culture (ways of acting, thinking, and being) of those using the language.</td>
<td>Studies the elements of language within their contexts of use; attends to the culture (ways of acting, thinking and being) of those using the language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes that language structure is independent of social function and uses. Any language can (potentially) serve any social, cultural, or stylistic purpose.</td>
<td>Assumes that languages, varieties and styles can be adapted to different situations, functions, and uses, and gain different social values for their use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes that language is a single code within a homogeneous community: each speaker replicates a uniform structure.</td>
<td>Assumes that language comprises a repertoire of speech styles within a diverse community: each speaker adds to an organized matrix of diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes the uniformity of speakers, hearers, action, events, and communities across world languages</td>
<td>Seeks to investigate the diversity of speakers, hearers, actions, events and communities within world languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, whereas the functional approach is interested in the study of language in its diverse forms determined by functional perimeters such as context and cultural orientations of the speakers, the structural approach considers language as an entity that is independent of the contexts of use.

Communicative competence that is related to the functional view of language is pragmatically concerned with the appropriacy of usage. Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006:497) under the glossary define communicative competence as:

...the knowledge people have, most of it below the level of awareness, of what is and is not a culturally appropriate way to carry out a communicative task in their native language and culture.

The functionality of idioms, that this study targets, emanates from their contextualization within the bigger organ of what Fishman (1972:45) regards as the context of culture. Radford (1988:2), in distinguishing the various theories of language study, notes that ‘...the theory of language use is concerned with how linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge interact in speech comprehension and production.’ The idiom is a product of both linguistic creativity at the level of its composition, and non-linguistic factors for its comprehension. The study therefore interrogates the non-linguistic pragmatic issues that enable the Olunyole speech community to produce and interpret Olunyole idioms as elements of language.

### 2.2.2 Pragmatics and Functionality

According to Leech (1981:6), pragmatics is viewed as the study of the rules and principles which govern language in use, as opposed to the idealized rules of grammar. In using language primarily for human communication, people rely on the system of knowledge and attitudes that are constantly brought to bear on the utterances in order to make
meaning out of them. Inferences, the information left unstated by the sender, provide the requisite missing links that ensure that the messages are interpreted as intended by the sender. van Dijk (1998:34) notes that supplying missing links to utterances involves the recovery of the sender’s intended meaning by providing bits of information which are not directly inherent in the utterances. The messages in texts and utterances are decoded on the basis of the interlocutors’ assumptions regarding their general knowledge and perceptions about the state of affairs of the world. An instance of communication is thus packaged as a set of related propositions which objectively reflect the state of affairs of the world and the intervening attitudes of the language users. Idioms are communicative utterances whose meaning and interpretation blend with the pragmatic background knowledge, context and the attendant inferences. Lattey (1986:59) vouches for “the contextual organization of idioms on the basis of recurring pragmatic functions related to the interaction between the speaker and the listener, speaker and outside world, positive evaluation and negative evaluation of people and phenomena.”

Assumptions, presuppositions and implicatures are crucial concepts in pragmatics which have a bearing in the production and processing of idioms. This study fits idioms in the general cultural set-up of the speakers as they interact in varied contexts. The view taken is that the Olunyole idioms are not used randomly in language, but rather they are functionally used in communicative events to reinforce the shared values within the cultural contexts, in the broadest sense of the world culture (McCarthy, 1998:135). Drew and Holt (1995) highlight the non-random occurrence of idioms and strengthen the argument that there is need to closely observe how and when idioms are used beyond their formal characteristics. Similarly, Lattey (1986) supports the pragmatic dimension to the study of idioms by noting that the contextual structuring of idioms on the basis of pragmatic functions that determine and influence social relationships captures the creative potential of language in its natural use. Idioms are thus created among groups with shared experiences in both public and private interactions; they are highly interactive items and therefore best studied in context. Words regularly combine to form recognizable expressions with specialized pragmatic functions which can only be discerned and appreciated in context (Coulmas, 1985).
The following diagram shows the functional model of language:

**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PHENOMENA**
(The state of the world)

**PRAGMATIC LENSE**
(Shared socio-cultural knowledge, inferences, presuppositions)

**NON-FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**
(Context-independent: Propositions, truth & falsity, Sense Relations)

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**
(Context-Dependent: Metaphors, Similes, Proverbs, Symbolism, Idioms)

**PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES:**
Thoughts, Ideas, Emotions and Attitudes

**DOMAINS:**
Cultural Models, Social Events & occasions

**INTERACTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:**
Identities, Roles, Power & Status Relations

**ACTS AND ACTIONS:**
Questioning, Saying, Doubting, Advising, Apologizing

*Figure 2.3: The Functional Model of Language Construction and interpretation*
*Source: Researcher (Atichi, 2016)*
The model captures the choices of language use as drawn from the culturally patterned domains. The interpretation and effect of the idioms are dependent on the shared knowledge of the world among the participants in interactive communication events. The strands of shared knowledge are accumulated and passed on to generations of people with a common traceable heritage and cultural identity using language as a dynamic tool of cultural transmission. The knowledge is organized such that only portions of it are activated at certain points of interaction in the processing of connected sequences of utterances.

Discourse analysts recognize two procedures of mental processing of information. Crystal (1998:123) identifies the top-bottom and bottom-up procedures of processing incoming pieces of discourse. The bottom-up procedure entails working out meanings of words and structures, and building the composite meaning(s) of the resultant expression. Crystal (1998: 124) says that ‘...the linguistic units that constitute an expression are sequentially processed as syntagms of (co)occurrence.’ This concurrence is, however, regulated by the pragmatic factors that necessitate the interpretation of the composite phrases.

This approach compares with Hymes (1974:79) structural approach which looks at ‘‘the structures of language separately and independent of social function.’’ The approach considers the sense relations between the units that constitute the expression. This provides the literal understanding of the expression. The top-bottom procedure, on the other hand, involves making predictions on the basis of what the participants know and anticipate from the context and the preceding utterances, together with the relevant cues that go with the communicative event. Furthermore, Hymes (1974:224) notes that the assumptions derived from the accumulated experiences, and the belief system, enable interlocutors to assign meaning to instances of language. The mental structure and organization of the knowledge of the world through the top-bottom procedure is facilitated by the theory of frames and schemata. The cultural knowledge structured in the participant’s mind is thus triggered to use by the contextual cues. For example, the idiom
omukhono omuraambi, ‘to have a long hand’, is transformed from the literal to the contextual meaning of “theft.” This interpretation is accessible through linkage of the idioms to the surrounding utterances in the conversation. This study considers frames and schemata discussed in the following section to functionality of idioms as they represent actual situations of usage.

2.2.3 Frames and Schemata

Gumperz (1982:42) notes that frames provide the theoretical means of formulating the systematic nature of stored knowledge. Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006:502) explain that framing is a “superordinate message that communicates how utterances are meant and what speakers think they are doing when they speak in a given context.” A frame is a data structure for representing stereotyped situations such as a funeral, political rally, wedding and office correspondence. Idioms are functionally used in varied social situations. Their production and processing require that appropriate frameworks are selected from the memory of knowledge. The frameworks so chosen are adapted to fit into whichever situation by altering details where and when deemed necessary. Frames then contain information about component states, actions or events which enable language to allocate appropriate conditions and consequences to the utterances (Gee, 1999:23). The frames are the containers that store the knowledge that the mind gathers from experience. A frame further contains specific slots which aid in making pragmatic inferences to decode the meaning of linguistic expressions.

The interpretation of idioms requires that the speaker and hearer share the knowledge of the contextual frames associated with the expressions as used in real situations. For example, the Olunyole idiom okhuleera obusela ‘to bring porridge’ draws from the general frame of burial rites, and is further traced from slots of specific actions that go with the rite. In the case of the porridge idiom, the women from the in-law’s family visit the home of the buried person with food stuffs that do not include porridge itself. Gumperz (1982) observes that assigning a wrong frame to an expression may result in
miscommunication or deliberate sarcasm.’ van Dijk (2006:12) on the significance of frames in pragmatics notes:

Speech frames and perceptions are important because they explain how certain utterances in certain contexts are actually understood as certain speech acts. Speech comprehension is based on rules and strategies for so called context analysis in which (epistemic) frames play an important role in the analysis of social context; social frames and interaction type.

A set of conventions (rules, laws, principles, norms, values, expectations) are crucial in delineating the properties of social contexts and systematically relating them to the participant members of socially sensitive interactive sessions. Frames in this regard regulate and constrain the kinds of acts that may be performed by social members in a wide range of contexts. The various acts may be products of a private institution of family, kinship, close acquaintances and peers, or public settings whose organization is predetermined by properties that define the social group. Strassler (1982) observes that idioms permeate private liaisons such as ‘...partnered couples, where intimacy is reinforced by private sets of euphemistic and humorous expressions.’ The idioms are largely functional for informal conversations and small time chats.

The frame-bound functionality of linguistic expressions controls the verbal and non-verbal acts that are associated with a set of properties and relations (power, status, authority), which in turn shape the progress of the social interaction. Idioms in their functional and contextual distribution are grounded in acts that accompany their utterance; their interpretation in actual usage and scholarly analysis may, as van Dijk (2006: 22) points out, entail making ‘...informed inferences about the internal structure of the speaker in terms of knowledge, beliefs, intentions or wants, desires, preferences and feelings.’ Schemata are thus related to, but distinguishable from frames. Cook (1989) notes that whereas frames are mental concepts, information-centred and relatively value-free,
Schemata involve attitudes, and judgements about the area of experience. Schemata are predisposed ways of interpreting experience that is defined by frames. They are more cultural and psychological than absolutely informational. Fasold and Connor (2006:513) in their glossary define schemata as “a set of structured expectations about an experience (e.g. events, people, setting).” Schemata affect the expectations of participants (hearer and listener) about text utterances and contribute to the top-down processing of information. Together with inferences and frames, schemata involve the receiver continually constructing possible words and messages from the data that utterances in their logical sequence provide. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:105) on the role of frames and schemata in the interactive use of knowledge structure contend:

...frames and schemata are configured in a hierarchical way: some information is more essential (or salient), the other is more or less incidental. Many of the slots in some of these frames remain latent in the understanding of utterances. Members of the social group cooperatively provide clues of what slots need to be activated to enhance coherence and avoid misunderstanding.

It is therefore worth noting the Critical Discourse Analysis, adopted in this study, has roots in Halliday’s systemic-functional theory with components of its later developments in critical linguistics. Some of the principles of CDA are partly grounded in the sociolinguistic planes insofar as they interrogate the social variables that have a bearing on the use of language. Idioms, as instances of language, are tied to the social reality that is manifested in the social relations and roles taken in their processing. In addition, pragmatic inferences, frames and schemata are responsible for activating the relevant knowledge and experience to facilitate interactive meaning in communication.
2.2.4 Cultural Models in the Use of Figurative Language

The pragmatic use of language requires that the speakers and listeners give specific meanings to words and expressions within applicable situations (Kant, 2003). Figurative expressions, such as metaphors and idioms, as creative language in use are adapted to specific contexts and situations of speech interaction. The human mind works in tandem with the social world by storing experiences from social interaction and discerning patterns from such experiences. In this case, the interpretation of expressions entails conceptually relating the cognition (mental recognition) of patterns of experiences to the cultural models that are continually constructed within social contexts. The cultural models are the recognisable and predictable patterns that speakers/listeners use to assign social meaning to expressions. Gee (1999: 40) on cultural models notes:

...the meanings of words are not stable and general. Rather, words have multiple and ever changing meanings created for and adapted to specific contexts of use. At the same time, the meanings of words are integrally linked to social and cultural groups in ways that transcend individual minds.

The language behaviour therefore results from relating the experiences recorded in the mind to the dynamics of the cultural groups within the speech community. The meanings of expressions, literal or non-literal, are more than mere symbolic representations in the speakers’ minds. The meaning and interpretation of linguistic expressions are situated in patterns of social and cultural practices. These socio-cultural experiences are recognised as patterns of connected images continuously adapted to the contexts that are shared by the speech community and “used always against a rich store of cultural knowledge (cultural models) that are themselves ‘activated’ in, for, and by contexts” (Gee, 1999: 63). The encoding and decoding of the idioms involve mapping the inherent images to the cultural experience internalized by the speakers over the years of continued social interaction.
Each given model is associated with different rituals and settings for socio-culturally defined groups of people. The social domains are characterized by smaller models inside bigger ones. Among the speakers of Olunyole, there are numerous expressions used to talk about marriage. There are metaphors, similes and idioms that cover the preparedness, preparations and the values that revolve around the marriage institution. For example, *okhuboha*, ‘to tie’, is an idiom that indicates that a girl is old enough and psychologically ready for marriage. A girl, who is “ripe” for marriage, is talked about as *atsiitsa*. To say *omukhaana watsia*, ‘a girl has gone’, would mean that the girl is married. The linguistic expressions therefore depict the people’s attitudes and thinking towards the cultural rituals and practices.

Cultural models structure people’s thinking by organizing aspects of their experiences as well as their conversations within particular groups of interaction. The speakers’ actions and interactions are appropriately guided to fit into the attitudes, viewpoints, values and the belief system of world of consciousness of the speech community. Apart from the interactional role, the cultural models in language use also serve an evaluative function in enabling the speakers and listeners consciously or unconsciously judge their behaviour against that of other people. The speakers choose to either align their behaviour to the group expectations for their recognition and acceptance into the cultural out-fit, or demonstrate outright defiance that results in condemnation and ultimate isolation. The speakers express their feelings about and toward the events, objects, people and phenomena.
2.3 Idioms and Idiomaticity

The notions of idiom and idiomaticity are reflected in several senses provided in the 7th Edition of Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005:740) definitions of idiom:

The kind of language and grammar used by particular people at a particular time or place; typical of a group of people, period or time; A group of words whose meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words; idiomaticity - containing expressions that are natural to a native speaker.

The terms therefore refer to both the composition of the expressions of language and the way of life of the native speakers. Commentaries and scholarly critiques on idioms generally tend to point out the fact that the meaning of some expressions in language is unrelated to their compositional constituent parts. Fernando and Roger (1981:3) note that the idiom is undoubtedly a communicative component of the natural language and that ‘‘what needs to be examined is how the cognition design of a given language reveals itself through the idiom.” This cognition structure reflects the collective cultural reality constructed and experienced within the speech community. The speakers demonstrate greater interest in and awareness of indigenous knowledge by communicating messages using expressions that draw their compositionality of the known surroundings. The foreword part of Cackier and Tabors (1993: vii) notes that ‘‘idioms are transparent to native speakers, but a course of perplexity to those who are acquiring a second language.’’ The communicative processing of the idioms of a language is thus dependent more on the speakers’ perception of their collective experience than the linguistic composition of the constituent units. The study of idioms can be aptly linked to the Ferdinand De Saussure La langue and parole dichotomy of structuralism. Krishnaswamy and Verma (1989) use Ferdinand de Saussure to broach the idea that idioms result from personal innovation and that the elements, including idioms that this study targeted, and which form part of language, are evidence of creativity as part of the practicality of language use. This individual creativity is compared to parole, and it gets absorbed into the mainstream langue that is the language experience in its totality (Syal and Jindal, 2002:31).
The reconstruction of language into analysable units is constrained by socio-cultural conditioning. Idioms and other figurative forms of linguistic manifestation such as sayings, proverbs are instances of collective social language ‘‘contract’’. Part of the social responsibility of the members of the speech community is not only to observe the conventions of the usage of such expressions in their various levels of interaction, but also participate in determining the forms of the linguistic products in reflecting the dynamic nature of language as embraced by the speech community. Drant (1989) echoes the place of creativity in language by noting that ‘‘the coinage of idioms is indeed an issue of theoretical interest which results from daily communication via language as the speaker/hearer continually produce and interpret novel utterances.’’ In relating idioms to social function, earlier studies by Robert (1944:300) suggest that the idiom is a manifestation of discourse that ‘‘…reflects a particular organisation of thought, the mental design of a language together with the idiosyncrasy of permutation which a given language exhibits in contradistinction to all languages…’’ Partridge (1935:24) argues that there is a connection between slang and idioms in that the circumstances which give rise to slang are replicable in the case of idioms. Patridge (1935: 24) also notes that ‘‘the desire for greater vivacity and intimacy is a powerful originator of slang. Partridge in Fernando and Roger (1981:27) further identify a number of reasons for the use of slang, and which can be extended to the idiom:

i) As an exercise either in wit and ingenuity or humour.

ii) To be picturesque, either positively or/as in the wish to avoid insipidity-negatively.

iii) To lend an air of solidity, concreteness to the abstract of earthiness to the idealistic; or immediacy appositeness to the remote.

iv) To soften the tragedy, to heighten or to ‘‘prettify’’ the inevitability of death or madness.
v) For ease of social intercourse.

vi) To be secret.

vii) To lessen the sting of, or even, on the other hand, to give additional point to, a refusal, a rejection or recantation.

The formation of idioms and integration of idioms in the language takes a process. Idiomaticization, as Fernando and Roger (1981:25) call it, occurs as a result of associations that are a product of ‘...contextual extension in the everyday situations of communicative use over a period of time.’ The idiom *okhu-riaaba ingumu* ‘to beat a fist’, for example, is associated with the act of folding up something in one’s palm in order to give it to someone else. Whereas the literal meaning of the idiom is to fight someone with a blow, it is contextually and connotatively used to mean ‘the deliberate act of giving out money to someone in order to get certain favours.’ The money is folded up so that the act remains secretive. The speakers, as noted by Oyule, an informant, argue that whatever one gives to another person should not be known to the public; it encourages people to make other interactants happy without seeking public attention.

### 2.4 Idioms and Figurative Language

Language explores a variety of means of expressing messages. The speakers’ communicative competence partly enables them to package messages in language that is either direct or indirect. Cultural etiquette requires that members of the speech community do not talk about certain issues and topics in plain language. It would be considered impolite to, for example, talk about issues related to death, birth and parts of the body in direct language. Ochieng’, a columnist in a Kenyan Daily Newspaper *Daily Nation, 11th January, 2014*, in noting the significance of figurative language says:

> Even among the most illiterate societies and the lowest classes imagery is what lends colour, power and influence to speech. In any
linguistic community, language without alliteration, idiom, metaphor, onomatopoeia, pun, simile and such other figures of speech would be like a meat or vegetable dish without any salt or pepper (p.14).

Ochieng’s (2014) assertion affirms the fact that phraseological units such as idioms and metaphors are highly indispensable components of the language. Mastery of a language is measured by the ability of the interlocutors to naturally use the phrase expressions in diverse but appropriate situations.

The native speakers’ creativity therefore facilitates indirect communication by composing expressions whose interpretation does not rely on the meaning of the individual words. This linguistic creativity is, however, constrained by the non-linguistic (pragmatic) factors that are largely culturally conditioned. Through wide application and use, the indirect figurative expressions become an integral component of the language. Swerling (1976:42) discusses tropes (such as metaphors and idioms) as the broad class of language forms which create stylistic effects, and at the same time “deliberately but strategically alter the meaning in the context of actual use.” These expressions form material for both literary and linguistic analysis; literary when they are studied within works of literature (play, novel and poetry) and linguistic in ordinary interactional discourses. Despite being flexible to such multifaceted nature of approaches, the scope of analysis for figurative language could be narrowed, with studies concentrating on specific “trope-types”. The idioms in a language, for example, could be viewed as independent expressions with specific features that distinguish them from other forms such as sayings, proverbs and metaphors.

Broadly speaking, the study of figurative language, as highlighted by Gibbs (2001:317), pursues a number of options in explaining the motivation, intention, structuring and interpretational processing of various forms of indirect language. Gibbs (2001) regards figurative language as ordinary verbal units upon which contextual cues operate to realize
creative figurative effect. Context, in this sense, is the bridge that relates the literal language to the indirect figurative meaning. The effect of context on different forms of figurative language such as metaphor, metonymy, proverbs, idioms and irony is closely tied to the pragmatic function of the resultant figurative language. The pragmatic function of figurative language explains the motivation behind the use of such indirect language and its deliberate or unintended effect on the interlocutors.

Furthermore, Gibbs (2001) addresses the basic question: why do people speak figuratively, say using idioms or metaphors, and what effect does such language have on the listeners and speakers in specific interactive contexts? Some scholars may choose to examine broad theories that apply to different kinds of figurative language (proverbs, metonymy, idioms) or focus on the actual details of how a distinct type of trope, say metaphor or idiom, is interpreted. The other scholars’ considered approach would be to interrogate the possible connections between figurative language and human thought. This study borrows aspects of each of these approaches in considering the idioms as distinct units of linguistic utterances with both literal and figurative meanings, meanings that are related through contextual inferencing, while reflecting human thought in social reality. We refer to specific examples of levels of Olunyole figurative expressions.

A metaphor example:

The Olunyole metaphor Ng’ane ne li-ua musilenje ‘one is a thorn in the leg’ may, for example, be viewed as drawing its metaphoricality from the contextual cues as understood by the speaker and listener. The literal qualities and properties of the thorn – sharp, unnoticeable and therefore insidiously dangerous and hurtful, are mapped onto the pragmatic background that yields various interactive meanings. These pragmatic bits of information become part of mental cognition of the native speakers that links world knowledge to the interpretive value of expressions in realistic contexts. The “leg” in this regard is extended from ‘the body part’ semantic sense to “one’s welfare or life interests” connotative sense. Thus, the inclusion of the “thorn” and “leg” metaphor in a verbal discourse unit could be used to realize various acts such as warning, be cautioning, avoid
the ‘thorny’ person of reference, and influence specific behaviour in the listener. The listener could take particular concrete steps to avoid or hit back at the mentioned person.

An idiom example:

The word *okhu-λia* ‘to eat’ has the default literal meaning. It denotes the ordinary act of swallowing food. As a lexical element, it lends itself to all levels of linguistic analysis within the system of the language. At the syntactic level, the element is a verb that may be used in the sentences of the language either transitively or intransitively as illustrated below:

Intransitive: *Be-nya okhu-λia* [NP subject + to-verb infinitive]

(They want to eat)

Transitive: *Be-nya okhu-λia ama-tuma* [NP subject + to-verb infinitive + NP object]

(They want to eat maize)

When the above Olunyole sentences are uttered, they relay the denotative interpretation that is equivalent to the literal meaning as “the biological function that characterizes all living organisms when they take in food to boost their energy levels.” Besides this ordinary semantic sense of the word, various pragmatic contexts in which it is used could activate a number of figurative shades of meaning. For example, the word *okhulia*, ‘to eat’, used in the following conversational context describes the emotional state of the referent. The translations appear in brackets:

Agnes: *Omusatsa ula ya inyoye ni ngoolanga musipeti sie* (That man found me checking through his wallet).

Mary: Mmm...

Agnes: *Waawa! Ya beye yandie...* (Waawa! he nearly ate me).
The meaning of “eat” in the above exchange is projected from the literal sense of food to the expression of fiery anger; the man that Agnes refers to was so menacingly enraged that he could “swallow” the interactant.

The word *okhulia* is also used to indicate that someone has been compromised to influence certain decision using his position. When one in authority is given any kind of favour in the form of money or material gifts, it is common to hear such a person *u-liye*, ‘one has eaten’. Apart from this connotation of corrupt acts, the word also refers to any form of financial impropriety. The utterance *uliye amang’ondo* ‘one has eaten money’ has nothing to do with food; it means that one has misappropriated money; used the money on activities for which it was not intended. It is notable that the idiomaticity of *okhulia*, ‘to eat’, is common to most of the languages spoken in Kenya. In Kiswahili, for example, Kenyan speakers say *amekula pesa*, ‘one has eaten money’ to suggest corruption or misuse of public funds.

In Olunyole, through an oral interaction, Oyule says that the word *tsingano* is used to cover any form of indirect language expressions. The term covers proverbs, sayings, metaphors, similes and even the oral narratives in cultural folklore. The fact that there is a single term reference to these expressions as *tsingano* clearly suggests that they are interrelated and that the lines distinguishing them are thin. Wulffu (2008:47) on idiomaticity says “…the boundaries between idioms, collocations, and other phrases in all respects, however, all involve reconstructing utterances to integrate the diverse knowledge and experiences shared by the native speakers.” Fernando (1978:67) says “expressions engage listeners in constructing interpretations of speakers’ intentions by integrating linguistic, stipulated and allusional content within the discourse context.” In this section, we briefly relate idioms to other forms of figurative expressions.
2.4.1 Idioms and Metaphors

A metaphor is a figurative expression that describes one notion in terms of attributes associated with another notion. It captures unlike notions as implicitly related and as informed by certain identical features. Indeed analysts have considered metaphor as the core of linguistic creativity (Crystal, 1998:70). Idioms carry with them a character of metaphors in their construction. A metaphor progressively loses its metaphoricity (the quality of being a metaphor) after some time of usage and becomes a fixed expression with conventionalized interpretation. To demonstrate the ties between the metaphor and the idiom, Hobbs (1979) identifies the cycle through which a metaphor becomes an idiom. In the first phase, a notion or term that belongs to a given conceptual domain is mapped onto another domain. In the second phase, the metaphor becomes familiar and less complex because the interpretive path is already established. The third phase presents a ‘tired’ expression with a weak conceptual link between the domains. In the final stage, the metaphor is ‘dead’ and its metaphorical origin cannot be traced. This cycle of shifts from metaphoricity to idiomaticity does not, however, drastically vary the initial meaning assigned to the expression and the metaphoric features that aid the interpretation of idioms.

The Olunyole conceptual metaphor *Olu-limi ne selengero*, THE TONGUE is A SLOPE, is used in reference to ‘slipperiness’ of the tongue. In this case, speech is movement that requires one to take cautious steps. There are a number of Olunyole idioms that allude to the ‘sloppiness’ of the tongue. *Okhu-relela olu-limi* ‘the tongue to slip’ interpreted as “unintentionally saying what could have adverse repercussions.” *Okhu-liinda olu-limi* ‘to guard the tongue’ is another related idiom that calls for controlled talking and the need to be thoughtful about the likely consequences of what one says. Cacciari (1993: 29) on the interplay between metaphors and idioms notes:

...the notion of literal meaning must be broadened in order to include conventional meaning attached to certain expressions...the figurative meaning of frozen metaphors (such as JOHN IS A
LION) must be considered as ‘literal’ because of its
conventionality. The figurative meaning of idioms, indirect speech
acts, and so on, are accessed directly precisely because their literal
meaning has come to include also all conventionalized aspects of
meaning that were once metaphorical or indirect.

The figurative meanings of idioms are, therefore, derived from the native speakers’
accumulated knowledge of the conceptual metaphors projected from the idioms. In other
words, the conceptual metaphors link the idioms to their figurative meanings, and
determine the way native speakers understand the idioms, both from the world knowledge
and the mental images formed (Nunberg, 1978). For example, the Olunyole conceptual
metaphor, *Omusila no omululu*, THE TAIL is PAINFUL, maps the idiom *okhu-sena khu
musila* ‘to step on one’s tail’ onto its figurative interpretation, ‘to provoke someone’s
anger by talking about sensitive secretive issues about one’s life.’ The tail thus symbolizes
the “invisible” hidden bits of information about an individual, and divulging such
information publicly could cause emotional pain. The figurative meanings are thus
concretized as pragmatic utterances in specific performance contexts of interaction. As
Cacciari (1993:36) points out, there is always the metaphorical motivation underlying the
interpretation of idioms, and that such motivation is “...rooted at the level of conceptual
structures, and not in the correlation between word meanings.”

2.4.2 Idioms and Proverbs

Proverbs are witty expressions that are a means of capturing and reflecting philosophical
and ideological perspectives of a particular culture (Honeck and Hoffman, 1980). Proverbs
mirror the world view of the speakers in a subtle but elegant manner. Okumba (1994:45)
recognizes the proverb as the shortened form of language that serves the artistic
expression of social culture in diverse but subtle ways. Like idioms, proverbs embrace the
spirit of communal existence in reflecting and propagating the collective world-view held
by the speakers. Wan Johi (2008:38) says:
The all-embracing character of Gikuyu proverbs is shown by the fact that these proverbs treat (sic) of both unperceivable and perceivable reality. In the former, they refer to God, a super-natural reality, and psychological and moral realities. In the latter, they introduce one to physical reality: the earth, the sun, the moon, the rain, the wind, trees and animals; they also treat social and political matters.

In other words, the philosophy (structured critical thinking) of indirect language maps the expressions to all domains that characterize the interactions and relationships of the speakers. Proverbs are age-long assertions that deliver messages in a condensed form. Like idioms, proverbs in Olunyole are interpreted beyond their constituent words or phrases, and allude to the familiar native speakers’ experience. The usage of the proverbs in Olunyole is associated with the elderly members of the speech community. Thus, the use of a proverbial utterance is introduced with the statement: omukhulu yaboola, ‘our forefathers said.’ This implies that the proverbs carry the cultural heritage that is passed down from one generation to another.

The linguistic creativity underlying the realization of the Olunyole proverbs is guided by socio-cultural reality that encompasses the conventional knowledge and belief systems of the speakers’ identity. Onyango (2007:46) observes that proverbs capture people’s authentic orientation towards their identity and their collective socio-cultural perceptions; they carry with them a certain cultural flavour that expresses the native speakers’ shared consciousness about their identity. The proverb ochesa esio orakile, ‘you reap what you sow’, is used in contexts that extol the virtue of sincere work that is commensurate to whatever one earns in the end. On the other hand, it could be taken as a warning act and a deliberate message to oppressors or those who do evil to humanity, that they will eventually reap the consequences of their action. The figurative interpretation of this Olunyole proverb, as in the case of idioms, is realized at the conceptual, and not the lexical level. The proverb is related to the conceptual metaphor, okhuchesa no okhuraka – TO REAP is TO SOW, with the action verbs attitudinally and behaviourally stretching
beyond their denotative meaning. But unlike idioms which permeate ordinary interactional conversations, proverbs are usually reserved for formal contexts that call for cultural wisdom to unravel the hidden messages. They could, for instance, more likely be used in a gathering of elders performing a cultural function and not among peers engaged in casual talk. Cacciari (1993:27) indicates that the native speakers’ linguistic repertoire is largely formed more by idiomatric expressions than the proverb by noting that interlocutors “speak idiomatically unless there is a good reason not to do it.”

Proverbs could be considered much more stretched in ‘length’ than the idiom. For example, the Olunyole idiom 
*okhurekela olukhoola* , ‘being trapped with a banana fibre’, is a reduced form of the proverb *silie sinale sirekelwa olukhoola*, ‘once one gets into some undesirable habit, it takes little effort to trap one.’ The proverbs are truncated forms of educative past experiences, with a clear purpose to regulate behaviour. For example, the Olunyole proverb *karama omwelema* ‘even the diver drowned’ reminds the Olunyole speakers on the importance of consulting, as nobody can claim to have all the necessary knowledge for survival. In terms of allusional content, the cultural texture of the proverb is therefore much deeper than that of the idiom.

The Olunyole sayings are yet another means of expressing messages indirectly. The sayings, like proverbs, are part of the demonstration of the native speakers’ accumulated knowledge over years. But the sayings tend to be less formal than proverbs. A saying in Olunyole *ndetekhane yayia ameno* ‘one who hurried burnt one’s teeth’ is commonly used for informal conversational contexts to caution against taking hasty action that could result in regrettable consequences. The opposite expression would be *cheenda kalaha yoola muumbo* ‘one who trekked slowly and cautiously reached the south.’ The saying emphasises the value of planning, perseverance and precision in the speakers’ undertakings. The Abanyole regard the south as the land of the neighboring Luo. The south is used to indicate movement away from home, a journey to a far off place. Another example, *mbir’re omulalu nasamuye*, ‘when I passed, the madman had sauntered’ is a saying that cautions the hearer that situations and circumstances are bound to change. The
interpretation of sayings in Olunyole would be much more directly accessible to the hearers than that of the idiom. This is because interpreting the Olunyole sayings and idiom requires that one draws relationships between multiplicities of conceptual variants, and links them to one’s intuitions based on the accumulated knowledge and experiences within the interactional speech community.

2.5 Idiomaticity and the seven types of Meaning

The interpretation of linguistic units in use entails deciphering the meaning of the expressions. The meaning of an expression depends on the intention of the speaker and the resultant effect of the utterance of a particular expression on the hearer (Bolinger, 1977). Leech (1974:10-24) provides seven types of meaning that could apply to the interpretation of idioms. The conceptual meaning is regarded as the denotative level at which expressions are given non-figurative interpretations. The other levels vary the meanings depending on the situation, social circumstances, the psychological disposition of the participants in communication and the strategic intention of the speaker-hearer (Leech, 1974:18).

Idiomatic expressions find relevance in the connotative, social, affective and collocative senses presented in the table below:
Table 2.2: Seven types of meaning  
Source: Leech 1974:23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. CONCEPTUAL or Sense</th>
<th>Logical, cognitive or denotative content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATIVE MEANING</td>
<td>2. CONNOTATIVE MEANING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SOCIAL MEANING</td>
<td>What is communicated of the social circumstances of language use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. AFFECTIVE MEANING</td>
<td>What is communicated of feelings and attitudes of the speaker/writer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. REFLECTIVE MEANING</td>
<td>What is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. COLLOCATIVE MEANING</td>
<td>What is communicated through association with words which tend to occur in the environment of another word?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. THEMATIC MEANING</td>
<td>What is communicated by the way in which the message is organized in terms of order and emphasis?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study of Olunyole idiom entails the interrogation of the various interrelated levels of meaning. The types of meaning cut across all the realms of human individual and collective existence. The indirect expressions and figurative language, within which the idioms fall, largely exploit the associative meaning that covers the connotative, social, affective, reflective and connotative meanings. These are meanings that accrue from the use of expressions in the real life functions of the speakers in social groups.
2.6 Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter elucidates the conceptual basis upon which idioms are interpreted and analysed. The idiom, as a figurative expression, is considered as a unit of language that functions as a pragmatic means of reflecting social reality and enabling stylistic communication of the speakers’ inner consciousness. The interpretation of idioms, like other related forms of figurative language such as metaphor, is not haphazard but rather involves making pragmatic inferences drawn from the collective cultural experiences of the speech community. Halliday’s functional approach to language considers language as an expression of knowledge and experience (ideational) among people with a common cultural background (interpersonal) in their interactional utterances (textual). The critical discourse analysis is an improvement of the functional approach. The linguistic expressions are viewed as a resource for portraying social inequalities in the distribution of power and status. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology for the study.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design of the study. It also highlights the target population, the sample population and the sampling techniques adopted in the study. The research tools used and the data collection procedures are discussed. The chapter finally looks at the data analysis strategy used in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This linguistic study adopts a multi-prong approach to investigate the socio-cultural content manifested and reflected in the composition and pragmatic use of the Olunyole idioms in diverse social contexts. The study takes the qualitative research approach in interrogating the relevance and significance of idioms in the reflection of the social order. On qualitative research, Bryman (1998:277) explains that the detailed description of the social actors and the emphasis on the natural context, in which the phenomenon under study manifests itself, provide insights into perspectives of the people being studied in the reflection of the social world. The Olunyole native speakers are taken as social actors in their use of the idioms in communicative conversations controlled by functional contexts. The functional contexts are taken as the domains of language use motivated by social intentions that result in dynamic social acts. The speakers use idioms in their interactive relationships to capture or construct a socio-cultural world that gives them an idiosyncratic identity as a speech community.

The qualitative descriptive research design, that the study takes, focuses on the affairs of linguistic phenomena, language use in situations, social events and participants within the Abanyole cultural milieu. The descriptive design objectively examines the Olunyole idioms, in the manner in which they exist and their relevance in diverse domains of
language use. In analytical research, on the other hand, Maluku, et al. (2007:6-7) note that “The researcher has to use facts or information already available, and analyze these to make a critical evaluation.” This linguistic study empirically looks at and accounts for the cultural differentiation and social function of Olunyole idioms as used by the speech community in interaction. The empirical study is adopted in the sense that it relies on experience and verifiable conclusions based on the data collected from the field.

The descriptive materials are verbal idiomatic utterances in actual communicative events. The study takes the ethnographic approach, which involves generating new insights by investigating specific attributes as evidently observed in the way people live and interact. Verbal realization of language is either spoken or written word communication, as opposed to the non-verbal forms which are realized through use of non-word language systems such as gestures, distance, pictures and diagrams. This study takes spoken idiomatic forms of expression as used in the Olunyole speech community as its primary source of data. However, the study is open to what Brower (1966) calls ‘...the transferability of media through translation.” The texts in which the idioms are used are thus translated from Olunyole to English for analysis as instances of language in use.

Palmer (1983:27) notes “...people too often tend to think of the spoken language as a rather poor version of the written language.” On the contrary, as Saran (1967:44) puts it, the tokens of spoken language are favored data in linguistics because they are more spontaneous, authentic and naturalistic. The idiomatic expressions in this study are considered more naturalistic. Radford (1988:8) enumerates several reasons for preference of spoken data over the written language. He notes that the spontaneity with which the spoken form of conversation is produced in conversation could give a more objective reflection of language as a natural medium of interaction among members of the speech community.
Idiom use is therefore a critical component of the spoken language and a demonstration of the speakers’ internalization of cultural behaviour and practices. The spoken language exhibits what Radford (1988:9) regards as a clearer and “a greater range of variation between individuals than written language.” Such features of variation in language use could provide insights into the role of language in explaining and understanding social behaviour. Radford (1988) further notes that spoken language carries more information than written language. The extra-linguistic information is based on the life of the speakers in real contexts. The present study examines how the extra-linguistic factors determine the realization of Olunyole idioms in contexts of interaction. The volume of information could therefore be relied upon to objectively, and with a considerable measure of reliability, characterize the pragmatic features of expressions in the speech community. The idiomatic expressions are more likely to be realized within informal levels of interpersonal conversations that characterize spoken discourse, and therefore their usage is better captured in speech contexts.

The study design of the research takes the descriptive approach to language with a synchronic view. According to Crystal (1998:411), “...any synchronic study of language, as opposed to the diachronic view which considers language as a continually changing medium, looks at the target language as a phenomenon existing as a state at a particular moment in time.” The study therefore locates idioms in the synchronic language study, and objectively provides the description of the relationships between language and the social constructs that determine the use of Olunyole idioms. These are the relevant variables that ensure social existence and interaction among a group of people with a common heritage. A descriptivist, rather than a prescriptivism approach, that is interested in drawing objective evaluative conclusions about data, is therefore adopted in synchronically studying the pragmatic functionality of the Olunyole idioms.

Superficiality is cited by De Vaux as one of the shortcomings of the descriptive design (De Vaus, 1999). To overcome this, the data collected is subjected to levels of verification by capturing the usage of idiomatic expressions in contexts, interrogating them as the
native speakers use them. Almeajak (1998:126) contends that “...the primary data for description must be the natural spontaneous data of narrative and conversational texts, collected in a variety of contexts.” The Olunyole idioms are collected from the social events and occasions, subjected to further confirmation by native speakers and analysed in terms of their functionality. A functional view of natural language by van Djik (1998:46) considers “language as primarily a pragmatic phenomenon; a symbolic instrument used for communicative purposes.” The pragmatic concerns of idiom usage in language specify the patterns of relationships within the speech community, the appropriate social situations in which they are used and noticeable influence of their use on the speakers/hearers in their interactions.

The descriptive approach that guides this study links the depth of the data collected to descriptive statements deduced from the data, and aligns these particular descriptions to the selected theory. The set of Olunyole idioms collected are subjected to empirical observation of the context of their usage and descriptive generalizations drawn from their functionality in relation to the collective consciousness of the speakers. Martinet (1961:43) contends that the principle that characterizes the functionalist approach in language description “...is embodied in the dictum: function is the criterion of linguistic reality.” The linguistic reality is empirically exhibited from observed functions of the constructions, as corroborated by the native speakers through direct engagement. The description of the linguistic constructions adequately and consistently relates the data collected to the functionalist theory through focused interaction with the native speakers, and empirical observation of social meaning attached to the idioms. The idioms as concrete contextualized speech-phenomena are instantiations of the social patterns that define the speakers’ way of life (Mulder and Hervey, 1980:14). The descriptive statements provide insight into the contextual factors that motivate the appropriateness of interpretation to the idioms.

An idiom *omukhono omwaangu* ‘light handedness’ is, for example, interpreted along the context of disagreements or heated exchange to describe an individual who gets easily
provoked into fist fights. The individual is thus not able to control anger. *Omukhono omusiro* ‘heavy handedness’, on the other hand, describes the generosity of an individual demonstrated by the willingness to give out what one has. The adjectives *omwaangu* ‘light’ and *omusiro* ‘heavy’ are interpreted in the contexts of their usage rather than their denotative semantic relations. Whereas the adjectives are antonyms in the ordinary non-figurative sense, their idiomatic interpretation relates to their contextual use. *Omwaangu* combines with the hand in the context of a verbal exchange or conflict to imply that one is the type of person that would easily engage in fist-fights. *Omusiro* ‘heavy’ in reference to the hand in the context of harmonious interaction compliments a generous individual. The native speakers are constantly conscious of the social contexts and experiences that determine the interpretation of the idioms in language use.

The relationship between the data collected and the resultant descriptions is schematised in the following figure:

![Figure 3.1: Research Descriptive Parameters](Source: Mulder and Hervey, 1980:12)
3.3 Variables and considerations

The variables in this study build from the objectives of research study. The variables running through the study are:

i) The use of Olunyole idioms in pragmatic conversational interactions.

ii) Idioms in the construction and reflection of social reality.

iii) Idioms in controlling social behaviour.

The following sub-sections examine the above variables of the study. The speakers of Olunyole construct the idioms to reflect the social reality evident in their interaction. These premises of the study are presented below.

3.3.1 Olunyole Idioms in Pragmatic Conversational interaction

The study took the Olunyole idioms collected from the field as the independent variable. The expressions are collected as they are used within the speech community. The heterogeneity and complexity of language are therefore studied by engaging a multifaceted view to social research. The idioms are used in different social domains in which people hold communicative relations that serve diverse purposes of interaction. Thus, in examining idioms as conventionalized means of stylistic expression, it was necessary to consider the sociolinguistic issues that influence the usage of these fixed expressions and also determine their interpretation. Particularly, the social groups, social class and status of participants in the networks of interaction combine with the contexts to give meaning and structure to the selected language forms. Cutting (2000:3) considers context as “...knowledge of social circumstances and expectations, and the situation of the here and now.” Context, in this regard, is significant to the pragmatic interrogation of language in society. This study considers the contexts in which the idioms are used such as home and family backgrounds, the communal social and cultural activity, speech
interactions with relatives, friends and peers and correspondence with government departments.

The idiomatic expressions are taken as non-literal components of the language which form an integral system of social interaction. van Dijk (1977:167) on social functionality of language use says:

The functional view of language, both as a system and an historical, which the predominant SOCIAL role of language in interaction is stressed, is necessary corrective to a “psychological” view of language and language use, our competence in speaking is essentially an object for the philosophy of mind…

The interpretation of the Olunyole idioms requires that psychological processes are complemented by the social character of the expressions in contexts. The internal knowledge of language that the native speakers innately possess is creatively used in varied social contexts. This knowledge is the communicative competence that is evident in the speakers’ ability to choose the language resources to express messages using appropriate codes. The speakers, for example, encode the messages in either literal or non-literal symbols of language depending on the socially motivated factors and the expected impact of the language form used. Sociolinguistically, it is necessary to discern segments of the speech community in terms of age, gender, social class and educational background that prefers to use the idioms.

Searle (1975) on idiomaticity explains that idioms are linguistic expressions that are informally governed by the language usage rule that requires members of the speech community to inevitably speak idiomatically all the time. What this would imply is that speakers of a language consciously or subconsciously include idioms in their speech with varying levels of figurative competence. In other words, there is always the nagging
compelling urge within the native speaker to communicate messages with the subtle indirectness that embellishes the language with stylistic flavour.

The ability to manipulate language resources creatively to encode intended messages in a manner that inspires memorable impact is a measure of the native speaker’s competence. The levels of competence in language usage depend on a number of sociolinguistic variables such as the age, extent and frequency of interaction and the (un)availability of alternative modes of expressing the intended message. The study on Olunyole idioms therefore collects idiomatic forms and captures their usage in concrete contexts based on situationality, shared background knowledge and generally the socio-cultural world view of the native speakers. It is partly for this reason that the Olunyole idioms are studied in relation to the various domains of language use.

Take an example of an idiom in the Olunyole:

Okhu-khalaka amakhoola (Olunyole)

To cut banana fibres.

This idiom is used by the aged in the funeral context in which case the widow is expected to be inherited. A man who engages the widow in the first sexual encounter after the burial of the husband is said to have cut the ‘the banana fibre.’ It is after this ritualistic act that the widow may choose to be inherited.

Apart from the Olunyole idioms wielding a pragmatic character, they are processed and interpreted as elements of discourse within the conversational texts in which they occur.

The following exchange in which the idiom okhu-sena khumaika ‘to step on the cooking stones’ and okhuhila litinga‘to drive a tractor’ are used to illustrate the pragmatic nature of idioms in Olunyole conversations:

Woman 1: Omwana wa Yakobo ateekha khu On’enge.
Yakobo’s daughter is married to Ong’enge

Woman 2: Wululu, Omwana wa Yakobo nanyale okhusena khumaika?

(Exclaims) Will Yakobo’s daughter really manage to step on the cooking stones?

Woman 1: Akaboola Ong’enge ahila litinga?

You mean Ong’enge drives a tractor?

The lexeme litinga ‘tractor’ is used to fit the description of native speakers of Olunyole to the practice of night running. In the informal conversation, the two native speakers of Olunyole use idioms to pass information about the marriage of someone known to them. Through the idiom the interactants indirectly pass the message that Ong’enge is a night-runner (drives a tractor). A woman who marries Ong’enge will therefore shoulder the responsibility of “stepping on the cooking stones.” This implies that she will remain awake so that the husband is not caught in the act. There are also certain cultural topics that are best discussed in non-literal forms such as metaphors, proverbs and idioms; euphemism is the sociolinguistic regulatory use of language as an indicator of politeness (Brehens and Rosen, 1997).

The pragmatic use of the idioms in socially situated continuous stretches of language is therefore what this study explores.

3.3.2 Olunyole Idioms in reflecting and constructing Social Reality

This study was grounded in ethnography research. Ethnography as part of social research entails focusing on the lives of the population under study in their natural setting. The ethnographic study of the Olunyole idioms engages the Olunyole speech community in providing insights into the speakers’ social reality. Social research collects data in relation to interactive phenomena and seeks to interrogate the linking strands between specific social variables and human behaviour. The study views Olunyole, like any language, as a social phenomenon that could be used to explain and understand the behaviour of the speech community as a speech group. The study of Olunyole idioms is guided by the
ontological position of critical evaluation of knowledge that is culturally indigenous to the speakers. Bryman (1998:17) on social ontology notes:

...the central point of orientation here is the question whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors.

Bryman (1998) recognizes two ontological philosophical positions in the study of social entities. Objectivism separates human influence from the nature of social phenomena and their meanings. On this note, it is possible that idiomatic expressions of language are categories on which the speakers are external actors. The speakers, thus, have no role in their compositionality and interpretation. The members of the speech community only come to be socialized to use the expressions of the language in order to function in the social set-up of a particular linguistic community. The objectivist approach would examine idiomatic expressions as structural configurations that are analysable within the syntactic component of the grammar of the language.

Schutz (1962:59) provides a philosophical exposition of the place of social reality in social research:

The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not mean anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist of social reality has a specific meaning and relevance of structure to the beings living, acting and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by
motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men [and women], living their daily life within the social world.

The main points from the above account relate the meaning of human acts to social order. Social reality therefore bears meaning for speakers of language that are the subjects of social research in the present study (Bryman, 1998:14). The research interprets the actions that accompany the use of Olunyole idioms in the social world of the native speakers, and from their point of view verified through interactive observation.

Let us take the following example to illustrate:

Okhuseena mwisasa

To step into safari ants

The idiom is interpreted in the context of provocation to anger. The metaphor that is carried in the idiom compares the reaction of ants to the deliberate act of provocation, “stepping into.” The tiny ants attack all parts of a human being in a manner that makes it difficult to get rid of them. The idioms complement behaviour that reflects the expected levels of interaction through the social acts such as warning, regretting and advising. This idiomatic outfit could be assigned the structure to+ verbal infinitive + PP, to capture the sequence of the elements that constitute the idiomatic expression. The consideration of the linguistic items as autonomous entities glosses the contribution of the speakers in the production and processing of the expressions. The formation of the expressions is indeed dependent on the contextual interaction of the speakers as a linguistic community (a social unit of people sharing a language for existence and survival). The constructivist influence of the speakers of language functionally contributes to the creation of the speakers’ social world view.
The objectivism “separationist” approach contrasts with constructionism (also referred to as constructivism). Objectivism takes the position that social entities are not only produced and shaped through socially structured interaction, but that they are also constantly evolving to embrace and capture the dynamic world. This participatory (re)creation of social reality is evident in the analysis of discourse. In this regard, Potter (1996:98) observes: “The world…is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it.” Idiomatic expressions as constituents of stretches of discourse could provide insights into the nature of the interaction among the speakers. From the constructivist angle, these expressions have a mutual relationship with people’s interactionist world view. Indeed Pulman (1993, xv) contends that “… the flexibility of idioms is not and should not be explained by a theory of syntax, but depends on the semantics of the idiom and on the contextual interpretation of the utterances in which they occur.” The recognition and interpretation of the expressions is dependent on the sufficient shared information among the speakers and listeners in conversations. The socially established roles, identities and relationships are reflected in the idiomatic strings. The usage of the expressions, as is the case with other figurative configurations, depicts the domains or fields of use in context, the characteristics of social actors and the various conversational speech acts. For instance, the expression *okhulia imoondo ndala* ‘to eat/ share a gizzard’ can be located in the domain of ordinary kinship relationships (Appendix C1, item 12). Among the Olunyole speakers, brothers and close relatives are not supposed to share a gizzard. It is believed that sharing the *imoondo* ‘gizzard’ results in strained relationships characterized by fights and quarrels. The idiom depicts the patriarchal nature of society that constrains the behaviour and conduct of women, including what they should eat or not. The gizzard itself is a symbol of domestic authority which is vested in one man and cannot therefore be shared.

The study therefore examined the socio-cultural constraints that characterize the functionality of the idiomatic units. Cultures are viewed as “...repositories of widely shared values and customs into which people are socialized so that they can function as good citizens or as full participants” (Geertz, 1973:87). Tyler (1986:13) points out the inevitability of linking language forms to “the familiar ethnological categories such as
kinship, economy and religion” in the description and representation of social consciousness. Whereas focus on objectivism requires that the research process emphasizes the formal properties of the social entities under study, the research tools designed from the constructivism position examine “…the active involvement of people in reality construction” (Bryman, 1998:18).

### 3.3.3 Idioms and Social control

Language use in society performs both transactional and interactional functions (Gee, 1999). The transactional function could be thought of as the one involved in the conveyance of information meant to represent the state of affairs of the world and capture the dynamic human endeavours in diverse areas of development. This language function is related to language in reflecting reality. Another function of language use is the interactional function. It is concerned with how language is used to influence and manipulate the behaviour of the members of the speech community (Gee, 1999). The regulatory function of language is a control one; human behaviour is constrained within the societal norms and values. Communicative competence partly involves internalizing the regulatory potential of the expressions and seeking acceptance by using language in the appropriate contexts. This study investigates the effect of the Olunyole idiomatic expressions in determining and shaping the behaviour of the speakers and listeners in order to be accepted within the speech community. For example, the idiom *okhuetea tsinyeende mubuoba*, translated as ‘to search for jiggers from mushroom’, is used to deter the speaker and listener from insisting on details that could strain relationships. The idiom emphasizes the need to focus on the key issues in the course of interaction and refrain from dwelling on trivial non-core matters that could only create misunderstanding. Thus, by uttering the idiomatic expressions in contextualized conversations, the speaker restrains the listener from exhibiting behaviour that goes against the societal norms and values. This regulatory role of idioms is one of the variables in this study.
3.4 Sampling Technique

This section discusses the population and the method used in the selection of the sample population. The reliability and validity of the research partially relies on the representativeness of the sample. A representative sample is one which “...reflects the population accurately so that it is a microcosm of the population” (Butcher, 1994:18).

3.4.1 The Population

The study targeted the speakers of the Olunyole as the first language. The speakers of the Olunyole exhibit varying sociolinguistic tendencies as revealed by the oral informants of the study. The literate segment of the population is multilingual and speaks Olunyole, Swahili and English. Due to its social and professional networks, this level of the population prefers English and Swahili to the Olunyole vernacular. English is used for formal purposes and as the official language of instruction in education. The use of the vernacular is often limited to their interaction with non-literate relatives and friends. The non-literate segment, which has not gone through formal schooling, uses Olunyole and Swahili to relate with non-natives for trade and socio-cultural functions. This population has high levels of communicative competence in the vernacular, since Olunyole is the language it has known and used all its life.

There is yet another group of Olunyole speakers who border non-Olunyole speakers. The Abamuli and Aberanyi clans of Bunyole, for example, neighbour the Luo speakers, and therefore speak Dholuo in addition to the Olunyole vernacular. These speakers tend to mix expressions, with the Olunyole spoken by them having phonological similarities with the neighbouring Dholuo (Cf.figure1.1). Despite the border proximity variations, these speakers of Olunyole communicate with the “mainstream” speakers at mutually intelligible levels. The speakers of Olunyole interact in trade and socio-cultural events and occasions using speech. During these socio-cultural events such as weddings, burials and religion functions, the commonly used language is Olunyole. The level of fluency and competence in such functions is determined by demographic factors, among them
educational background and gender. In this case, the speakers who have had consistent exposure to the language possess enhanced native speaker competence. There are, however, speakers of the Olunyole who do not live within Bunyore. These speakers either moved out of the speaking locality to settle elsewhere due to land constraints or could have taken up career engagements in far off places. The ones that work outside Bunyore have members or their nucleus or extended families living in the locality and they therefore make frequent visits to attend social functions. The study, however, focuses on the native speakers living within the indigenous locality.

The research population is therefore the Olunyole speech community. The term speech community goes beyond merely sharing speech behaviour; it covers the shared norms that give a distinct identity to a group of people that is in constant and continuous interaction. Gumperz (1982:14) corroborates this by noting:

The speech community is defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.

The speakers of Olunyole are therefore considered a speech community with a common heritage perpetuated and practised through the language. The study looks at ties between the idiomatic constructions and modes of cultural behaviour that define the speech community.

3.4.2 The Population and the Native Speaker Competence
According to Bryman (1998:85), the term population in research is “...basically the universe of units from which the sample is selected.” The study relies on the Olunyole native speakers in characterizing the empirically discernible features of target expressions
in language use. McCarthy (1998:8) points out two approaches of collecting spoken data that are relevant to this study. The “demographic” approach targets the population of speakers and records the spoken bits of language over a period of time. The specific characteristics of the sampled Olunyole speakers are known to influence language use. This approach involves working with the people over an extended duration and gathering the idioms as they are known to the native speakers. The second approach is the “genre” approach that, in addition to the population of speakers, examines the environments and contexts in which spoken language is realized (McCarthy, 1998:9). The genre approach in this study collects data based on the contextual (situational) variables drawn from the socio-cultural conditions of the speakers. According to McCarthy (1998), the approach has the advantage that:

...the corpus data can be analysed from different perspectives (situation types, conversation types, types of speakers) and therefore seeks a balance between speaker, environment, context and recurrent features.

The functional social features of the Olunyole idioms are observed and confirmed from the speakers’ own accounts of their experience and the objectively thought out significance to the cultural world of the speakers.

The sample of this study comprised the Olunyole native speakers. Native speakers are the language users that Chomsky in Radford (1988) considers as ideal speakers and listeners of a particular language. The native speakers of Olunyole used in this study possess inherent knowledge that enables them to make intuitive judgments about the production of the idiomatic utterances and the way such utterances are used in various contexts. It is likely that some non-native speakers could exhibit more fluency than the native speakers of a language due to sociolinguistic factors associated with language attitudes (Hudson, 1996). However, the study takes the view that the native speakers have better internalized
the nuances of the cultural orientations that are largely the basis of the usage of idiomatic expressions than the non-native speakers of a language.

Crystal (1995) points to the communicative competence which focuses on the capacity of the native speakers to produce and comprehend utterances in the context in which they occur. Communicative competence differs from the Chomskyan mentalist linguistic competence that is the composite knowledge of a finite set of rules that produces an indefinite number of utterances and sentences of a language. Bachman (1990:88) explains what is referred to as Bachman’s model of communicative competence which consists of two components: the organizational competence and the pragmatic competence. The former entails the speakers’ use of formal rules to structure language and construct texts, while the latter concerns the use of language to achieve specific interactive ends, convey the speakers’ world experiences and express their feelings about such experiences. Pragmatic competence of the native speakers covers “…sensitivity to the context where language is used and the extent to which language is appropriate to the person or situation” (Baker, 2006:15). The ability to interpret the significance of cultural references and meanings packaged in figures of speech, such as idioms, is a performance-oriented demonstration of the pragmatic competence of the speakers.

The study accounts for and explicates the manifestation of social determinants that characterize and constrain the construction, interpretation and use of Olunyole idiomatic expressions in concrete interactive situations.

### 3.4.3 Sampling

The study initially used the location as the basic sampling unit. Thirty native speakers from each of the eight locations, which form the local administrative units, were selected using the stratified random sampling. The stratifying criterion was based on the demographic features, particularly the sociolinguistic determinants that are relevant to language use. In this regard, age, gender and educational backgrounds of the speakers
were the personal characteristics considered in the selection of the sample. On age, the older speakers are expected to have continuously used the language long enough to make more accurate judgements on the expressions of the language than the relatively younger ones. In addition the perceptions of the native speakers on cultural issues are likely to be formed along gender differences, and hence the need to include both the male and female speakers in the sample population. Notably, only 58 (20.3%) out of the 286 participants were female. This low participation of the female segment is attributed to cultural factors. Many of the females approached were hesitant to participate, citing family commitments. The literacy levels among women in this speech community also remain low; most of them would not express themselves in writing. However, the participants who could not write were subjected to the face-to-face interviews and even included in the FGDs.

The stratified sample was used for this study because as Bryman (1998:91) notes ‘‘...it ensures that the resulting sample will be distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion.’’ The role of this sample was generally to confirm that the collected expressions are indeed recognizable idioms of the language. The strategy was to involve a large population at the confirmatory stage and a few purposefully selected subjects at the discursive stage.

The following sketch shows the location of the sample in terms of the Administrative Units.
The research selected native speakers who have a high level of competence in the language. It is assumed that the older native speakers have continuously used the language and therefore have a firmer grasp of the socio-cultural principles, norms and values that determine the comprehension and functionality of the idiomatic expressions in specific contexts. On this ground, this sample comprised adult native speakers aged 40 years and above. The Kenya Constitution, G.O.K (2010), Article 260 recognizes these age brackets. The article defines a youth as a person between 18 and 35. Anybody above 18 is an adult, whereas the one below 18 is a child. Persons who have attained the age of 65 and above are regarded as senior citizens. Based on this age distinctions, the study considered participants who are 40 years and above of age as the ideal representation of adulthood.

The following tables summarise the age distribution of the three sets of the samples that were used in the study:
Table 3.1 (a) and (b): The initial sample of 240 and 30 respectively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-54</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 (c): Sample of 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The small group of people contacted was used to reach others through the snowball sampling. To overcome the challenge of representativeness associated with purposive and snowball sampling, this segment of the sample was selected from all the locations of the study area. Coleman (1958) underscores the significance of snowball sampling and its advantage over the conventional probability sampling when the researcher seeks to focus upon or reflect relationships between people in tracing inherent connections. To avoid bias and reduplication, the purposive and snowball sample did not include any individual who had been selected in the initial stratified sample. The study further relied on sixteen native informants who are traditional elders, reputable opinion leaders and aged speakers (senior citizens). The study initially used 240 native speakers and reduced the informants to 30 and finally 16. The reduction in the sample size, as the study progressed, enabled the study
to gather an in-depth exposition of the variables through more focused and close engagement with the informants.

3.5 Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology in language study is interested in conversation as a reflection of social action. The approach emphasizes techniques that people themselves (ethnic groups) use when they engage in social activity, such as linguistic interaction, while making sense of their collective experience and sharing such experiences through verbal interactions (Crystal, 1995:126). In examining the phenomena of everyday existence, Leiter (1980:5) says ‘‘...the aim of ethnomethodology to study the processes of sense making (idealizing and formulizing) that members of society...use to construct the social world and its factual properties (its sense of ready-made and independent of perception).’’

The construction and interpretation of idiomatic expressions in language involves placing their meanings within systematized categories that form part of the social reality that characterize the specific cultural group, which may be defined as a speech community as far as language use is concerned. Ethnomethodology suits the study of idiomatic expressions in understanding how people interact and make sense of the world. Ethnomethodology is grounded in practical study of the people’s life as the aspect under study manifests itself in the speakers’ natural environments. Malmkjaer (1991:121) on field methods in ethno-linguistics (the ethno-methodology in the scientific study of languages) notes:

The ideal way to study the language of a community is in situ, living within the village, learning as much of the social customs of the people as possible. It is very important to understand something about the social contexts in which the language is used, for in many languages these will affect aspects of its structure. The only way these contexts can be learned and properly appreciated is by living in
Ethno-methodology in qualitative research aims to describe the behaviour, values, taboos, beliefs in the natural context in which the data is collected. This was achieved through access to the public (open) and private (closed) social settings that rely on Olunyole as a means of communication. These included funerals, weddings, parents’ gatherings in schools and local churches. The researcher, over a period of time, listened to the speakers’ conversations in various contexts, gathered expressions that carried indirect meaning and subjected them to further verification through direct engagement and participant observation. The ethnomethodological data covers the recordings of natural conversational interactions that are transcribed and translated for analysis. Taylor (1973:7) sums up the process of ethnography as “be with them, live with them as you unravel the meaning they attach to their actions from their own viewpoint.”

3.6 Data collection Tools

The study employed a number of instruments in the collection of data. The elicitation tools are used to collect the idioms from the native speakers. The instruments used include the questionnaires and interviews for the elicitation and confirmation of the Olunyole idioms. The instruments focus on the functional social domains, schemata of social contextual frames, features of social reality with regard to the use of Olunyole idiomatic expressions in context and the social control in the interaction.

The elicitation and confirmation tools are presented as appendix A - C.

3.6.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to the initial sample to confirm the corpus of idioms collected. An initial twenty idioms were compiled from the researcher’s intuitions and introspection, the researcher himself being a native speaker. These were tested on the
initial sample of 240 native speakers for acceptability (tools in appendices A). The speakers were asked to provide other idiomatic expressions of Olunyole. The tool elicited responses that checked and counter-checked the existence of each idiom. There were two sets of initial confirmation tools: the one framed in purely the 1st language was administered to the respondents who could only write and read the vernacular (appendix A) and another was presented in the 1st language and English for respondents who had gone through formal schooling (appendix B). The idioms were provided with a key word left out in each expression. In case a high proportion (over 60 per cent) of the respondents complete the idiom with a given word, then the idiomatic expression is taken to be a recognized idiom in Olunyole. This was also used to reveal the acceptability and prevalence levels from the native speakers. The tools investigated the use of the expressions for interaction in social contexts. The questionnaire was used to gather information on the specific situations when the idioms are used and the acts/actions associated with their usage (appendix C). This was administered to 30 participants, purposely selected on account of age and role in the traditional set-up. These were particularly elders, traditional leaders and aged retired persons. The tools further sought the respondents’ personal information regarding age, their extent of use of the idioms, linguistic background (bilingual or multilingual) and educational background. However, the educational background did not seem to have significance on the native speakers’ use of Olunyole indigenous language in cultural contexts. These research tools were administered and collected immediately after filling. This enhanced the return rate that stood at 98% (tools in appendices A&B) and 100% (tool C).

The following illustrates the items on the confirmation tool (appendix A) using three idiomatic expressions (Appendix B):

1. *Omundu oribuula amang’ana na rapar’re abetsa wa kwa ------*
   
   (One who talks without much consideration is described as having fallen in the------)

   This completion item tests the authenticity of the idiom: *okhukwa m’munwa* directly translated as ‘fall in the mouth’.

   82
2. Omundu Okhwi biila okhuribula ling’ana abetsanga umil’le ----

(One who forgets to reveal crucial information is said to have swallowed----)

The idiom tested here is okhumila amare to swallow siliva

3. Omundu ore lelesie musikhalo abetsanga wikhaye----

(One who is not settled in a meeting or gathering is said to be sitting on a----)

The idiom tested is okwikhala khuisokoro- to sit on a maize-cob.

Apart from eliciting the levels of recognition and acceptability of the collected idiomatic items, the questionnaire administered to 30 participants (appendix C) is structured to capture the native speakers’ intuitions on the appropriateness of the use of the expressions in terms of the contextual dynamics. Particularly, the speakers reveal the following use-related dimensions:

i) The participant relations and relationships; who is most likely to use the item in discourse of conversation? (Adult-youth; husband-wife; man-man; woman-woman etc).

ii) The social context: informal-formal; private-public; private informal; public-informal. For example, gatherings would be public informal but local courts would be public formal.

iii) The acts realized from the texts of utterances in which idioms are used. The speech acts executed by the expressions such as caution, warning, threat, apology and order.

Covering all the items on a single tool could result in questionnaire fatigue. To avoid bogging down the respondents, the items are presented on various sheets and administered one after another. Therefore, each of the 30 participants handled two questionnaires, making a total of sixty questionnaires. At each level of data collection, the participants would be asked to provide other expressions, their meanings and contextual usage.
3.6.2 Interview Schedule

The study corroborated the questionnaire data through the qualitative interview. The study used semi-structured interviews on the sample selected purposefully and through snowballing. It was administered to 4 out of the last sample of 16 participants. These were participants who were not available for the focused group discussions due to illness or personal commitments. The objective of the research interview was to elicit from the interviewee(s) the necessary information with regard to the values, norms and beliefs. The interview also enabled the researcher to observe the interviewee’s non-verbal behaviour that reveals the attitudes towards the variables under study. Wray (1998:183-184) says ‘‘...seeking intuitions is rather different from general questioning or eliciting linguistic forms, because you are trying to get a ‘view round the back’ of the process that has led your informants, or would lead them, to their linguistic responses.’’ The qualitative research interview provides insights into what the interviewee sees as relevant and significant to the target research objectives.

The guiding open-ended and closed questions were formulated and follow-up probing and prompting questions were posed. The schedule comprises questions that are put to all interviewees, but variations on the subsidiary (elaboration) questions and the directions of probing are dictated by the circumstances and specific responses from individual respondents regarding the use of the idioms. Bryman (1998:313) notes that the qualitative interview is a flexible tool that takes cognizance of the direction of the interview to get detailed answers; the interview schedule only acts as a guide to which new questions can be introduced as a follow-up to the interviewee’s responses. It is an appropriate tool for gathering information on the roles and relationships (formal and non-formal), values, beliefs and the significance of social attitudes and behaviour related to the Olunyole idioms.

The interview formed the basis of focused discussions with native speakers. The semi-structured interview was blended with the focused group discussions. There were particularly six different sessions of focused discussion with one group of twelve
participants. Each session would last about three hours of active interaction. Face-to-face interviews and discussions were held with four of the participants. Each of the four participants would be interviewed separately.

The native speakers were guided to freely talk about the idiomatic expressions in relation to their everyday life interactions. Extensive discussions were the means of authenticating that data of the idiomatic units in relation to structured social life of the speakers. The discussions also provide some speculative explanation on the etymology (origin) of some of the expressions. The participants’ viewpoints and observed attitudes provide insights into the representational, interactional, regulatory and imaginative functions of the Olunyole idioms as aspects of social creativity of the Olunyole speech community.

### 3.6.3 Observation

Observation study entails non-manipulative data collection; the researcher observes the activities and interactions of the native speakers’ natural settings (Wray, 1998:186). Observation provided an informed view of how the idiomatic expressions are used in texts and revealed crucial un-elicited behaviour. The practical environment within which the expressions are used is critical in providing the contextual cues associated with the idioms and testing the correlation of the variables. The researcher, being a native speaker, personally attended occasions and events where the language of interaction would be predominantly Olunyole. Observation avenues included formal public arenas such as chiefs’ *barazas*. Eight of these *barazas* were attended. *Barazas* are open interactive sessions between the local people and government administrators. Other fora are the local arbitration sessions, informal public conversations and public socio-cultural events. In the spirit of participant observation the researcher immersed himself in the groups of speakers for an extended period, observing behaviour, listening to conversations, asking questions, sharing experiences and seeking specific explanations. In the complete observer approach, the subjects pay little attention to the researcher’s presence. In this study, the researcher thus attended gatherings and occasions (formal and informal) and listened to spontaneous utterances from speakers. As an observer/participant, the observer would get involved in
the activities that could provide the necessary data without divulging intention. The attitudes and perceptions of the speakers towards their social reality were observed from their reactions and responses. The stretches of discourse in conversational interactions formed part of the corpus of analysis. These are extensively discussed in chapter five.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis is based on the idiomatic expressions collected and their use as confirmed from the native speakers’ elicitations. The functionality of the idiomatic expressions is scrutinized along the Hallidayan three-dimensional framework: field, mode and tenor.

The field in this study is related to the domains of usage of the expressions. The Olunyole idioms function in specific domains that are socially conventionalized. These domains are situated in public or private, formal or informal settings that determine and constrain the acts performed by the utterances constructed. It is these domains that partly shape the communicative content of the messages. One of the related domains is, for example, gender differentiation. Some idioms are used to refer to gender-based issues related to the social frames such as marriage, impotence, infertility and power relations (authority and subservience). There is, for instance, the Olunyole idiom omukhaana waboha a girl ‘is round’ that is used to communicate that a girl is ripe for marriage. Given that it is only used to talk about girls and not women, the idiom can be said to be a public informal idiom that is not only restricted to gender but also the age of the referents. Other domains apart from gender and marriage are:

i. Sickness and disease

ii. Funeral and burial

iii. Birth

iv. Wealth
v. Nature: rain, lightning and hailstorms

The next level of analysis is the mode that covers “the how” of language use. This concerns the manner in which the messages are packaged through the utilization of the language resources. This is the level at which the Olunyole speakers construct messages as idiomatic utterances or functional texts, with clear sensitivity to the speakers’ intention(s) and appropriateness of communication. The native speakers therefore reflect and (re)create social reality by exploring and manipulating the imagery that defines the cultural ecology of the speech community. The idiom *okhukhalaka amakhoola* ‘to cut banana fibres’ is constructed from the image of the banana plant. The speech community differentiates between the banana leaves and the stem. *Liiru* is the fresh banana leaf while *likhoola* is the peeling from the stem. The fact that the idiom is constructed from the stem peeling and not the leaves is cultural. The Olunyole idiom *okhu-khalaka amakhoola* ‘to-infinitive+ cut banana fibres’, represents the Abanyole cultural ritual that relates to burial. It is the first post-burial sexual act a widow engages in, and therefore signifies an end to her marriage to the deceased man.

The tenor entails the participants’ roles, identities and relationships. Language use involves the interlocutors taking up or being assigned specific positions and functions that are regulated by social frames that entail the categories that characterize social contexts. The conventionalized principles, rules, norms, values determine the behaviour and actions associated with participants’ position, properties and functions. The study therefore examines how the participants’ characteristics in the social structure make it possible for specific acts to be realized through the utterance of Olunyole idioms in social contexts. For example, the elders are obligated to advise younger members of the community on the behaviour that conforms to societal norms. All social functions have educative components that inculcate the values that ensure the distinct identity of the speech community and the harmonious co-existence of the speakers.
3.8 Conclusion of the Chapter

The chapter discussed the descriptive research design adopted in the study. The research relied on empirically collected data to investigate the functionality of idiomatic expressions in controlling behaviour in social interaction and reflecting social reality. The collected idioms were subjected to the native speakers’ recognition and acceptability tests through elicitations from focused interviews and formulated questionnaire items. The intuitions of samples of native speakers are used to provide new insights into the relationship between the composition of the idioms and their use in reflecting the socio-cultural reality of the speech community. The native speakers were observed in their interaction and use of the idiomatic expressions. The discourses in which the expressions are used form texts that are primarily analysed within Halliday’s functionalist three-dimensional model. Chapter four presents the ethnographic world view of the Olunyole speech community.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE WORLD VIEW ON THE OLUNYOLE SPEECH COMMUNITY

4.1 Introduction

The chapter explores the cultural categories and concepts that characterize the sense of mutual belonging and collective social consciousness of the Olunyole speakers. It also seeks to interrogate the function and meaning of Olunyole idioms in bringing out the shared cultural aspects, and investigate the perceptions of the speakers (Abanyole) to the ‘fields of culture’ such as religion, death, marriage, initiation and family ties. These fields are drawn from the critical study of discourse in language, as social practice that is constrained by social conditions and “manifested in a great many different critical institutional domains” (Fairclough, 1995: 79).

The Olunyole speakers are bound to act and behave in accordance with the basic common interests of existence structured by the interdependent institutions that ensure socio-economic integration among members of the Olunyole speech community. Furthermore, it draws connections between Olunyole language and the speakers’ world view.

4.2 The nature of the Abanyole world view

The world view of a people is the aggregate of a group of individuals’ integrated cultural perception of the environment and their interwoven relationships that determine the development of social systems (Taylor, 1973:102). The term world view in this study refers to the structured awareness that the members of the Olunyole speech community demonstrate about everything that surrounds them. This awareness may be premised on what Okumba (1994:44) recognizes as the cultural context. He notes the two branches of culture as material and social. According to Okumba (1994), the material component refers to the physical products such as attire, tools, instruments, while the social aspects
are people’s language, religion, customs, indigenous philosophy and knowledge. The social world view therefore entails both explicit ideas and implicit assumptions and orientations held by the people, the implicit ones being those that can inferred by investigation from the observation of the people’s consistent behaviour (Gerrald, 1989:206). The language behaviour of the Olunyole speech community, studied from an ethnographic perspective, forms the core methodology of this study. In this regard, the study constructs the collectively structured inside view of the speakers according to their cultural preconceptions. Taylor (1973:420) on language in relation to philosophy and world view as adopted in the study notes:

The governing premises, assumptions and tenets and axioms about the universe tend to be more implicit for a high proportion of the society’s members. In addition, philosophical issues are rather abstract and can be communicated effectively only in the native language. This means that the ethnographer is not likely to learn much about people’s philosophical ideas unless they talk about them.

The elements that shape the world view of the Olunyole speech community are therefore the pervasive cultural themes that cover the speakers’ assumptions about the nature of the physical universe and its significance to their interpersonal relationships within the defined social systems. Hoebel (1958:27) views the cultural themes as the culture complexes, the closely woven patterns related to the interests and needs of social living. The complexes are recognized as patterned institutions such as the family and kinship, religion, marriage, leadership and administration that characterize the social interaction of the Olunyole speech community. These patterns determine the adaptive strategies of the members of the speech community as they go through the full life cycle.

The speech community is responsible for ensuring societal survival and continuity by establishing age-long cultural systems for providing human needs for social common
good, organizing relations, utilizing innovations in technology, trade and the arts (Hoebel, 1958:31). The present study considers the Olunyole speech code as a functional instrument reflected in the basic prerequisites of societal existence. Bennet and Melvin (1978: 68 note the six cultural prerequisites that determine the use of language by the speech community in the functioning of a social unit. The cultural prerequisites that guide the functionalist study of the Olunyole idioms are:

1. Maintaining the biological functioning of the group members.
2. Reproducing new members for the group.
3. Socializing new members into functioning adults.
4. Producing and distribute goods and services necessary to life.
5. Maintaining order within the group, and between itself and outsiders.
6. Defining the meaning of life and maintain the motivation to survive and engage in the activities necessary for survival.

These cultural prerequisites are manifested in the people’s use of language, and in the representation of the collective norms, values and beliefs of the members of the Olunyole speech community in their interactive co-existence. In the introduction of Nyore Dictionary, Makokha (2012: i) on the interface between language and culture contends:

...language is the master medium of culture, for the latter’s assured preservation and reliable propulsion into the future: lose your language, and you have no culture to speak of; and people without cultural roots are societal misfits floating in life like weeds in air.

Olunyole idioms are thus linguistic systems that enable the speech community to ascribe to its rich unique heritage. The speakers of Olunyole thus creatively use the language to regulate the interactive behaviour of the speakers and enforce the norms and values of the speech community in the fulfilment of the speakers’ needs and the distribution of
resources within the various social functional units. For example, the idiom *omukhono omusiro*, ‘heavy-handedness’ is used to compliment generosity as one of the virtues that propagate the value of open sharing. This idiom expresses the fact that the Abanyole value the sharing of available goods as a show of communality. On the contrary, selfishness or coldness of heart is condemned through expressions such as *yachuuna ofiye* ‘one pinched the dead’ and *olukhono* ‘diminutive hand’. The present study examines the role of the Olunyole idioms in reflecting and enhancing the cultural world view of the speakers.

### 4.2.1 Olunyole and the Cultural life-cycle of the Speech Community

The use of language within a social group partly revolves around the speakers’ customs and perceptions about the life cycle stages of marriage, birth and child-rearing, adulthood and its responsibilities, ageing and eventual death. Kottak (2000:310) says:

> The people’s sense of belonging is aligned to their behaviour towards the physiological changes and states of the human life cycle: the customary responses to pregnancy, birth, puberty, the biological vigour of young adulthood, sexual capacity and the decrepitude of old age and death.

The Abanyole cultural group is thus identified from its in-built systems that assure the members of the speech community of the balance between the physical and psychological security of the individuals and the continued harmony of the whole social unit. The Olunyole speech community values harmonious co-existence that perpetuates age-long values and norms that are transmitted from one generation to another by means of language. These norms and values are evident from the Abanyole life-cycle and the socio-cultural domains such as family and kinship, initiation, religious practices, funeral and burial rites.
4.2.2 Olunyole and the Family Social Organization

The Abanyole, the target population of this study, are generally a patriarchal people. Alembi (2002:56) notes “…the society is in fact named after their founder forefather, Anyole, while the clans that form the Abanyole are named after their sons.” Their social organization is centered on the clan system, with eighteen clans forming the Abanyole society. The clans that form the Abanyole are Abatongoi, Abasyubi, Abasiloli, Abamuli and Abalonga. Other clans are Abasakami, Abayangu, Ababayi, Aberanyi, Abasilatsi, Abamang’ali, Abasikhalé, Abasiekwe, Abakanga, Abamukunzi, Abamutete and Abamutsa (Alembi, 2002:57).

The Abanyole are a patriarchal group in which the man wields ultimate authority within the social group. This set-up is responsible for gender-based construction of social reality that creates differences in the behaviour, roles and treatment of girls and women. The Abanyole families reside in patrilocal homes; the setting-up of a home is the responsibility of a male head of the family. The cultural perceptions inculcate male stereotypes that revolve around “instrumental qualities such as being competitive, adventurous and physically strong while the female stereotype is centered around qualities of affiliation and expressiveness such as being sympathetic, nurturing and intuitive” (Turner and Turner, 1994: 101). Male-female behaviour is therefore controlled along the lines of stereotypical expectations. Girls and women who overly exhibit male associated qualities are cynically referred to as nasisacha, to mean ‘the men type’ and are generally reprimanded. On the other hand, boys and men who express open expressive emotions are reminded ‘to be men.’ Olunyole is replete with expressions that represent these perceptions. For example, expressions ekase es’satsa, ‘persevere like a man’ and luma ikholo ‘be unshaken, demonstrate that men are expected to be resilient and brave. Men who run back to their kin for protection in the face of confrontational situations instead of aggressively going out to attack are mocked as ones behaving like women in utterances such as olakayanga singa omukhasi ‘you are crying like a woman.’
Women among the Abanyole are relegated to submissive inferior socio-political status in the distribution of resources and power. The family prepares individuals for their culturally constrained gender roles towards transitions to adulthood. The boys are expected to gain more independence as they begin to court girls for marriage. The construction of esiimba ‘a small hut’ after esisebo ‘circumcision’ is a demonstration that a boy is ready to free himself from the influence of the parents. The boy is discouraged from sitting in the kitchen or performing female chores. Boys are instead taught and trained to defend their families, clans and communities in case of external aggression. Traditionally, they are given war paraphernalia such as the shield, bow and arrow, once they are initiated and graduate into manhood.

Despite the rights of girls to inherit family property entrenched in the Kenyan constitution, society still holds hard cultural positions that do not recognize girls as beneficiaries of family wealth. Sons are relied upon to ensure the continuity of the lineages because girls get married into other clans and they therefore do not contribute to the growth of their fathers’ clans. The girls are referred to as abahuyi ‘sojourners’ and therefore they do not have a significant contribution to make to the family. The traditional view, which is changing as a result of sensitization, is that girls are only prepared for marriage so that they fetch bride-price for their fathers’ clans. In fact a man who sires daughters only is forbidden to perform or participate in birth and death rituals of the clan because his “house” (lineage) is considered “closed.” The Abanyole capture it in the idiom wa-sikha ‘he has drowned.’ This means that no reference will be made of him once he dies. Thus no new-borns are named after such a person, and therefore the name is not maintained within the lineage.

Among the Abanyole, the family goes beyond the nucleus set-up. The Abanyole value the extended family that also includes relatives such as aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws. It is within the family that children are brought up; the cherished values of the society are initially inculcated collectively by the family members. The values such as generosity, hospitality, chastity, respect for elders and honesty, among others, are emphasized as part
of children’s upbringing. It is therefore the responsibility of the whole clan to ensure that a child grows into an adult observing the norms and values. The deviant ones are reprimanded and counselled. The elderly members take time to teach the youth the *emisilo* ‘taboos’ related to their life cycle. Marriage to or sexual liaison with relatives and clan members could result in the culprits being banished from the society. The clans are exogamous, in which case one is prohibited from marrying a member of one’s patrilineal clan or the patrilineal of one’s mother’s clan (Mari, 1998:162). Children borne out of such incestuous unions would traditionally be abandoned to die. In the modern times, such babies are surrendered to the authorities for adoption. Social and cultural functions are therefore used as fora to introduce children to their relatives to cement family ties and avoid marriage unions that could betray the norms.

The fictive kin, individuals whose membership in a kin group is assigned arbitrarily rather than through consanguinity or affinity, are recognized among the Abanyole Mari (1998:163). The child that a woman gets before marriage may be integrated within the family but be referred to as *omucheenda na nyina* ‘one who accompanied the mother.’ Such a child is curtailed in the access to the rights and privileges associated with the family. For example, the child cannot take up a power-related or leadership position in the community. In case the child is a boy, he is not allowed to inherit the ancestral family property. A girl is easily accommodated by the family because it is presumed that she will get married and earn the family more bride-price. In fact a man who marries a woman with a baby girl is expected to pay bride-price that covers both the wife and her daughter. A child borne from an inheritance marriage is known as *omwana wo omwandu* ‘a child that results from wealth.’ This is attributed to the assumption that the deceased husband had accumulated wealth which the inheritor takes up and controls by virtue of his status. Such a child, like *omucheenda na nyina*, is not entitled to the same filial rights and privileges as children borne from what is regarded as “mainstream” marriages.

Informant Maganga, on age-based behaviour among the Abanyole, observes that lack of respect for the elders earns a member a curse that could cause illness, madness, barreness,
impotence or even death. An aggrieved elder strips before the younger member, *okhufulama*, and utters *es’ilsaamo* ‘a curse’ that hounds the youth for life. The idiom *okhukabusia eminwa* ‘verbal recant of the curse’ refers to the process that seeks to pacify the elder in order to withdraw the curse. A child who is in the habit of laughing unnecessarily at the elders is cautioned through the idiom, *witsa okuhambibwa lisafu*, translated as ‘you will be handed a leaf.’ An elderly person showing a child a leaf is seen as act of daring the child to remove from the old person whatever that child perceives as being odd. This sort of challenge coming from old people is interpreted to be a curse.

Family roles and responsibilities are shared with the head of the family ensuring that members of the family have shelter and adequate food. The males are expected to provide security to the family and defend the social group against any internal or external aggression. Consequently, the linguistic imagery used to refer to and talk about men depict them as being brave, firm, and generally wielding power and control over all issues related to the being of the family. Animal-related images such as *etsulukhi* ‘the bull’, *eso* ‘the wild animal’, *itsofu* ‘the elephant’ and *injika* ‘the hero’ are common references to men that depict masculinity as a necessary feature for the continued stability of the family and the clan as social units. Under his watch, he also ensures that every male adult gets married. He does this by marshalling and mobilizing resources to facilitate payment of bride-price so that the family is not ridiculed.

Mrs Mafumo, an informant, says that bride-price is a form of recognition of the marriage union, and is meant to give the married people the necessary security and social recognition to build their family without interference. The Abanyole value cattle as payment of bride-price that symbolically binds the two extended families involved in the marriage. The partners are then given the freedom to engage in an intimate relationship that leads to the birth of children. So significant is the institution of marriage that every adult, male or female, is expected to marry or get married (females). In this regard, the members who do not marry are shunned and considered a disgrace to their families and clans. The expression *omusuumba sia konywata* ‘a bachelor is never visited’ means that
you do not engage an unmarried man in important matters. Marriage is therefore a show of responsibility, and an institution that ensures the survival of the family.

The linguistic expressions thus depict the people’s attitudes and thinking towards the cultural rituals and practices. Indeed, there are idiomatic expressions which capture the perceptions of the Abanyole towards marriage and family. Married people are allowed to remarry in case their spouses die. A widow may get re-married into the late husband’s family through a process known as okhukabusia ‘to return.’ Wife inheritance is referred to as ‘to return’ because the dead man’s family takes a cultural responsibility to ensure that the widow does not leave the home. A male relative, usually a brother or cousin, is identified to ensure that the family does not “lose” its wife; a wife is considered to belong to the whole clan. To fail to inherit a widow, would be calling for ridicule from other families and the wrath of the deceased relative.

Polygamy, though not widespread, is culturally admissible among the Abanyole. The speakers use the expression okhwalikha to refer to the act of taking in an additional wife. The idiomatic meaning of okhwalikha derives from its denotative meaning of the act of beginning the process of preparing ugali ‘maize flour meal’ - a known stable food for the speech community. A co-wife is referred to as mwalikhwa, the one who shares the responsibility of cooking ugali in marriage. This means that the women using mwalikhwa to refer to each other are traditionally married to one man, brothers or cousins.

Cooking has a symbolic significance in marriage. A wife among the Abanyole could complain that the husband does not give her sexual attention by indirectly saying ‘he does not eat the ugali that I cook.’ The man could accuse the wife of not giving the ugali sufficient heat as his explanation for not eating ugali. The expressions serve to point the cultural significance of the people’s interaction with their material environment, and also function as euphemisms in the discourses about sex as a taboo topic. The taboo topics generally cover birth, calls of nature, sex and death. The Abanyole, for example, say
ndekweeny kho, ‘may I step aside briefly’, to excuse themselves in order to answer a call of nature. For the short one, the Olunyole speakers indirectly say saabe kho, ‘may I wash.’

There are therefore metaphors, similes and idioms that cover the preparedness, preparations and the values that revolve around the marriage institution. For example, okhuboha, ‘to tie’ is an idiom that indicates that a girl is old enough and psychologically ready for marriage. The same lexical reference is used for sour milk. Fresh milk once deliberately kept under certain conditions goes sour and is taken as a meal. In the case of a girl, Otieno, an informant, explains that traditionally the Abanyole take care of daughters to get married off once they mature. Oyule, another informant, observes that the Abanyole use okhuboha to mean ‘to get thick and round’. In this case, Oyule further adds, the expression in the context of a girl means that any girl who is ‘ripe’ for marriage atsitsa; she is expected to go. To say that a girl watsia, ‘she has gone’, is to state that the girl is married. In other words, the girl has left the parents’ home as required by tradition.

Generally, issues related to sickness, death, initiation and other cultural matters are handled at the family level before the clan is involved. The family is therefore the focal point in the realization of the Abanyole cultural obligations and fulfilment of the people’s social responsibilities. Linguistic units such as idiomatic expressions in usage are constructed to represent and reflect family and clan-based relationships.

4.2.3 Olunyole and Kinship

The Abanyole value and strive to maintain close ties with the relatives that are located near around their points of physical residence and far off places. Most relations are traced from the institution of marriage. Amatsaai malala, ‘of the same blood,’ among the Abanyole refers to blood and kinship relations. The expression is used in conversations to explain that people are identified with a given clan lineage. The references to these relationships are meant to minimize the gaps between relatives and depict a close knit set-up. For example, the same term papa is used to refer to both one’s ‘father’ and one’s
uncles (brothers to the father). *Khootsa*, the equivalent of ‘uncle’ in English, is only used to talk about the brother to one’s mother. A man married to one’s mother is not that person’s step-father, but one’s father; there is no term step-father in Olunyole.

The following table shows the Olunyole kinship terms and their English equivalents:

Table 4.1: Olunyole Kinship Term  Source: Field Data

| Patriarchal Relationship |  |  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kinship                  | Olunyole term | English term | Kinship | Olunyole term | English term |
| Father                   | Papa           | Father       | Mother  | Mama          | Mother       |
| Father’s brother         | Paapa          | Uncle        | Mother’s brother | Khootsa | Uncle |
| Father’s father          | Kuuka          | Grandfather  | Mother’s father | Kuuka | Grandfather |
| Father’s mother          | Kuukhu         | Grandmother  | Mother’s mother | Kuukhu | Grandmother |
| Father’s sister          | Seenje         | Aunt         | Mother’s sister | Mama | Aunt |
| Wife to father’s brother | Mama           | Aunt         | Wife to mother’s brother | Mama | Aunt |
| Father’s wife (not one’s mother) | Mama | Step-mother | Mother’s husband (not one’s father) | Father | Step-father |
| Father’s son             | Ahefwe         | Brother      | Mother’s son | Ahefwe | Brother |
| Father’s daughter        | Mbotwa         | Sister       | Mother’s daughter | Mbotwa | Sister |
| Son to father’s brother  | Ahefwe         | Cousin       | Son to mother’s brother | Mufiala | Cousin |

| Matriarchal Relationship |  |  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kinship                  | Olunyole term | English term | Kinship | Olunyole term | English term |
| Father’s son             | Ahefwe         | Step-brother | Mother’s son (different father) | Ahefwe | Step-brother |
| Father’s daughter        | Mbotwa         | Step-sister  | Mother’s daughter | Mbotwa | Step-sister |
The kinship terms therefore indicate family bonding with focus on expanding relations beyond the nucleus family. An oral informant, Oyule, explains that the Abanyole partly derive their cultural strength from broad-based relationships for purposes of sharing roles and providing communal support in situations of adversity. The kinship system revolves around the patriarchal set-up and has, in some cases, different terms for a father’s and mother’s relatives.

4.2.4 The Abanyole Religious beliefs and practices

Religion is a component that partly determines behaviour. The Abanyole observe both the traditional religious practices and modern doctrines. These practices are partly evident in the specific expressions used within the Olunyole speech community. Edward (1976: 171) on the Religion and People’s world view notes:

Religious practice is the consecration of the group and the core of society, one of the universals of social behaviour, taking recognizable form in every society. The predisposition to religious belief is the most powerful force in the human mind. Religion is then a process by which individuals are conditioned to subordinate their immediate self-interest to the interests of the group through belief in super-human and supernatural forces.

Religious behaviour of the Abanyole cultural group is shaped by practices and programmes that reinforce forms of behaviour that revolve around deities that hold a firm control over their lives. Everything they undertake is influenced by the full force of ancestral authority and mortal divine being with unchallenged power interpreted and presided over on earth by institutionalized systems (churches, cults and rituals). On the belief system of the Abanyole, Alembi (2002:16) notes “…the cosmology of the Abanyole is characterized by a belief in a supreme being, ancestral spirits and human agents with supernatural powers.” The Abanyole believe that their lives are controlled and influenced
by Nyasaye (the one who is prayed). Nyasaye, the Supreme Being, is the bringer of fortune, prosperity, peace and harmony to the society. The Abanyole embrace both the traditional and the modern modes of worship. Christianity is the dominant modern religion, with insignificant scatters of Islamic practice. Religion has consequently ‘encroached’ on the traditional way of life. In fact some traditionalists indeed lead Christian lives, attending church and at the same time holding onto cultural practices. During social and cultural functions, there is tolerant blending of all forms of religious practices. A good example is the Abasiekwe rain-makers. Abasiekwe form one of the clans of Abanyole. Christians hold the view that God sends rainfall to the human world. But there are speakers of Olunyole who believe that the Abasiekwe, a clan of the Abanyole, have mystical powers to make or prevent rainfall. Quite often, the idiomatic expression; Abasiekwe baatile likulu, translated as ‘Abasiekwe have held the sky’, is used to explain long spells of drought: the belief that the Abasiekwe have control over nature.

Among the traditionalists, ancestral spirits are the relatives who died earlier but continue to have influence over the living; they are the link between the living and the dead. Emakombe in Olunyole is the ‘world of spirits’ from where dead relatives “monitor” the world of the living. The idiom okhutsia emakombe ‘to go to the spirit world’ means to die but remain relevant in another world. In the olden times, every clan had Olusambwa ‘a four feet pole’, “one foot of the pole is covered underground, leaving three feet in an upright position...two stones, one on each side, are placed at the base of the pillar.” (Alembi, 2002:60). The placement of the Olusambwa would symbolically signify that the Abanyole operate in two interrelated worlds, the world of the dead and the world of the living. For the Abanyole, life continues beyond death. Olunyole is therefore replete with expressions that depict death as merely a journey. For example, burial is euphemistically referred to as okhukooba translated as ‘to escort.’ When someone dies, they say hutsie okhuhulukha ‘one has gone to rest’. Abule (1988:43) notes that the Luhya, to which the Abanyole belong as a sub-group, console the bereaved by assuring them that the bereaved will have better chances of uniting with their departed relatives.
Rituals are a means by which people express their commitment to the beliefs that define a cultural identity. They are formal, stylized, repetitive and stereotyped social public acts that people perform in special (sacred) places and at set times to signal that they accept a common social and moral order, one that transcends their status as individuals (Kottak, 2000:455). Rituals, tsimbikho, are at the centre of all aspects of the traditional life of the Abanyole. Onyango (2007) discusses the solidarity rituals that create and maintain communal integration. Among the rituals that pre-occupy the cultural life of the Abanyole are the okhuloomba ‘cleansing’, emilembe ‘greeting’ and okhuchiimba ‘rain-making’.

The cleansing/healing rituals engage the herbalists, medicine-men and priestesses in harnessing the natural environment and communing with the spirit world in order to intervene in people’s problems such as ill health, disagreements in relationships, barrenness, prolonged drought and famine. Cleansing deals with the misfortunes of life and diabolical or malevolent forces of nature interfere with the dynamics of acceptable social and religious values in the community (Onyango, 2007:67). Non-observance of the norms calls for the cleansing rituals that involve the traditionally commissioned agents making utterances, sometimes formulaic, in the form of vows and long winding pronouncements on generational moral values. The practices are accompanied by specific actions such as the sprinkling of blood from specified animals, chewing of concoctions from plants and animal parts. Among the Abanyole, a white cock or sheep are reserved for specialized cleansing ceremonies. Ordinarily, such animals are neither donated for other functions nor given out as gifts of goodwill. The trees reserved for rituals among the Abanyole are olusolia ‘Markhania lurea’, omureembe ‘Nandi flame’, the olwolia and lisaachi. Otieno, my informant, explains that every homestead among the Abanyole is likely to have these plants as grown vegetation. Onyango (2007:69) describes the cleansing of incestuous liaisons that involves the condemned man sitting in the middle of the council of elders and concoctions sprinkled over the buildings in the homestead. According to Otieno and Oyule, informants in this study, the man and girl found to have engaged in acts of incest are made to eat the ritual roasted meat, each repeating vows uttered by elders that the immoral acts will cease for purposes of peace with the spirits and communal harmony among the living. The utterances would go as:
Translated:

I swear before the elders
The blood of incest will not stay with me (I will swallow the blood of incest)
Should I go back on these vows, let lightning strike me
Let the peace of our forefathers mark my pronouncements
so that I may live in harmony with my neighbours and within the clan.

The rituals are therefore public functions that involve interested adults as witnesses to the vows made before elders and priests, who are considered representatives of spiritual and supernatural order. Apart from rituals, the Abanyole traditional life revolves around communal shrines that are collectively preserved for posterity. A number of beliefs and taboos are drawn from expectations about their preservation of the holy shrines. For example, cutting down trees from such shrines may result in destructive rain. Whenever people experience hailstorms that destroy their crops, they attribute it to someone gathering firewood from the shrine and ask:

*Ni wina orenyele musabwali* ‘Who could have gathered firewood from the shrine?’

The spirits are known to wander freely in the shrines at night. People therefore hurry to walk past the shrines before night fall. In addition, the shrines are littered with sacred objects and creatures that could have been sacrifices or used for rituals. The animals and creatures in these spots are considered sacred and it is sacrilegious to kill any of them. In fact movement into such grounds is forbidden unless the elders known to be custodians of the shrines are consulted.
According to the research conducted by Onyango (2007:27) the Abanyole known sacred spaces and shrines are Emukusa, Esibakala, Esiarambatsi, Ebulonga-Etwenya, Ebusiekwe Musichimbilo, Omukawino thicket and Omuhaya sacred tree. These are the physical points of contact between the spiritual (transcendent experience) and the physical worlds (Onyango, 2007:28). Onyango (2007:28) on Emukusa shrine, for example, notes:

The shrine is the most feared; respected and restricted to the extent that mentioning its name alone sends chilling waves in the minds of the people...Today, it is reserved as a religious site by the local government under management of the Luanda Town Council. The practice of Abanyole traditional religious ritual in Emukuusa shrine makes a distinction between human and something that transcends them not substantively, in the sense that the religious shrine was necessarily believed to occupy another world functionally, in the sense that within this one world of experience, the ritual is an agent believed to encounter powers that are impressively greater than (transcendent) to his own.

Emukusa, believed to be over a hundred years of existence, is one of the oldest shrines (Onyango, 2007). Asitiba, a member of the Abasiekwe rain-making clan explains that Ebusiekwe, another shrine, is instrumental in the rain-making ritual of the Abanyole. *Ebichiimbilo*, ‘the rain-making shrines’, constitute thick vegetation of gigantic trees and fierce animals. The rain-makers, *abachiimbi*, keep rain-making paraphernalia at the centre of these spots. They make discreet visits to the shrines when there is prolonged drought. The coded behaviour of the rain makers is a guarded secret; they are reluctant to share for fear of rivalry and witchcraft that could destroy their power, adds Asitiba. In the context of trade, the Olunyole has the expression *okhuchimba obukusi* ‘to exaggerate the price beyond the affordable cost’ to mean making it impossible to buy. The expression compares the price to the inaccessible clouds in the sky.
Apart from shrines, the Abanyole cultural life is believed to revolve around totems (Onyango, 2007). Maganga and Amukhuma, the informants in the study, confirm that the otherwise wild animals domesticated by families and clans are believed to bear immense significance to the existence of the clan. Totems, the natural objects and creatures, are treated as emblems that partly define a clan or family (Kottak, 2000). The common totems likely to be kept and revered by families include snake reptiles, frogs and tortoises. The totems, ’emisambwa’, are believed to bring prosperity and good health to the families. They wield supernatural and mystical power over the members of the families that keep them. The present religious practices such as Christianity changed the people’s perception and the totems are therefore considered means by which people practice witchcraft. Otieno, another informant, says the totems are therefore kept secretly because families suspected to have them are shunned.

The linguistic expressions used during the performance of rituals by the Abanyole realize the social function of creating or portraying permanent solidarity among the people as a social community. For example, okhwikula omuliango ‘opening the door’ is a post-burial ritual that is performed to allow the bereaved to resume normal communal association. Elderly women return to their maiden homes as key participants in the okhwikula omuliango ritual (Alembi, 2002). The cultural functions and ceremonies are therefore meant to maintain close ties among the people related by blood, marriage and association.

4.2.5 Funeral and burial rites within the Olunyole speech Community

The Luhya ceremonies are a highly superstitious people with regard to issues related to death (Abule, 1988:61). The Abanyole, a sub-group of the Luhya, believe that death results from man’s failure to adhere to the societal norms, and also the evil schemes of adversaries. The bereaved try to come to terms with the loss by tracing any latest instances of animosity between the dead person and neighbours or relatives. If the dead person openly disagreed with anybody, then that is deemed to be the cause of the death, even
when there is medical proof that the deceased was ailing (Abule, 1988:64). As Otieno explains, one who dies from murder or commits suicide is buried only after elaborate rites are performed by hired talismanic traditionalists. In such cases, there is no public mourning and the interment is done at night. The typical funeral acts such as religious prayers, the Holy Scriptures and eulogies are not recited. People who die from murder or suicide are not remembered after interment as their names are not given to the new-borns. This stems from the belief and fear that their spirits could return to haunt the living.

The Abanyole funeral ceremonies separate the spirit of the dead person from the living, notes Oyule. These activities and rites are meant to appease the dead to “travel” so that his or her spirit does not return to hound the living. There is the universal thought in African practices that the ghost is often reluctant to depart and that only special rituals conducted in adherence to specific cultural codes can ensure permanent departure (Alembi, 2002). The practices of okhukoma ‘activities related to public mourning’ and esilemba - ‘a ritual performed at a hero’s funeral’ - are meant to appease the spirit of the dead in order for the living to remain in peace.

The Abanyole mourn the dead in various ways such as wailing loudly and wild chants, esilemba. The horn is blown incessantly by reknown artists. The esilemba rite is meant to expel the spirits that could have resulted in the death so that the surviving relatives live in peace. Padre Josphat reminds that such a rite would be performed when the deceased was one whose moral standing was beyond reproach, and that one must have contributed significantly to community interests, such as times of war or leadership charisma.

Abule (1988:68) notes that “…open expression of grief among the Luhya is a show of solidarity with the bereaved.” Among the Abanyole, those who do not grieve are perceived to have had a hand in the death. Otieno notes that among the Abanyole, death does not occur without a cause. Otieno captures this attitude by saying, Omusaala sikukwitsanga okweene tawe ‘a tree does not fall on its own; it is felled’. The people
believed to harbour malicious intentions to cause harm are captured in the idiom *okhucheenda mundangu*, ‘making discreet movements with ulterior evil intentions.’ These movements include witchcraft which is widely believed to be one the causes of death. The belief that death is attributed to evil work of sorcery and harmful magic defines the associations among members of the Olunyole speech community. For example, Oyule explains that the Olunyole speakers are cautious how they handle their possessions so that those thought to harbour evil intentions do not pick them. The expression *okhu-toola* ‘to + infinitive + pick someone’ is used in situations where a sorcerer is suspected to have collected a victim’s property or whatever may have been handled. People are careful not to leave behind their hair, piece of cloth, half-eaten food or even foot marks. The conduct of spouses during the mourning period is generally monitored to reveal their levels of chastity. A spouse who does not sit next to the head of the deceased partner is judged to have been promiscuous. These practices are more punitive to women because of the male dominance in the cultural ideology of the Abanyole.

Death is one of those subjects about which the Abanyole do not comment directly. For example, one reporting about the death of a relative may use the idiom; *Ng'ane ali Khwiselo,* to mean that ‘somebody is dead and that the body is awaiting burial.’ This euphemism gives Olunyole the requisite self-regulatory mechanism that ensures that desirable levels of politeness in communication are maintained. Louis (1936:195) in her article “American Euphemisms for Dying” concludes, “…one of mankind’s gravest problems is to avoid a straightforward mention of dying or burial” Idioms therefore ‘shelter’ these taboo subjects in decent-sounding euphemism. On burial, the Olunyole idioms such as *okhura* ‘to place someone’ and *okhukooba* ‘to escort someone,’ which are all equivalents of ‘burial,’ demonstrate honour and respect for the dead, explains Maganga.
4.3 Norms, Values and Taboos within the Olunyole Speech Community

Cultures integrate practices that conventionally regulate social institutions, relationships, the arts and technology for collective survival (Fonklin, 1976:24). The speakers of a language code, in their permanent group (the speech community), strive to act according to its culture. The Abanyole social life observes levels of conduct that enhance respect for one another, solidarity within the social unit and individual sacrifice for the good of the bigger group. The Abanyole demonstrate cultural values by sharing resources among friends or relatives and facing situations of adversity in groups. This is what Kottak and Conrad (2004:118) refer to as “finding solace in solidarity.” Generosity, hospitality and warmth for those in difficult situations are some of the virtues that propagate the values of the people. The idiomatic expression *okhumekana lipwoni*, ‘to share a patoto’, is used to demonstrate the spirit of sharing possessions and solidarity among the Abanyole. The ‘potato’, as Oyule explains, culturally refers to whatever little an individual is able to get and can be shared among friends, peers or relatives as a demonstration of solidarity and communal harmony.

Generally, according to Otieno, the Abanyole norms revolve around avoidance or resolution of conflicts caused by unacceptable acts such as murder, incest, adultery, witchcraft, theft, encroachment on private property and interference with communal sites. The people’s behaviour is regulated within the acceptable ethical code by ensuring that their belief system, cultural practices and social relations perpetuate the norms and values.

4.3.1 Olunyole and the Abanyole Norms

The behaviour of the group is guided by standards of norms and taboos, and mechanisms are set to enforce adherence to the acceptable standards of conduct (Taylor, 1973:113). A norm is the average or modal behaviour of a given type that is manifested by a social group (Taylor, 1973). An informant, elder Imbira, notes that the behavioural norms of customs among the Abanyole *tsimbikho* reinforce the basic value of social *obuhaambani* ‘solidarity’ through *obulala* ‘unity’ and promotion of *omulembe* ‘peaceful co-existence’.
To go against the set norms is regarded as *esilache* ‘perversion.’ For example, relatives who engage in sex relations are considered *ebe-esilache*, ‘perverts.’ Such acts that defy the norms are regarded as *olubo*, which means alien behaviour. *Olubo* is therefore a way of disowning behaviour that is contrary to the norms of the Abanyole. Amukhuma, an informant, explains that *Olubo* is feared to cause dreaded ailments that eventually result in the death of the perverts and those that closely relate with them. The perverts are punished through banishment from the group or they are shunned by the rest of the people. They may be re-admitted only after the cleansing ritual specific to the particular ‘offence’ is performed.

The acts of promiscuity in marriage are believed to cause ailments culturally called *tsisila*, as Ms Margaret Otieno notes. A spouse that engages in immoral acts is advised not to be close to an infant child; the child will die of *tsisila*, ‘an ailment that changes the skin texture, the stomach is distended.’ Furthermore, a man who takes another person’s wife does not visit the other person on his sick bed or view his body in case he passes on. Such a visit is believed to worsen the patient’s situation and could cause death. The Abanyole use the verbal idiom *um’male*, ‘he has finished him’, as a comment on the death that follows such a visit. If the immoral man views the body of the aggrieved man, he may collapse or become mysteriously ill and die soon after. The tribulations from extra-marital acts are referred to as *ebiila* ‘strange ailments that result in death.’ In Olunyole, the idiom *okhukhalikha* ‘to be cut’ means that one has died suddenly and mysteriously from such a strange ailment. The people therefore avoid immoral behaviour for fear of *tsisila* or *ebiila* (cultural illnesses). In addition, the rigours of the cleansing rituals, for members who engage in *olubo* ‘acts that defy the norms’, are exacting and socially humiliating.

The norms are dynamic in embracing the changing world of scientific innovations and inventions (Taylor, 1973). For example, Otieno explains that it was a traditional norm for the Abanyole people to keep bodies in the home for three days before burial. In the modern times, bodies are preserved in mortuaries and are only ferried to the home a day before burial. Traditionally, the Abanyole would talk of *okhuhalisibwa* ‘to be laid in state’
as the act that would mark the beginning of public mourning. This has notably changed to *okhuhinibwa* ‘of a body, to be ferried’ when the body is transported from the morgue to the place of burial. Many years ago, a respectable elder would be buried with the head facing up, *okhwikhasibwa*, ‘to be made to sit upright’ as a show of honour. Otieno, an informant, recalls that the last elder to be buried in this position was Ngota in 1961.

*Okhubiita* refers to the traditional blessing process that is carried out by elders commissioned by communal order. Informant Josphat says that *okhubiita* applies to adults setting out to pursue the interests of the community such as war or political contests. The adults spent days away from the ordinary setting in secluded points to receive psychological mentorship and elaborate training on traditional expectations and code of conduct. On *Okhubiita*, traditional blessing elder, Abednego says the elders would transmit the value of individual sacrifice for the benefit of the entire community.

### 4.3.2 Olunyole and the Abanyole Taboos

Taboos are prohibitions and inhibitions that result from, and are complementary to the package of social customs of an identified group of people with shared heritage (Mari, 1998:40). These inhibitions serve a stabilizing role of checking and regulating behaviour to conform to the needs and interests of the majority members of the group. As Oyule notes, the enforcement of the taboos among the Abanyole observes the principle of collectivism rather than individualism. Collectivism, as Kottak and Conrad (2004:54) observe, calls for collaborative mechanisms of internalizing the group code of customs and embracing structured means of enforcing the observance of such conventional behaviour. Bee and Barbara (1992:56) comment that the enforcement of taboos is notably controlled by exchange and reciprocity. For example, if one broke a taboo, then one would be inviting misfortune such as illness to oneself or those in one’s lineage. In addition, they note that observance of the taboos is an assurance of continued prosperity and good health for the stability of the whole group. The strange illnesses that befall those members who do not observe the taboos are referred to as *ebiila*. This is the same condition that results from promiscuity in marriage (cf 4.2.1). The causes of certain ailments are culturally traced
and explained from the known past conduct of the victims rather than the modern scientific medical research. For example, a couple that sheds blood in the course of a fight does not share a meal or engage in the sexual union until traditional cleansing is done. Failure to observe this requirement could result in a strange ailment and eventual death, warns informant Otieno. Diseases such as H.I.V/AIDS and yellow fever, whose causes and symptoms are known in modern medicine, are believed to be the result of non-conformity to the taboos.

Below are representative taboos that control the behaviour and conduct of the Abanyole in their social relationships:

i) Boys do sit on the cooking stones: *okwikhala khu mahika no omusilo*.

The Abanyole believe that sitting on any of the three coking stones may result in the death of one’s mother. The taboo discourages children from hanging around the cooking point as this may cause burns. Culturally, children are brought up with the knowledge that boys do not sit in the kitchen. Those who do so are ridiculed publicly through song compositions. Otieno, an informant, says that this could have been a clever way of observing hygiene at the cooking place as boys in the traditional past would move around without underwear and there was no toilet paper.

ii) Girls do not climb trees: *Omukhaana okhunaala emisaala no omusilo*.

Girls who climb trees could encounter snakes.

Girls are expected to carry themselves with decency. Jael, an informant, says that the Abanyole girls are trained to walk and sit without exposing their privacy. Among the Abanyole, it is the cultural duty of a mother to remind the daughter to sit well by covering her garment beyond the knees. Climbing trees therefore would show their nudity to the people watching her from below. This is one of the taboos meant to enhance decorum among youths, particularly the girls.
iii) You do not borrow or lend salt at dusk: *echuumbi yo mubutukhu*.

This could result in ill luck. People are expected to be responsible and plan well for the day to avoid rushing to collect essential commodities at night. Wives have an obligation to ascertain that they have gathered foodstuffs early in the day. The person lending salt at dusk drops bits in fire before giving out. This is believed to burn or keep the spirits away.

iv) You do not blame blood relatives for any death and then share a meal.

*Okhwekuulanana ma mulia bilala.*

Among the Abanyole, one that causes a relative to die could suffer madness or a series of misfortunes. Those suspected to engage in evil that causes death are quietly blamed because there is usually no scientific proof to link them to the death. Out of anger, relatives swear never to share food or work together during social functions. Blood relatives who disagree to the extent that hard pronouncements are made do not share food. To do so would cause *ebiila* ‘fatal mysterious diseases’. Oyule explains that after a traditional medicine-man presides over the appropriate ritual, the warring related families begin to share food. This is traditionally referred to as *okhulia bilala*. The taboo discourages people from making unsubstantiated allegations when death occurs.

v) To defecate on the road makes smoke to blow in one’s direction.

*Okhunia khunjila khulanganga omwosi*

This regulates people from relieving themselves in the open and compromising public health standards. The people sitting round a fireplace ridicule anyone in whose direction smoke blows. This occurrence is considered an indicator that one defecates in the open.
vi) You do not shed the blood of a relative.

*Okhuratsia esichayi*

Among the Abanyole, blood is a symbol of kinship. The expression *amatsai katse* ‘my blood’ is uttered to hail or recognize close relations. Jael Omufwoko explains that one who deliberately engages in any act that will result in loss of blood, *okhuratsia esitsai*, is reprimanded and fined according to tradition. Relatives who shed blood do not share meals until cleansing is done. If the harm inflicted results in death, the culprit is sent away from the community. The taboo regulates against rash and irrational reactions in cases of conflicts and disagreements.

### 4.4 The Abanyole Cultural Symbols and their Significance in Olunyole

The native speakers creatively construct expressions drawn from the familiar material objects and natural phenomena as they interact with the environment in their social groupings (Mari, 1982:74). Olunyole derives indirect language forms such as idioms, metaphors and proverbs from a number of objects and phenomena drawn from the people’s social life.

#### 4.4.1 Rain water: *ifula:*

*O-singiile ifula ne katukhile:*

You tried to harvest it (rain water), long after it had stopped. Otieno notes that the idiom is situated in the cultural model of harvesting rain water.

The practice involves tapping rain water from the roof of a house by placing out a container. Situated in the context of the cultural model, the idiom is interpreted as any focused attempt to get what one desires from a particular source. The rain water is taken as any invaluable object that one sets out to obtain. The idiomatic expression explains the need for focused and properly timed action in order to succeed. People must utilize time meaningfully to realize their objectives and goals in life.
The second social meaning of the ‘rain’ expresses the temporal nature of situations and conditions. In particular contexts, rain used in the expression *ekwitsanga ne kekatukha* ‘it rains and subsides’ means that whatever condition is being referred to is bound to end in the same manner that rain stops. The idioms prepare people for change, positive or negative, says Oyule.

In making decisions, Otieno observes that the Abanyole utter the idiom *urakiye ifula yatse* ‘you have sowed with my rain’ when one’s suggestion formed the basis for reaching a beneficial decision. Rain is therefore a useful symbol that supports good living. The rain expressions allude to the fact that situations and conditions will always vary. Related to the social sense of this idiom, is the expression *okhwalikha obuhaya* ‘to prepare ugali (a maize meal) without vegetables’. This expression is used in the context of one failing to find the intended provisions as a result of poor planning or mere ill luck.

### 4.4.2: The gizzard: *imoondo*.

![The gizzard ‘Imoondo’](image)

*O-khulia imoondo ndala:* To share a gizzard.
Chicken is a delicacy among the Olunyole speakers. Indeed among the larger Luhya community, the lexical term Ingokho ‘chicken’ is used as a stable food of the community. In most of the ceremonies of the Abanyole, and the greater Luhya community, chicken is served as a show of honour for highly respected visitors and guests. The parts of chicken are shared within a family according to age, gender and order of birth. The gizzard of chicken prepared at home is culturally a symbol of authority in the family; it is therefore eaten only by the man who is the head of the family. A wife serves the gizzard to the husband as a demonstration of loyalty and chastity. The cultural symbol of the gizzard affirms male authority in marriage; authority lies with one man just as chicken has only one gizzard. Maganga says that due to the cultural significance attached to the gizzard, it is never shared; it is believed that people who share the gizzard will disagree and fight at the slightest provocation. Whenever two men regularly exhibit open hostility toward each, part of the explanation would be that they could have shared a gizzard, balia imoondo ndala.

The Abanyole believe that hostility between kinsmen could arise from the men having an affair with the same woman. The expression ‘bualia imoondo ndala’ in such context suggests that they could be intimate with the same woman. However, Mrs Mafumo, an informant, notes that in rare circumstances, people share the gizzard to reach a binding decision. In this case, failure to honour the agreement may result in adverse social repercussions.

4.4.3 Placenta: tsingobi

Tsingobi tsie tsia yabilwa halia, ‘one’s placenta was buried there.’

The placenta is the symbol of identity among the Abanyole, comments Otieno. Before the recent developments in reproductive health, midwives would play crucial roles in helping expectant mothers. Whenever the delivery occurs in a home setting, the placenta is buried at spot behind the homestead. To talk of the placenta in Olunyole is therefore to point out
one’s identity. The “placenta practice” has however faded with the reproductive practices in modern health facilities.

### 4.4.4 Cooking stones: amahika

The three cooking stones are a symbol of independence in marriage. The cultural practice of setting up the stones marks a new life in which a couple will no longer rely on the man’s parents. The woman is expected to collect a cock and flour from her parents. This will be the first symbolic meal to be prepared from the stones. The man’s parents provide a *sufuria*, ‘a metal cooking vessel’ from which the meal is cooked. The whole practice is referred to as *okhusichikha amahika* ‘setting up the cooking stones.’ The cooking stones are not interfered with because they signify the stability of the marriage union. Maganga, an informant, observes that the three stones represent a complete Abanyole family made up of the father, mother and children. *Okhurekula amahika* ‘to dislodge the cooking stones’ by a man marks the end of the marriage. A wife whose husband throws away the cooking stones must vacate the home and return to her parents. A couple that reunites without cleansing rituals and taking traditional medicine could die from *ebiila* ‘a mysterious illness’.

![Figure 4.2: amahika](image)

Illustration of *amahika* (Cooking stones): *Okhukona khu mahika*

There are a number of Olunyole idioms constructed from *amahika* ‘the cooking stones.’ For example, Elder Abednego says the idiom *okhukona khumaika*, ‘to sleep on the
cooking stones’, means to experience an unpleasant sleepless night. *Okhukon’na omundu khu maika* ‘to sleep by the cooking stones for someone else’ is to hatch plans to cause permanent suffering to someone else.

4.4.5 The rumen: *esihu*.

The Abanyole attach cultural significance to the rumen of a cow slaughtered in the home for functions and ceremonies. Otieno explains that the act of *okhufutula esihu* ‘to rupture the rumen’ is done by a male adult member of the family who is morally upright. During funerals, the brother to the deceased man ruptures the rumen to demonstrate that he did not sleep with the widow while her husband was alive or bear a hand in the death. One that is suspected to be evil or immoral is asked to rupture the rumen as proof of innocence. One who gets excuses to keep away from the slaughtering place is faulted to have caused the death or engaged in immoral behaviour. The Abanyole believe that an immoral or evil person who ruptures the rumen will die soon after. The Abanyole men point out that they can rupture the rumen in their families to mean that their conduct is beyond reproach.

4.5 Olunyole and Socio-economic Activities

The private and public life of the Abanyole centres on affirming and strengthening communally institutionalized structures that ensure mutual consciousness in the sharing of scarce resources (Onyango, 2007:4). The community is densely populated on a rocky and hilly landscape with small parcels for subsistence farming (Abule, 1988:46). They cultivate the limited land and grow maize, beans, bananas and vegetables for family food. The people also domesticate livestock, especially cattle and poultry, for milk and meat to supplement maize meal that is their stable food. The Abanyole sell the limited farm produce at the Luanda Township market and use the money to purchase whatever they lack.
The scarcity of resources is captured in the verb ‘*okhusuma*’ which, according to a native speaker, Maganga, means ‘to go away from home seeking charity for food provisions that are only sufficient for a while’. People visit relatives who have surplus stocks so that they get food supplies for sustenance. This perpetuates the philosophy of communal responsibility where the members of community who are endowed should aid the less fortunate in their midst. *Okhusuma* ‘seeking charity’ in the Abanyole world view is an expression encapsulating deprivation and hand-to-mouth existence. The sharing of resources therefore enhances the values of hospitality, generosity, good neighbourliness and warm friendliness. The expressions *omukhono omusiro* ‘heavy-handedness’, *suundakho omukhono* ‘stretch the hand’ (generosity), *okhuhenga oluboni* ‘to look at one with a bit of an eye’ (hospitality) reinforce the values. The idiom *okhukhulul’la* refers to the kind gesture of giving out whatever one no longer needs, particularly garments. The Abanyole are expected to be charitable towards the less fortunate relatives and neighbours. The people who do not take positive steps to assist members in dire need of the basic commodities for decent survival (clothing, food and shelter) are said to be *abahandu*, ‘extremely mean.’

The Abanyole therefore construct idioms and other figurative expressions from the collective experiences within the evolving times and their activities as they harness the environment for their existence.

### 4.5.1 The Olunyole food and famine idioms

The Abanyole stable food is *obusuma* ‘ugali’ that is prepared from maize flour.’ The family head ensures that the family has adequate supplies of flour. Informant Maganga observes that the significance of flour is evident in the idiom *okhusundula obusie* ‘to spill flour’ which means to lose a job or to be sacked from employment. “One who spills flour” may encounter difficulties in providing for the family. Apart from flour, the Abanyole diet may include *tsiswa* ‘flying ants’ which are expertly trapped. The idiom *okhul’lola iswa khumunwa* ‘to see the flying ant on the one’s mouth’ means that one cannot be sure of what one has not held or until whatever is anticipated actually happens. In the same way
the ant could fly away, the idiom communicates that circumstances may change so that what is planned or anticipated is not realized. Secondly, the idiom esiswa okhukhalisia ‘the ants to reduce’ is used when the continuous supply or availability of anything dips. The idiom is generalized to contexts other than “the trapping of ants” from which it is formed. Informant Oyule notes that a common expression amache kakaata tsiswa ‘termites deceived the ants’ reminds the speakers against being gullible. The termites mislead the ants to leave the safety of the ground and get harvested for food as they fly off.

Informant Oyule further observes that the seasons that the Abanyole experience are determined by the security or scarcity of food. Esuubwe ‘the season of steady supply’ and erootsu ‘scarcity’ control the planning for ceremonies and functions. For example, people prefer to hold ceremonies after harvest. In addition, informant Otieno explains that erootsu comes from okhurootsa ‘to stab and cause harm’ and suggests the time when people experience hunger. At such a time, the Abanyole in anticipation say tsimoni tsili esioba, ‘our eyes are cast outside’, to mean that the crops planted are not yet ready for harvest to alleviate the food scarcity being experienced.

Over the years, the Abanyole have experienced famines that have partly defined Olunyole. Maganga mentions that one of the most recent famines occurred in 1980 and got named egorogoro ‘two kilogramme tin.’ The people embraced the egorogoro tin (a word borrowed from the neighbouring Luo) as a measuring of tool for cereals. The word egorogoro represents the peasant life for the people who hardly get sufficient provisions for basic subsistence. The people talk of okhunyoola egorogoro ‘to get merely a two kilogramme tin’ to say that they have food for a particular day and that they are not certain about what they will eat in the coming days. Informant Maganga further explains that the Saba l’lala ‘wash one’s hands once only’ famine of 1994 got its name from the fact that people survived on one meal each day. After going without food the whole day, they would wait for dinner late in the evening.
4.5.2 Olunyole Speech Community in Conflict

The Abanyole people value peaceful co-existence omuleembe, a word that marks their greeting handshake (Onyango, 2007). According to Otieno, there are, however, instances of conflicts at levels of social interaction and processes of arbitration to resolve disagreements. Maganga further explains that the idiom okhunia induli ‘to instigate a conflict’ refers to any acts that cause fierce quarrels or fights. Induli in Olunyole is a container with concoctions that would be hit on the ground to spark off war in the olden days. The idiom from induli such as omunia induli ‘one who provokes disagreement’ condemns people who intentionally cause people to quarrel or fight.

Disagreements are resolved through the communal justice systems presided over by elders. Informant Otieno notes that the parties involved finally share a meal to signify the end of conflict. The idiom amakata ‘dry maize stalks’ is the money given to the presiding elders. The dry maize stalks are related to arbitration as it is given at the end of the process. The amakata ‘dry maize stalks’ signify the end to the conflict. Amakata is whatever remains after a maize harvest.

4.6 Olunyole Native speakers’ Ethnographic Accounts

The Ethnographic elicitations provide insights into world view of the Olunyole speech community and their objective construction of social reality. The following sub-sections present the text analysis of the translated excerpts of the ethnographic accounts from focused discussions with the purposively selected sample of Olunyole speakers.

4.6.1 Ethnographic Account of the Olunyole Native Speakers (A)

Ethnographic excerpt of the Olunyole Native Speakers (Otieno, Oyule, Amukhuma and Josphat)
**Researcher:** I believe we have all lived in Bunyole for most of the years. I would like share freely about the life of the Abanyole in their interaction, and use of language with regard to their norms and practices.

**Otieno:** That is fine. I would say the Abanyole are people united by peace. They like sticking together to share what they have and even problems. That peace is what makes them offer *omuleembe* ‘a handshake of peace’.

**Researcher:** The Abanyole have a way of expressing issues not so directly…

**Otieno:** Ya. They do not expose everything. They talk *fumbumbu* ‘indirectly’.

**Oyule:** Like *okhusaba emiro* (to ask for *emiro*’a type of local vegetable’). That is to spoil the air around; to fart.

**Otieno:** Because of respect for people, you do not about certain things explicitly. Like to urinate, people say they want to wash ‘*okhusaaba.*’

**Researcher:** You’ve heard of it *ekwiitsa nekatukha* ‘the rains are always bound to stop’

**Oyule:** Rain… It is said to tell people that everything has to come to an end. Nothing goes on forever. But it not just about rain. It is about circumstances and conditions that may change or end.

**Otieno:** Still on the same rain the people say *osikhile nekatukhile*‘you tried to harvest rain water long after it had stopped.’ We must strive to do and get things while conditions favour us to avoid regretting. It educates us to utilize opportunities because they are not available all the time.

**Researcher:** Now tell me about death. How do they talk *fumbufumbu* ‘indirectly’ on issues of death?

**Otieno:** They say that one has gone *emakombe*.

**Researcher:** *Emakombe*?

**Oyule:** *Emakombe* is the world of spirits.
Researcher: They also say um’mile…

Otieno: Emiiya.eee.Um’mile emiiya (one has swallowed breath). He will never breathe again. Also, they could say unyiile elongu (one has stretched one’s trousers). This is because the dead body is laid straight on the ground.

Researcher: What about burial?

Oyule: Burial we just say okhura (to place). The body is placed at a resting point. Another one used is okhukooba ‘to escort.’ The Abanyole believe that death is a journey to emakombe, another world spirits…

Otieno: The Christians (abasomi) say one is gone to heaven…So we escort the dead to travel to heaven and we shall meet there…

Researcher: And what causes death among the Abanyole?

Amukhuma: People fall sick, get treated in hospitals or herbs but they sometimes die.. But it is believed that death occurs when people do not observe customs and taboos. Adultery, murder, incest (esiluuchi), shedding Blood can cause funny illnesses that bring about death.

Oyule: Call them ebiila and tsisila. Those ones are not treated in hospital…

Otieno: In other words, death does not just come. Abanyole say, a tree does not just fall. It is cut. So people bewitch others. And let me tell you there is no way you will not eat together or visit your blood (relative who is sick or attend a funeral. If you have misbehaved through witchcraft, incest or adultery, you will die…

Oyule: Unless you go through rituals and people fear rituals…

4.6.2 Ethnographic Account of the Olunyole Native Speakers (B)
Ethnographic excerpt of the Olunyole Native Speakers (Pastor Abednego, Margaret Ayuma and Peris)
Researcher: I would us to talk about behaviour and life of the Abanyole in relation to language use. First, what is this part in Olunyole (showing the back)

Margaret: Isn’t that omukoongo.

Abednego: It is the back....

Researcher: The Abanyole say okhukhalikha---

Margaret: (Completes) Omukoongo...One gets so jealous of other people’s progress. Such a person can bewitch to kill.

Researcher: They also say the stomach...

Abednego: To have a burning stomach...Such a person does not want to see other people prosper. They wish to have everything...

Researcher: The Abanyole say that someone who does keep secrets has guarded...

Margaret: The tongue. Not to disclose information that can cause trouble... One who talks carelessly is said to have ‘fallen into the mouth’.

Peris: Again, they say, ‘a long mouth.’ Someone who causes trouble or quarrels and comments on anything.

Researcher: What about omunwa mubisi ‘the raw mouth’?

Abednego: There and then. Coming so soon...

Peris: I hear people say ‘before a hen swallow piece of maize grain...’

Researcher: Let us come to some form of behaviour.....Okhukatula ‘go loose.

Margaret: Someone who breaks loose is one who looks for other men outside marriage. They also say omuheyi...One who looks around...

4.6.3 Analysis of the Excerpt A
The excerpt engages the speakers in expressing their thoughts about death from a cultural perspective. The act of speaking and expressing messages is referred to as talking fumbumbu. The Abanyole talk fumbumbu as part of the politeness in the use of language.
The *fumbumbu* ‘indirect language’ is a means for ensuring that the message reaches only the selected people. The speakers in this excerpt point out that the expressions are used by the elderly members of the speech community. The youths prefer to use the emerging speech codes such as *sheng* that may have their own mystifying idiomaticity for expressing the divergent socio-cultural orientations of their speech communities.

The excerpt depicts death as regulator of behaviour among the Olunyole speech community. The Abanyole are known to observe high sense of conscientious behaviour and their dealing with relatives, friends and neighbours for fear of death. In reporting about death, the Olunyole speech community uses idioms such *okhu-nyiila elong’u* ‘to-infinitive + stretch-Verb + a pair of trousers-NP’ and *okhu-m’mila emiyya* ‘to + infinitive + swallow-Verb + breath - NP’ to depict the lifelessness of the dead as a result of taking the final breath. Death among the Abanyole is a link to the other world, *emakoombe*. This refers to the world occupied by the spirits of the ancestors. Burial among the Olunyole speakers is regarded as a process of escorting departed relatives and friends on a journey to the next world. The Olunyole speech community therefore uses the expressions *okhu-huluukha* ‘to-infinitive + rest’ and *okhu-kooba* ‘to + infinitive + escort’ to talk about death and ultimate burial.

In addition, the excerpt reveals that the Olunyole speakers believe that there is no natural death. The Abanyole usually die from the failure by the individual to observe the cultural code of conduct packaged as the norms and values passed down to the younger members of the Olunyole speech community. The excerpt in Olunyole makes reference to cultural norms using expressions like *ebiila*, *tsiisila* and *esiluchi*. On the other hand, the Olunyole speakers believe that they may die as a result of the evil schemes of other people through witchcraft. The Olunyole proverb *omusaala si kukwitsanga butwsa tawe* ‘a tree does not fall without a reason’, used by the informants, summarizes the belief in supernatural and other underworld forces as part of the causes of death.
4.6.4 Analysis of the Excerpt B

The excerpt engages the native speakers in the discussion of the body parts idioms. The native speakers provide the vernacular lexical items for the body parts and freely talk about the idiomatic expressions constructed from parts. Particularly, the back, the tongue and the mouth are related to the speakers’ behaviour. For example, they talk of *okhukhalikha omukoongo*, ‘to cause one’s back to break,’ which means to condemn jealous individuals among members of the speech community. *Omunwa mubisi* ‘the raw mouth’ means sooner than expected.

4.7 Conclusion of the chapter

The chapter relates the Olunyole language, particularly the Olunyole figurative expressions, to the Abanyole world view. It is argued that the Olunyole idiom construction and interpretation draws from the understanding of cultural beliefs, customs and practices of the Olunyole speech community. Clearly then, the idiom can be said to be a product of the people’s life that gives the Olunyole speech community an idiosyncratic cultural identity. The Olunyole language is therefore considered a means by which the Olunyole speech community preserves and transmits its cultural heritage and maintains its socially knit interactional relationships. The Chapter relies on ethnographic engagement with the native speakers and anthropological sources. Finally, this chapter forms the basis of the discussion of the domain-centred idiomaticity and the notable body parts idiomatic constructions in the representation of the Abanyole social reality (world view) and interactional social control in chapter five.
CHAPTER FIVE
DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction
This chapter is the core of the research. It builds on the Abanyole world view covered in the preceding chapter. The chapter subjects the collected idiomatic expressions to the tests of the Olunyole native speakers’ recognition, acceptance and usage in communicative discourse events. The ethnographic sources of the native speakers through the interviews and focused discussion provide crucial insight into the relationship between the Olunyole idioms and the world view of the speech community. Olunyole idioms are discussed under the pragmatic domains that characterize and reflect the socio-cultural reality of the speech community. The social reality is realized as the Olunyole speakers continually and collectively construct meanings of the expressions in conversations as instances of social interactions. These interactions are structured into pragmatic domains that define and determine the roles of speech participants in conversations. The domain-oriented analysis of the idioms is drawn from the critical institutional domains of social practice that is realised within the social relations and conditions evident in the ideology of unequal discoursal distribution (Fairclough, 1995: 79). Kress (1985:32) also provides insight into the domain approach to the analysis of language in use. This is earlier discussed in chapter two (section 2.2).

Eckert and Mcconnell-Ginet (2003: 92), on the significance of situational structures in deciphering social meaning, contend:

The force of an utterance is not manifest in the utterance itself, but in its fate once it is launched into the discourse, once it begins ‘discursive life.’ And that fate is not in the hands of the initial utterer, but on the meaning-making rights of that utterer both in the immediate situation and beyond, and of those who might take up
the utterance and carry its content to other situations and communities.

Generally, the chapter interrogates the contribution of cultural perceptions in the (re)construction and reflection of social reality of the Abanyole through the creative use of Olunyaole by the speech community. The chapter further captures the usage of the Olunyaole idiomatic expressions in conversational utterance texts illustrated in the socio-cultural contexts of the Olunyaole speakers.

5.2 Domain Oriented Analysis of Olunyaole Idioms

Olunyaole idioms, like other forms of indirect language, fall within functional domains of usage. The domains are universal social constructs whose form and composition vary according to the cultural character of the speech communities (Gee, 1999). The construction and interpretation of language expressions is largely determined by the speakers’ perceptions of their unique setting and distinct cultural practices. The linguistic expressions remain an ‘in-group resource’ that defines the identity of the speech community. The ability to map the expressions onto their appropriate contextual cues is considered a key measure of belonging to the Olunyaole speech community. The non-members of the speech community cannot therefore work out the non-literal meanings of the Olunyaole idioms owing to the fact that such people do not espouse the shared mental and emotional character that has been cultivated by social contracting and cultural branding through continuous use of language (Emantian, 1995).

5.2.1 Gender-based Olunyaole Idioms

Language is a powerful tool in creating and revealing social categories (Hudson, 1996). The distinct roles of males and females are partly defined by the cultural orientation that is transmitted through and by the gender-based differences in the use of language. Whereas sex distinctions are based on predetermined biological differences, gender, as one of the categories that control social behaviour, is a product of cultural socialization (Wardhaugh,
Gender as a social category is embedded in the communicative practice and use of idioms as linguistic forms. There are indeed idioms in Olunyole which depict social roles and relationships as defined by gender differences. The Abanyole are a patriarchal community, with men expected to take a central role in the leadership and organization of social units and cultural activities. Women, on the other hand, are culturally socialized into passive subservient roles. This gender-based differentiation is embedded within the ideological world view of the speakers; the set of beliefs that rationally explains and assesses behaviour. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:35) note:

Gender ideology is the set of beliefs that govern people’s participation in the gender order, and by which they explain and justify that participation. Gender ideologies differ with respect to such things as the nature of male and female, and the justice, the naturalness, the origins and the necessity of various aspects of the gender of the gender order. Ideologies differ on whether difference is fundamental, whether it should be maintained, and whether it can or it should be maintained without inequality…the maintenance of the gender order is a moral imperative, whether because it is of divine origin or simply because it is embedded in convention. For others, it is a matter of convenience…

The study of Olunyole idioms demonstrates that social responsibilities and expectations are structured along these gender differences. This subsection illustrates the idioms that reinforce gender-based cultural inequality and depict the cultural constraints on the separate behaviour of men and women.

From the ethnographic discussions with Oyule and Otieno, among the Olunyole speech community, a girl of age is culturally expected to be married. The expression okhutsia ‘to go’ is used on females to mean to get married. “To go” in this regard suggests that girls must leave their parents’ homes because they are cannot own property. A girl who remains
in the parents’ home well past the expected age for marriage is a “she has not gone.” Upon
death, a woman is not to be buried in the parents’ homestead as doing so would be
bringing evil spirits to the family. In the event that an unmarried woman dies, she is buried
close to the fence behind the home. The common cultural reason for a girl fleeing her
parents’ home to get married would be to avoid being buried in such circumstances.
During a conversational introduction, Otieno notes, a woman utters the expression
nciahila esilindwa habulebe, ‘I have carried a grave to such a place,’ to socially mean that
she is happily married. The terms used to refer to the institution of marriage itself portray
women as operating on the submissive end of the gender scale. For example, okhutekha
‘to cook’ refers to the act of a girl getting married. A man who marries is said to have
made one to cook, okhutesia, ‘to cause someone to cook.’ A married man is forbidden to
perform domestic chores such as cooking. A man who does so is said to have lost
authority and may be a subject of ridicule in private conversations. The expression
waikhalwakho ‘one has been sat on’ is used to indicate
that the man is ‘hen-pecked.’ That
is to say, the man is controlled or dominated by his wife. Otieno comments that such a
man hardly makes contributions on community matters for fear of social ridicule.

Another idiom okhwemenia ‘to stay on oneself’ makes derogatory reference to an
unmarried woman who lives independently without relying on a man for assistance; she is
not controlled by a man as prescribed by culture. Such a woman sustains herself without
seeking any assistance openly. The connotative meaning of the idiom as indicated by
Oyule, a native speaker informant, is that a woman could be engaging in prostitution to get
money for her life needs. The idiom is not used in conversations about men who live alone
and independently go about their life activities. Ms Margaret, an informant, attributes this
to the Abanyole thinking that polygamy is a cultural norm.

Omukhaana okhuboha, ‘of a girl to be round’, is another idiom used to reflect perceptions
and social evaluations of gender differences. The idiom communicates the thought that a
girl is ready for marriage as a result of maturity in age, body and conduct. Notably, there
is no expression for the boys who are thought to be prepared for marriage. Members of a
girl’s clan monitor her for signs of any physical development, for they are assured of wealth once the girl is traditionally engaged through payment of bride-price. The expression *okhuhaamba omukhaana* ‘to book a girl’ is the act of identifying a prospective wife and paying bride-price to the girl’s clan. Again, the girl’s preference is never regarded in the whole process, as she is expected to largely abide by the decision of her clan.

An informant, Maganga, notes that discourse on the domain of child-bearing implicitly relies on euphemistic idioms because any direct references to procreation among Olunyole speakers tend to be considered discourteous and are believed to bring bad luck to the newborn baby. Once in marriage, women have a cultural role of procreation. Olunyole has idioms that capture the female reproductive function from conception to child birth. *Okhutiila amatsaai*, with the literal translation as ‘to catch blood’, Otieno, an informant says, refers to the act of a woman conceiving a baby. Child-bearing thus ensures the continuity of the family lineage; members of a lineage are said to belong to the same ‘blood’ - ‘amatsaai. The speakers identify their ancestral links by mentioning their “blood”, *ndi wa amatsaai ka ng’ane*, ‘I belong to such and such blood.’ Apart from the cultural meaning of pregnancy, birth and family links, the blood metaphor is used in idioms to explain instinctive behaviour and close association among relatives. For example, one may say, *amatsaai kake kali khusula* ‘my blood repelled’ to explain deep-seated fear or uncertainty. People who do not get along could say, *amatsaai sikenjisania tawe*, ‘our blood does not blend.’

The blood metaphor therefore pervades the Olunyole conversations in social discourse. When a woman is pregnant, the expressions *okhu ba nende omusiko*, ‘to have a load’ or *okhuba nende obusiro*, ‘to have weight’ are used to describe her state. *Omusiko* is also a noun for ‘luggage’ that travellers carry. One of the informants for this study holds the view that an expectant mother carries a baby on behalf of the clan and hence the pregnancy could be considered as luggage or weight. The whole duration of nine months
is a journey that ends when the woman is delivered of the baby. At this point, the idiom *weboloye*, ‘she has eased herself’ is used to refer to the ultimate birth.

Oloo explains that impotence and barrenness among the Abanyole are known to result from witchcraft. The idiom *okhukwa nende amadebe* ‘to fall off with *debes* (empty tin containers)’ she says, refers to an impotent man. Failed manhood is metaphorical emptiness in the Olunyole culture. A barren and impotent man is said to have been ‘tied up’, *waboywa*. This results from the acts of witchcraft by the evil-minded people in the society.

In the Olunyole conversations, male dominance and authority over their female counterparts is evident in the expressions related to sex and sexuality (Makokha, 2012). A wife is culturally expected to give in to the husband’s desire for sex without questioning. The idiom *okhwima omusaatsa obukono*, ‘to deny one’s husband bedding’, is used only in reference to women. The idiom depicts sex as man’s right and a woman’s duty to submit to the husband’s demand. A wife who fails in this duty is reprimanded in a formal clan gathering and may even be sent back to her parents. The informants, Otieno, Oyule and Amukhuma, in the study observe that women are not expected to openly express sexual desire and emotions, for any woman doing so is regarded immoral.

There are expressions that describe women that stray from their matrimonial home. Olunyole language has idioms that talk about women who engage in extra-marital affairs. Jael, a female informant, observes that the idioms do not discourse about men who exhibit the same behaviour. *Okhukatula* ‘to get loose’ is an idiom used to refer a married woman who has multiple relationships. This suggests that a woman is ‘tied up’ to her marriage. The lexical item captures the fact that the woman remains culturally passive and submissive in the marital union; any conduct that is contrary is disparaged using the idiom, *wakatula*, ‘she has broken loose.’ The same idiom is not used in discourses that talk about men who engage in such behaviour. This is one of the Olunyole gender-specific
idioms that portray men and women differently. Such Olunyole idioms are explained by the cultural fact that polygamy is a cultural norm that allows men to have authority over a number of women. Derogatory sexist terms such as okhuheya ‘to engage in sexual liaison with someone other than one’s spouse’ and obutaamba ‘prostitution’ are used only in relation to women. It is common to hear utterances such:

*Omukhasi ulia ahengabania*

Woman that darts her eyes

*Okhuhengabania* ‘to have roving eyes’, Jael says, is used in discourse to express disgust for a woman who is still open to other relationships when she is known to be married. *Omukhasi omu-chendani* ‘a woman who walks about’ is an expression that talks about a woman who is not content with her husband. Whereas men can terminate marriages and get into new unions without any ridicule, women are culturally bound to remain in abusive and unhappy marriages in order to avoid the *omuchendani* tag.

The subjugated position of a woman continues even after her husband dies, as explained by Margaret, an oral informant. After the culturally determined burial rites, the woman is expected to be inherited by a close male member of the husband’s clan. The expression *okhukalusia* literally translated as ‘to return’ is the of act re-marrying. Before inheritance, there is *okhukhalaka amakhola* ‘to cut the banana fibre’ which is an idiom that describes the first act of sex that a woman encounters after the burial of her husband. The act itself is a symbolic termination of the relationship with the departed husband and therefore culturally gives the allowance to enter a new marriage arrangement, including inheritance, explain Oyule, Otieno and Padre Josphat. The metaphor of *amakhoola* ‘dry banana fibre’ may be attributable to the cleansing significance of the act. In this sense, it is a ritual that marks the end of mourning and signifies the beginning of new life for the bereaved.

The cultural practices that package the expressions are fast giving way to scientific innovations and inventions in the fast changing world. With time, it is anticipated that
many of the idiomatic expressions will either be extinct or their contextual interpretations will shift to reflect modern technology and the changing cultural trends (Makokha, 2012). For example, female educated career women no longer condone inheritance. Urbanization and exposure to interaction has continued to change the cultural values and attitudinal system. The modern woman is much more sensitized about gender inequalities, and is no longer a subservient adherent to practices that demean the female segment of the population (Okwiri, 2014:8). Informants in this study contend that some of expressions that would refer to women have acquired a bidirectional interpretation. Forty-five percent of the women exposed to the idioms related to the gender domain, for example, insist that expressions such as *okuhengabania* ‘to have roving eyes’, *okhuchenda-chenda* ‘to walk about’ and *okhukatula* ‘to go loose’ that have the connotations of moral waywardness are used in conversations that indirectly comment about the behaviour of both men and women.

The Olunyole idiomatic expressions, as a language resource, therefore invoke the gendered aspects of the speakers’ perceptions on the distinct social roles of males and females in ensuring cultural continuity and harmony.

The table presented below captures the prevalence and acceptability status of the expressions analyzed under the gender social variable.
The acceptability level for each idiom is determined by the percentage of the sampled native speakers’ recognizing the meanings provided as indeed the social meanings that the Olunyole speech community express in the specified contexts. The most prevalently recognized and acceptable expression in this domain, ‘okhuteekha’, (100%) was found to be widely used by both the male and female respondents. The least agreeable idiom, Okhukatula, ‘to break loose’ (82.55%) receives mixed acceptability. The male and female respondents appear to hold divergent views on whichever gender the idiom applies. The female respondents hold the view that men are also loose, whereas males insist that the expression applies to women only.
5.2.2 Olunyole Idioms related to the Disease and illness Domain

The Olunyole speech communally shares good times of joy by joining individuals and families to celebrate (Alembi, 2002). As elder Imbira puts it, the Abanyole attend ceremonies such as weddings and get-togethers to demonstrate goodwill and the best of wishes. In times of difficulty and bigger challenges, family members, relatives and friends are united to help the affected get over the psychological and emotional strain of the situation. Such situations include illness and death. Disease and death are not overtly discussed. Speakers express their feelings about disease and death through euphemism and indirect language that includes idioms. At different periods, there are particular dreaded diseases that speakers fear to talk about openly, largely because they result in terminal illness. One such disease in recent times is HIV/Aids. There are a number of idioms in Olunyole that depict the disease as a mysterious phenomenon that finally destroys people without discrimination. The expression *okhumila juala* ‘to swallow a plastic bag’ is to talk about the act of contracting the disease. This is because those who get infected evidently lose weight and eventually die. The condition of the infected is irreversible because there is no cure as yet. Jael, an informant, gives another idiom *okhu-s’ena khu lwaya* ‘to step on a wire’ that expresses the devastating conditions associated with the disease. “The wire” metaphor in the idiom compares the risks of HIV AIDS to the dangers of electricity. Thus, one needs to be cautious not to step on “the live wire” or else one gets “electrocuted” – burnt to death. This expresses the fear that the speakers have for the disease on account of its lack of a cure. *Okhunyoola eight* ‘to contract eight’ is a coinage from the word AIDS that helps the speakers discretely talk about the disease. It is speculated that this creativity could have resulted from the mispronunciation of the AIDS acronym of the disease by the non-literate speakers. The expression *omuyeka mukali* ‘the big flu’ in reference to Aids suggests that the disease spreads mysteriously like wind. Sometime back, the same expression was used to talk about measles before the discovery of a vaccine. The speakers, through the idiomatic units, express their vulnerability and helplessness in the desperate situation of a cureless disease whose origin they cannot explain.
One who remains sick from a terminal illness may have the idiom *okhusuunda esilindwa* ‘drawing the grave closer’ used to describe one’s state. This means that death is inevitably imminent. If the ill person is a man, the elderly speakers find out the recovery progress using the *okhunywa obusela* ‘to drink porridge idiom.’ Thus, the man’s wife is asked whether he drinks porridge. The porridge metaphor conceptually means sexual intercourse for a patient. An affirmative response from the wife confirms that the husband is functioning normally and is therefore on the path of recovery. A man who is not capable of “taking the wife’s porridge” is culturally on the verge of death. In a situation where the patient is unlikely to survive or is on the verge on death, the idiom *akhupaanga omukhono* ‘one is tapping one’s hand on the ground’ may apply. This idiom expresses the final pain that a patient goes through, and portrays desperation on the patient when all efforts of treatment have failed. Many of these expressions are not uttered in the hearing of the patients or the patients’ close relations. It is generally discourteous to tell someone that one is suffering from an incurable disease and may die.

### 5.2.3 Olunyole Idioms on Death and Funeral Domain

As stated earlier, among the Abanyole death is one of the taboo social subjects that speakers do not make direct reference to. The Olunyole speech community, therefore, sociolinguistically relies on euphemism to express cultural associations with issues such as death in conversations. Wardhaugh (1986: 234) notes:

> Taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society or behaviour believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them embarrassment or shame...so far as language is concerned certain things are not to be said or certain objects can be referred to only in certain circumstance for example, only by certain people, or through deliberate circumlocution, euphemistically.

Language puts social constrains on how to talk about particular objects and subjects (Hudson, 1996). Death causes anxiety among those directly affected. This fact may make
speakers to be cautious while engaging in conversations about death. It is perhaps for this
reason that indirect language is used to capture the emotional finality of death and the
beliefs about the life beyond after death. Informant Maganga notes that Olunyole
expresses immortality by portraying death as a temporary state in many forms. It is a
journey with an anticipated destination or a momentary sleep from which the deceased
will wake up to the next world. Grief that comes with bereavement is shared by the whole
community. The family of the deceased is comforted through material support and verbal
sympathies. Olunyole idioms generally tend to euphemistically capture the psychological
and emotional strain that results from death occurrences. The efforts to bear and
eventually overcome the situations of death are collectively undertaken within the dictates
of the cultural norms of the Olunyole speech community.

The idiom *okhutiila maa* ‘to help someone rise’ is an expression that encourages people to
demonstrate solidarity in times of sorrow. The funeral and burial rites are guided by the
cultural norms and beliefs of the speech community. The rites which are practised are
determined by the nature of the death. For example, if one is murdered by a clansman, the
burial is done at night without any formal traditional proceedings, explains Otieno.

The breaking of the news about death uses idioms that metaphorically depict the deceased
as one merely resting. *Okhuhuluukha* ‘to rest’ or *okhukona* ‘to sleep’ are expressions
which help the bereaved come to terms with the feelings of loss by giving them hope that
they could re-unite with their departed relative (Alembi, 2012). The family should be
grateful that their relative has rested from pain of illness and the suffering of the troubled
world. From these idioms, TO DIE conceptually means IS TO REST. *Okhumila inzalu* ‘to
swallow a hard crystal’ is yet another idiom used to make a pronouncement of death.
*Itsalu* is a brittle piece of crystal one can get in food which has not been sieved. One who
eats such a substance may choke to death.
The Abanyole also talk of *ukhulekhele*, ‘one has departed’, to show that the deceased has only travelled. The Abanyole believe that people leave the earthly world to join their ancestors in the spirit world. *Okhutsia emakombe* ‘to go to the world of ancestors’ recognizes another level of human existence (Cf. B above). It is believed that the ancestors continue to watch over the living by protecting them from the traps of the devil. Traditionalists make reference to the ancestors in religious functions and offer ritualistic sacrifices before and after harvest.

Before the introduction of coffins, the body of the deceased would be laid on cattle hide. Padree Josphat, an informant, notes that the idiom *okhuba khwiselo* ‘to be laid on the cattle hide’ is used to refer to the period the body stays in the homestead before burial. Even though bodies are no longer laid on cattle hides, speakers still use this expression to refer to the duration of public mourning that precedes burial. Public mourning, *okhukoma*, involves the singing of dirges, violent chase of evil spirits by men, *esileemba*, and chants of praise for the deceased (Alembi, 2012).

The widow or widower is expected to observe certain modes of conduct as reminded by the traditional elders and members of the clan, *abata*. A widow who was wayward when her husband was alive is advised to stay away from the body or accept to have some traditional herbs administered on her before she can participate in public mourning. The behaviour of the widow reveals her chastity and loyalty in marriage. Elder Martin explains *Okhwikhala tiili* ‘to sit upright’ is an expression which describes a widow who was morally upright in her marriage. Such a woman sits close to the head of her deceased husband. A promiscuous woman, on the other hand, mourns her husband from a distance and will all the time get excuses to keep away from the body. Oyule explains that the other mourners would then remark: *si ye khaye tiili ta* ‘she has not sat upright’ to cast aspersions on widow’s morality.
According to the ethnographic accounts of the informants, Oyule, Otieno, Josphat and Amukhuma - the actual burial among the Abanyole is presided over jointly by traditional and religious leaders. There are expressions that indirectly refer to the burial stage. *Okhukooba* ‘to escort’ is the whole process of interment. The deceased, as discussed earlier in this section, is believed to be going on a journey. The mourners augment the “TO DIE is TO JOURNEY” metaphor by talking about meeting the deceased in the life after death. The informants add that in fact the deceased is addressed directly and urged to go well, and greet the relatives who died earlier. The Abanyole also talk of *okhura* ‘to put’ to refer to the respectful manner in which the dead are treated. They talk of *okhura ha ahulu khila* ‘to be laid to the resting place’ to suggest that death is temporary and that the dead person is still conscious about whatever is going on. In fact, they do certain things within the mourning context in order to pacify and make the dead happy. For instance, they slaughter animals to feed crowds of mourners so that the deceased is contented. This is based on the belief that if the dead are not accorded dignified treatment, they come back to haunt those who are still alive. There are ritual activities that follow the burial ceremony. The speakers’ indirect reference to these post-burial activities is largely symbolic. These activities carry cultural significance in sustaining peaceful links between the living and their departed relatives. Their main objective is get reason to visit and keep members of the bereaved family company as they overcome the grief associated with the loss. Weeks after burial, *abakoko*, the girls of the clan who are married come back *okhwikula omuliango* ‘to open the door.’

Generally, during the whole mourning period, the bereaved are not to leave the home or mingle freely. The *okhwikula omuliango* marks the end of these restrictions and curtailed movements. The possessions of the deceased are declared and shared among the closest family members. This is followed by different delegations of relatives visiting to bring foodstuffs to the bereaved. This is called *okhulerabobusela*, ’to bring porridge.’ The idiom refers to the symbolic gesture of extended goodwill demonstrated by relatives, especially the in-laws.
In case the death occurred far away from home, close members of the family travel back to that place for a type of cleansing ceremony referred to as *okuhila esiiniini* ‘to return the shadow.’ Most of the post-burial expressions are a women affair because they are occasions that require carrying foodstuffs. The acts revolving around the death and burial domain are meant to manage the cultural transition from the living world and the *emakoombo* ‘the world of spirits.’

The following table shows the acceptability and prevalence levels of the idioms under the domain discussed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDIOM (OLUNYOLE)</th>
<th>TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH AND CONTEXTUAL MEANING</th>
<th>SAMPLE (235)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhumila inzalu</strong></td>
<td>To swallow a hard crystal: to die</td>
<td>220 93.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhuhuluukha</strong></td>
<td>To rest: to die after illness</td>
<td>233 99.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhutsia emakoombo</strong></td>
<td>To go to the world of spirits: to die</td>
<td>189 80.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhuba khwiselo</strong></td>
<td>1. To be on the cattle hide: of a corpse: awaiting burial 2. Remain sick for a long time, terminally ill.</td>
<td>200 181 85.11 77.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhukooba</strong></td>
<td>To escort – to bury</td>
<td>230 97.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okwikula omuliango</strong></td>
<td>1. To open the door: after burial: 2. To allow the bereaved to move freely</td>
<td>194 82.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhulera obusela</strong></td>
<td>1. To bring porridge; 2. After burial of in-laws: to visit the bereaved with provisions</td>
<td>196 83.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The expressions related to the death and funeral domain have varying acceptability effects. The post-burial ones seem to be least recognized. The participation in the after burial rites gets reduced support. Informant Oyule notes that the reason for this reduced recognition and prevalence could be that the participation of the members of the community in funeral rites diminishes after burial. In fact the participants in the post-burial activities are usually women. The expressions are popular with the elderly members (45 and above) of the speech community.

5.2.4 Olunyole Idioms on the Interpersonal Interaction Domains

Language serves a social interaction function among its speakers. According to Cutting (2000), one of the approaches to the study of linguistic pragmatic discourse is the conversational organization analysis approach. In this regard, the speakers use language to mutually express their personal and public feelings about experiences on diverse spheres of knowledge and existence. This is realized using language for interaction in social contexts. Conversational interaction entails speakers taking turns at talk and sequencing utterances to construct coherently communicative units of language. Furthermore, Cutting (2000) recognizes other interdependent and interwoven approaches to the study of language in use. The idioms packaged in utterances constitute more information than their linguistic compositionality. The instances of utterances are products of the situationality of context, informativity of content and interaction of the people who use the language forms. The meaning of context, the linguistic and the speech acts approaches interrogate language as a conventionalized system of social expression. There are Olunyole idiomatic expressions that enhance peaceful co-existence in propagating socio-cultural values and norms. The speakers’ ability to engage in conversations that use the expressions gives them identity and a sense of belonging. The construction and interpretation of idioms is dependent on cultural perceptions that native speakers hold about their interactions with their immediate environment, and the network of relationships that inform their collective existence (Grant, 2002:76). The interpersonal, ideational and textual shades of meaning infiltrate these expressions. The nature of the participants and their communicative intentions guide the choice of language forms in terms of structure and content.
McCarthy (1998:8-10) discusses the broad contexts under which the participants’ pragmatic relationships in language use fall. The contexts identified are the socializing, the intimate, the transactional, the professional and the pedagogical relations. The socializing relations are concerned with the social and cultural activities, but not related to professional or intimate contexts, that participants engage in. The linguistic behaviour is a way of ensuring socio-cultural solidarity and accommodation. The speakers of Olunyole talk of obulala ‘belonging together’ from the expression khuli abandu balala ‘we are the same people and therefore belong together’ to show the value that is collectivity holds to the social fabric of the people. They also talk of okhulia bilala ‘to share food’ to demonstrate that the people not only share identity but also live in harmony. Whenever the speakers resolve any disagreements, they share food from a common venue to mark the end of the hostilities.

The second relation type, intimate relations, holds between family members or close friends in private, non-professional settings. The figurative language forms, in this case, in their informal tone allow for free friendly talk tokens and conversations that cement such relationships. The two contexts, socializing and intimate relations, are the main source of idiomaticity. This is because idioms, as McCarthy (1998:139) observes, ‘‘are often created among small groups or those with shared interests, right down to partnered couples, where intimacy is reinforced by private sets of euphemistic and humorous expressions.’’ The other three the transactional, the professional and the pedagogical planes of relationship largely rely on distant interaction and therefore do not provide situations for the construction of idioms (McCarthy, 1998). The idioms preserve and transmit diverse indigenous cultural knowledge, and enhance stability in the manner people maintain social institutions for collective survival. This section examines idioms in the context of social interaction in influencing and reinforcing behaviour among members of the speech community.
5.2.4.1 Hospitality and Peaceful Co-existence

The Abanyole social structure has mechanisms for ensuring harmonious living among the group. *Mulembe*, ‘peace’ is the word that is uttered as a greeting for the Olunyole speakers. Greeting, as Onyango (2007:61) observes, ‘is an action of social solidarity, a focus on the framework of life; it illuminates complex acts of bodily gestures, symbols, a social procedure associated with peace.’ Everybody has a social obligation to build and maintain peaceful relations with the people one interacts with. A handshake and acknowledgement through verbal greeting precede all social transactions and functions. Children are trained to greet the people they meet, whether they are strangers or those known to them.

The relationships are determined and constrained by a number of social constructs defined within the cultural set-up of the group. Values and norms form part of such constructs that characterize language use as part of the contextualized knowledge a speaker acquires over a long period of existence within the speech community. Particular virtues such as generosity, respect for elders, kindness and unity are central in fostering group solidarity. *Okhumekana lipwoni* ‘to share a potato’ is an idiom that summarizes the sharing spirit of the speakers. To say that people ‘share a potato’ indicates that they interact peacefully as friends or relatives. The communal interaction that the idiom depicts encourages people to not only share whatever little they lay their hands on, but to also collectively assist others in times of trouble.

The use of language assumes cultural allusions that underlie the shared knowledge in people’s interaction. The idioms express collaborative ideas by participants sharing views of the world, discussing matters of common interest and making propositions of perceptions about the world. The speakers share thoughts, judgments, opinions and attitudes. The collaborative tasks, on the other hand, depict the speech community as a social group interacting with their physical environment (Lattey, 1986).
There are expressions that reinforce politeness and friendliness in the way people relate with others. Although conflicts arise in social relations, there are ways of resolving misunderstandings for continued mutual co-existence. The idioms, therefore, not only reflect relationships as an inevitable social reality, but serve a regulatory role in controlling behaviour as people interact at various levels. The Abanyole talk of *okhu-funaka esisaala*, ‘to break a stick’, in context to mean that one is keeping count of the mistakes or incidents of misconduct. In case one is wronged but does not react in order to maintain peace, one could say that ‘one broke a stick.’ It communicates restraint in the face of provocation. Another related idiom is *okhu-fiubila omundu esisaala*, ‘to throw a stick at someone.’ This idiom has two contextual meanings in Olunyole. The first meaning is that one has challenged the other to deny some allegation and secondly one is challenging the other to take up some responsibility or obligation. The study therefore explored the Olunyole idiomatic utterances as a means of participatory collaborative interaction among the speakers of Olunyole.

Among the Abanyole, it is part of the social responsibility of any family to welcome visitors warmly and receive strangers with kindness. The host (ess) ensures that the visitor gets a meal, however modest, as a show of peace. The idiom *okhu-futsa amare* ‘to spit’ refers to the act of the visitor eating a meal to demonstrate that there exists a cordial host-visitor relationship.

*Okhu-futsa amare in an utterance text*

*Olwa ba itsile okhu-tsendelela si bafutsile kho amare tawe.*

*Bakhabe ye mbwe? Mbuulanga nimbeleye muno.*

**Translated Version**

The last time they visited, they did not ‘spit’ in the house.

What could have been the reason? I am really troubled that they did not eat.
The speaker is expressing displeasure at the act of a visitor turning down an offer for food. Such conduct is considered impolite and may be interpreted as an indication of hostility. The expression *okhufutsa* in another context is the act of condemning socially unacceptable behaviour. It is interpreted as condemnation when it is used without the *amare* ‘saliva’ NP object. The act is done by elders or personalities that hold social authority because of their age or position in society.

*Okhufutsa* in an utterance text

*Ya ibile tsing’mbe tsia nyina. Abakhulundu ba mufutsile. Yamale areebe Obubeeli.*

**Translation**

He stole his mothers’ cows. The elders ‘spat’ - condemned/ scolded him.
He pleaded to be forgiven.

The purpose of this act is to deter the deviant behaviour and counsel whoever has gone astray. *Okhuba nende amare* ‘one who has excessive saliva or salivates excessively’ depicts greed. One who hardly gets contented with whatever one has is scorned by being cautioned not ‘to have saliva.’

*Okhuhenga oluboni* ‘to look with an inner eye’ is to consider treating one with generosity. The people value the acts of sharing resources as an expression of kindness. The members of society who are endowed are expected to assist the less fortunate with material that will ensure their basic survival. The expression is used to request for assistance or show appreciation for whatever help one receives. The *oluboni* assistance usually refers to food or money to buy food. See the idiom in an utterance:
Okhuhenga oluboni in a text
Ndachende obulayi ha ndatsie.
Abakhwe ba imengele kho oluboni.

Translated version

My journey to wherever I went was successful.
My in-laws treated me kindly by giving me assistance.

In the above excerpt, the speaker is reporting about a journey that was made to seek help from the relatives. The speaker is here expressing satisfaction that he was treated kindly and generously. The listener should infer that the speaker was given food or money to carry back home.

The idiom *okhunia khulu taabo* ‘to defecate on the bowl’ is used to indicate that one has abused the gesture of generosity by annoying the person that usually provides assistance. The utterance of the idiom signals the end of whatever help that one has been receiving in the past. The equivalent idiom in English would be ‘to cut the hand that feeds.’ The *olutaabo* ‘bowl’ metaphor in the Olunyole idiom means the source of survival.

Okhunia khulutaabo in an utterance

*Inzala elamwiira. Ya nieye khulutabo olwa yanyekele abakhwe.*

Translation

He will starve to death. He defecated on the bowl by abusing his in-laws.

The utterance as an act cautions beneficiaries of favours of generosity to reciprocate kind gestures with courteous behaviour. This is the only way one can be assured of continued assistance. On the other hand, selfish members of society are ridiculed using a number of figures of speech. The expression *okhutsuna ofiye* ‘to pinch the dead’ refers to one who is hardly willing to provide assistance even when one is able to do so. This implies that one
is as cold and unmoved as a corpse; he is never touched by other people’s misery. See the idiom used in text:

*Okhutsuna ofiye* in an utterance

*Khwekaane butwa ne ubun’ne. Baane yachuna ofiye.*

**Translation**

He/she was unmoved by our petition for assistance.

He must have pinched a corpse.

From ethnographic sources, generosity is also explained in terms of one’s hand. People ask for sufficient provisions using the idiom of *okhusuunda omukhono* ‘stretch your hand’ (Appendix C2, item 40). A stretched hand is one that gives help abundantly. On the other hand, one who gives little quantities is said to have *olukhono*. The word *olukhono* lacks an appropriate equivalent in English. It may mean a diminutive hand – a hand that holds back. The expression *omukhono omusiro*, ‘a heavy hand’ is a semantic antonym for *olukhono*. It is used in discourses about people who generously give out plenty of whatever is in their possession. The expressions are illustrated in the text below:

*Olukhono/omukhono* in an utterance text:

*Khwasangaye mbu bakuheye ebiokhulia nende omukhono omusiro.*

*Sibali nende olukhono singa abanyina tawe.*

**Translation**

We were happy that he gave us food with a heavy hand. They do not seem to have ‘small’ hands as their mothers do.

Still related to the hand, the people talk of *okhuhela mumukhono* ‘to fit into one’s hand’ to express levels of contentment for whatever one is given. To say that something does not fit into one’s hand would be to communicate that what one has is not sufficient. The
utterance of the idiom may therefore be construed as a request for an additional share of material.

When one gets lots of food, the idiom *okhwaya mumabombolo* ‘to graze where is plenty’ is used. The idiom is an expression of contentment and satisfaction with one’s situation. A person who has persevered many days of starvation and gets a single day to enjoy plenty of food may express the joyous moment by uttering:

*Ndelo tsayile mumabombolo,* ‘today I grazed in the land of plenty.’

The word *mumabombolo* derives from the big intestines and reinforces the sense of plenty supplies.

The speakers of Olunyole also use other idioms to indicate that there is what may be considered adequate supply of material for their comfort. *Okhulia nende omubofu* ‘to eat with a blind person’ is a humorous expression that means that the physique of the person being addressed has improved as a result of having plenty of food. The idiom points the good health of the addressee from the fact that he does not share out food. Another one *okhwetuya* ‘to knock oneself’ is an exclamatory expression used to explain that one has suddenly and unexpectedly got plenty of a particular type of food to eat.

*Okhwetuya* in a text:


**Translated version**

He is so happy today. He ‘knocked’ himself against meat. His prayer was answered.

The connotative meaning of the expression is that one has over-eaten what one has been yearning for. It satirizes gluttonous eating habits.
The speakers use a number of expressions to refer to hostility with one another. *Okhulia imondo ndala* ‘to share a gizzard’ is to show open hostility towards another person. The gizzard is a symbolic part of chicken that carries matrimonial authority (Appendix C, item 12.). Chicken is a cultural delicacy among the Abanyole. A ceremony is not complete without chicken. The gizzard is therefore strictly eaten by the man of the home. A wife ensures that she serves her husband with the gizzard of chicken slaughtered at home as a show of loyalty. The explanation given is that a hen has only one gizzard, and in the same way there can only be one man that is the head of a family. Traditionally, women would only cook and serve chicken to men. Over time women were allowed to eat only certain parts of chicken except the gizzard. Therefore, culturally a gizzard of chicken prepared at home is never shared, but must be eaten by the head male member of the family. It is believed that to share ‘imoondo’ results in hatred and open hostility. It is argued by female informants that this restriction on the gizzard was a way of fostering male dominance. They find it ridiculous that men even regulated whatever women had to eat.

The idiom is used in the contextualized utterance below:

*Okhulia imondo* in an utterance text

*Abandu yaba bamenya bas’solana. Balia imondo ndala nohomba?*

**Translation**

These people are ever quarrelling. Could they have shared a gizzard?
The following table shows the acceptability and prevalence levels of the hospitality and peaceful co-existence Olunyole idioms:

Table 5.3: Olunyole Idioms on Hospitality and Peaceful Co-existence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDIOM (OLUNYOLE)</th>
<th>TRANSLATION – CONTEXTUAL MEANING</th>
<th>SAMPLE (235)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhufuutsa amare</em></td>
<td>‘to spit’ of a visitor; to eat something as a show of peace</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhufuutsa omundu</em></td>
<td>To spit someone to condemn undesirable behaviour</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhuhenga oluboni</em></td>
<td>To look with an inner eye: to provide assistance</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhuba nende amakhono amasiro</em></td>
<td>With heavy hands: Generous</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Olukhono</em></td>
<td>Tiny diminutive hand giving too little of what one has</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhuchuna ofiye</em></td>
<td>To pinch the dead a miser; to be too mean</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhwetuya</em></td>
<td>To knock oneself against something; To unexpectedly get plenty of food</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhulia imoonondo ndala</em></td>
<td>To share a gizzard – to be hostile, express hatred towards one another</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhunia khulutabo</em></td>
<td>To defecate on a bowl To annoy whoever sustains one’s survival</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Okhwaya mumabombolo</em></td>
<td>To graze in plenty Receive rare treatment to be satisfied – ‘a wind fall’</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data

5.2.4.2 Olunyole idioms on Adminstration and Respect for Authority

The social structure recognizes hierarchical levels of authority (Leigh, 2001). The language use captures the unequal nature of society in terms of power and authority relations. Aborine (1998:48) notes that social stability is dependent on how these relations
are established and maintained through broad-based consultation and consensus building. Language is thus an important tool for the rulers and the ruled to relate and influence one another for the necessary balance in the pursuit of greater understanding. The messages that utterances encode explore acts that encourage submission to authority, whether the authority originates from the traditional or the modern apparatus of leadership.

The Olunyole idiom *okhwahila lisaaifu* ‘to herd with a leaf’ is used to talk about the style of leadership that encourages fair treatment. The leaf is known to be soft and therefore incapable of causing any harm. The people are compared to a flock of animals that are guided by a herdsman. Those in authority are discouraged from being autocratic but instead embrace open communication. The contrast of the leaf image is *elabusi* ‘the hard stick’ which suggests autocracy. This *lisaaifu* idiom is not only used in the context of national politics but also the traditional leadership. Once the leadership is acceptable, the citizens or subjects are expected to behave in a manner that respects authority and the law of the land. An arrogant individual who blatantly breaks the law is regarded as *wamela tsinjika* ‘one who has grown horns.’ Such person is known to have lost regard for authority and must be reprimanded.

*Okhurekelwa olukhoola* ‘to be trapped with a banana fibre’ reminds people that those who engage in acts that go against the set code of conduct will be ultimately caught and punished. The fibre is used in conversations to caution people who deliberately engage in acts of misconduct; they will easily be trapped and exposed without much effort. Another related idiom, *okhutiilwa akwanyeela*, ‘to be caught at the narrowest point’ in conversations expresses the meaning of ‘being cornered.’ The narrowest point in Olunyole is the wrist of the human body. ‘Being held by the wrist’ means that one has been found to go against the common good, and should therefore be punished. One who is caught at ‘the narrowest point’ is found in a situation where one cannot therefore escape; one must face the dire consequences.
The following table summarises the acceptability and prevalence levels of the usage of the Olunyole idioms on leadership and respect for authority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDIOMS: (OLUNYOLE)</th>
<th>TRANSLATION-CONTEXTUAL MEANING</th>
<th>SAMPLE(235)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhwahila lisaafu</strong></td>
<td>‘to herd with a leaf’ of leadership; administration; style of administration/leadership that practices fairness; democratic.</td>
<td>208 85.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhutiila akwanyeela</strong></td>
<td>‘To catch/hold by the narrowest point (wrist).’ To be cornered; have no means of escaping punishment or consequences of deviant behaviour.</td>
<td>226 96.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Okhurekela olukhoola</strong></td>
<td>‘to be trapped by a banana fibre.’ Easily trapped and caught once one gets into unacceptable habits or behaviour.</td>
<td>199 84.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data

There are relatively fewer idioms in the leadership and respect for authority domain. This is attributed to what an administrator, Asila, also an informant, explains as the need to communicate directly and plainly. He says that indirect language may result in misinterpretation of messages to the public. Secondly, the interaction between the leaders/administrators is usually formal, whereas idioms are commonly used within informal settings.

5.2.4.3 Olunyole Idioms on Social Code and Control

The social function of language is partly to ensure that the social institutions harmoniously benefit the members of the speech community as they harness and interact with their environment for their survival (Bressan, 1995). The social functions are performed within institutions such as the family, leadership and administration, religion. To this end,
language forms regulate the speakers’ behaviour by influencing culturally approved conduct and denouncing any deviant tendencies. The Olunyole idioms would be considered as expressions that derive from virtues, values and the belief system encoded within the cultural set up.

The Abanyole consider verbal control as a virtue. People are cautioned against talking without consideration of the likely consequences of what they say. *Okhukwa m’munwa* ‘loose mouth’ is used to condemn one who talks about something whose truth is not certain or that which must remain a secret. The speakers are discouraged from divulging information that might cause misunderstanding. See the idioms in a contextualized conversational text below:

\[
\textit{Okhukwa m’munwa} \\
\textit{Obaboleye ndi nende amapesa. Ibe wa kwa munwa po. Sio nyala} \\
\textit{Okhulinda ol’limi tawe?}
\]

**Translated version**

You told them that I have money. You are so loose-tongued. Why don’t you guard your tongue?

The above formal conversation is constructed around two contrasting idiomatic expressions: *okhukwa m’munwa* ‘loose-tongued’ and *okhulinda ol’limi* ‘to guard one’s tongue.’ The speaker is contemptuous towards the former but compliments the latter. The expressions are used by speakers holding higher levels of status over the hearers. Another related idiom, *okhuboha likhuwa*, ‘to wrap up a word’ refers to the act of two or more people remaining secretive about their intentions and decisions reached through consensus. This is because any revelation would jeopardize the success or progress of the plans. Another Olunyole idiom is *okhweteta tsinyende mubwoba*, ‘to search jiggers from mushroom.’ The expression means to look for trivial issues that obscure serious matters. The idiom discourages the habit of seeking details that could make people lose focus.
Obwooba, ‘mushroom’, represents the key issue that should form the point of focus, and tsinyende ‘jiggers’ is the detractor of the main issues. The utterance of the idiom cautions the hearers from getting derailed from the set intentions. This happens when people explore issues beyond the rational limits.

There are expressions that encourage perseverance and resilience in the face of public or personal difficulties. Okhuluma musikalo ‘to bite one’s palm’ is the act of enduring one’s situation. In such a case, one does not share one’s personal problems with people who may not have any solution to the issue. Okhweboha omukoye ‘to tie oneself with a rope’ is to restrain from complaining about one’s situation. Okhweboha omukoye munda ‘to tie one’s stomach’ is used when one is enduring starvation. ‘The tying of the stomach’ is meant to hold back the intestines because there is no food in the digestive system. The number of ropes corresponds to the number of days one has gone hungry. For example, the utterance, nda-eboyele emikoye tsitaru ‘I tied three ropes’ is interpreted that the speaker has gone without food for three days. Olunyole expression, okhweboha omukoye, ‘to tie oneself’ is used to mean that one makes sacrifices in order to realise a particular goal. This involves forfeiting comfortable living, as resources are directed towards achieving the intended goal.

In another context, okhuboha omukoye muunda ‘to tie one’s stomach’ is the process and act of going over times of grief. It can be located in the funeral domain to mean the act of consoling the bereaved. The Abanyole talk of khutsie khubohe lebe omukoye ‘let us go and tie so and so a rope’ to mean going to comfort the bereaved through any form of support. More often the bereaved may sing:

Soloist: Baluhya mbe mboyele

All : Mbee!

Soloist: Baluhya mbee mboyele

All : Mbe omukoye mbohele amala munda!
Soloist: Baluhya give me to tie

All: Give me

Soloist: Baluhya give me to tie

All: Give me a rope with which to tie my intestines

This song is performed in contexts of weddings or other happy occasions to communicate that the visitors are hungry and require food. During funerals, it is an expression of grief and a plea for comfort.

One who is going through unbearable problems after many years of comfort is said ye yakila es’sokoro ‘to be scratching oneself with a dry maize cob’. The es’sokoro is what remains from a cob after maize seeds have been shelled. The subject of the discourse in which the idiom, the es’sokoro metaphor is used to comment about someone who is suffering because one lacks resources that one once had, much the same way the cob no longer has the maize seeds.

Okhulakaila m’mwosi, ‘to cry from smoke’, refers the act of living with regrets as a result of not heeding advice. This happens as a result of hardships and scarcity that follow some period of a luxurious lifestyle. The expression is used for someone who hides one’s problems because they result from what could easily have been avoided. The fire and warmth, symbols of good life, give way to smoke triggers that tears.

5.2.5 Olunyole Idioms and the Religious Domain

Religion among the Abanyole is a key social institution that regulates people’s interaction. The Abanyole life is dependent on the belief in supernatural beings that exist in mystical non-human forms. The traditional religious systems of the Olunyole speech community tend to explain and attribute everything that goes on in their lives as initiated and motivated by Nyasaye, the one above. Christianity has continued to shift focus from the
religious rituals that revolve around the symbols of nature that are believed to connect with the supernatural world to the concept of a universal unitary force.

There are idioms that foreground the significance of the rituals that control natural phenomena such as rain and lightning. The Abanyole believe in the practice of making and stopping rain. *Okhutila likulu* ‘to hold the sky’ is the act of preventing rain *ifula*. The idiom is drawn from the rain-making ritual, which as Onyango (2007:73) observes ‘is very expressive and instrumental because it promises hope and prosperity; it thus achieves the ends and means of human, animal and plant life.’ The mysticism surrounding the ritual prohibits making direct reference to rain, *ifula*; they call it *AMAatsi* (*water*). The mystery is reinforced by one community sage, Ndale cited in Onyango (2007:74), in the following utterance:

*Musibala Niwina Owamanya kosi…*

*ne hamatsi kakonanga, kamenyanga,*

*akhakatsitsa nga nikawela, niwina omanyile?*

*Ne obusindu butiabanga khumatsi*

*butsitsanga butwa,*

*abulaho omundu uyo omanyile esisina sia*

*burulanga ta, nende esinoro esiamatsi ta.*

**Translated**

Into the universe, who knows everything?

nor tell whence water flows to

where is its destiny?

nor whence like water, does wind come from?

On water it blows, it wastes its energy

nobody absolutely can tell the source
nor the foundation of the wind, neither of the water.

The narrative dwells on the power behind storms, hailstones and water. To talk about the rain making, the Abanyole talk of likulu liratsile ‘the sky has bled.’ The origin of rain is believed to be in the sky, where God is believed to dwell. The people talk of likulu liratsile ‘the sky has bled’ in reference to rain. Rain stopping, okhutila likulu, is usually done to give people ample time to go about their daytime activities including ceremonies.

Rain harvesting, okhusinga, ‘to trap’ is one of the sources of water. The idiom okhusiinga nekatukhile, ‘you tried to trap after it had subsided’ derives from rain harvesting. The Abanyole use the idiom to refer to any belated action that does not realize the intended objective. The Abanyole say ekwitsanga ne katukha ‘it drops and then subsides’ to refer to rain. This expression does not directly mention rain but seems to imply that everything has an end. Like rain, which signifies plentiful supply, all that is pleasurable is naturally bound to get finished.

The following table summarizes the acceptability and prevalence levels of the Olunyole Idioms on social code/control and the religious domains.
Table 5.5: Olunyole idioms on Social code & Control and Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDIOM (OLUNYOLE)</th>
<th>TRANSLATION – CONTEXTUAL MEANING</th>
<th>SAMPLE (235)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhukwa munwa</td>
<td>‘loose-tongued.’ To talk without considering the effect of utterances to the other people or cause misunderstanding. To divulge secrets.</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhulinda ol’limi</td>
<td>‘to guard one’s tongue.’ To keep vital information to oneself; holding secrets.</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhuboha likhuwa</td>
<td>‘to wrap up a word.’ To reach decisions through consensus and keeping such intentions secretive.</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhweteta tsinyende mubwooba</td>
<td>‘to search/poke mushroom for jiggers.’ To look for unpleasant issues and lose focus.</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhuluma musikalo</td>
<td>‘to bite one’s palm.’ To persevere; be resilient.</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhweboha omukoye (muunda)</td>
<td>‘To tie one’s stomach with a rope.’ Starvation; to sacrifice one’s comfort.</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhuboha omundu omukoye</td>
<td>‘To tie some one else’s stomach.’ Console the bereaved in moments of grief.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhweyakila es’sokoro</td>
<td>‘to scratch oneself with a dry maize cob.’ Experience difficulties after a period of luxurious life.</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhulakaila m’mwosi</td>
<td>‘to cry from smoke.’ To regret after wasteful living or spending.</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhutiila likulu</td>
<td>‘to hold the sky.’ To hold back the sky where God is believed to dwell; to forestall rain.</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okhukwa nekatukha</td>
<td>‘Of rain, to stop raining.’ Every situation has an end.</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data

Like the idioms on administration and respect for authority, the Olunyole idioms on religion are limited in prevalence. The language of religion is rather fixed, and there is
little relationship between the present religious practices, that are based on the Holy books and the traditional practices that provide the cultural world view from which the vernaculars draw (Makokha, 2012).

5.3 Olunyole Idiomaticity from Human Body Parts

In this section, we explore the Abanyole (re)construction and reflection of reality through the articulation of body parts idioms.

The (re)construction of perceptions and social reality through the use of any language, such as Olunyole, significantly exploits the creative and transformative nature of the speakers’ experience in their unique environment (Kant, 2003). The human body provides forms of appearance that generate figurative expressions that communicate culturally encoded messages. Charteris-Black (2003:32) notes that ‘...the bodily acuities are built into a theory of knowledge that represents metaphor (and other figurative forms) as an extension of the basic fact that the human body deals with the world through adaptation and articulation.’ The speakers’ interaction depends on the body and its parts to organize the world to reflect their collective world view. There are expressions formed from Omubili, ‘the body.’ For example, Otieno, an informant, explains that the Abanyole say omubili kwa muyomba ‘the body is out of one’s control.’ This implies that one lacks self-control, and therefore exhibits loose morals. Oyule, another informant, adds that the Abanyole say Omubili kuminikhile ‘the body is strained’ means that one is sick. In certain contexts, people refer ‘to someone’s body as being good, omubili nomulayi, to communicate that ‘one is fat and healthy.’

There are idiomatic expressions generally formed from the specific body parts that also simultaneously meet a number of functions for human survival: the biological, the social, the intellectual and the spiritual functions. The figures below illustrate the external human body parts labelled in Olunyole. There are parts of the body that appear for both the males and females. There are, however, some parts that are gender-specific. For example, olukhalachilo ‘the waist-line’ is a preserve of females. The informants in this study
observe that the female private parts are used to utter insults and that the speakers do not therefore freely talk about them.

The following figures label the external human body parts from which Olunyole idioms are constructed. The study labels the parts that are largely used in the Olunyole idioms. Consequently, a number of parts may have been unlabelled. In addition, there may be some parts that do not have English equivalents. The word *esilakuna*, for example, does not an appropriate translation and could be referred to ‘the throat.’ The throat is, however, an internal organ.
Figure 5.1: Olunyole body parts (Male)
(Luganda, P. Artist & Illustrator, 2015)
Figure 5.2: Olunyole body parts (Female)
(Luganda, P. Artist & Illustrator, 2015)
5.3.1 Olunyole Body Parts Idiomatic Phraseology

The creativity of a large number of Olunyole idioms revolves around the body parts. Charteris-Black (2003) observes that the construction of idioms around body parts is a culturally-based means of evaluating and placing constraints on social behaviour that covers those parts. In this regard, ontological perspectives in the interrogation of social entities consider such entities, in this case idiomatic phrases, “...as either objective entities that have a reality external to the social actors or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman, 1998: 17). Constructionism, therefore, holds the position that social categories such as language and culture, in their diverse forms, are continually shaped by social actors through contextual interaction. The idiomatic phrases are pragmatically constructed in relation to and reflection of the knowledge of the social world as collectively perceived and experienced by the social actors. In the study of language forms as social phenomena, the social actors are taken as the speech community interacting for social order. The body parts are a source of the social creative construction of idiomatic phrases that incorporate indigenous experiences and knowledge in shaping social reality. Whereas constructionism places premium on the participatory role of people in the construction of social reality, objectivism (another ontological approach to the study of social entities), views social phenomena and corresponding meanings as independent of the social actors (Bryman, 1998: 17). Language expressions as a pragmatic tool of social interaction cannot therefore be considered without the nature and role of the speakers. The Olunyole speakers are thus participants in the utilization of forms in their language in shaping their collective world view.

5.3.1.1 Olunyole Idioms from Oral Parts

The oral body parts cover the lips, the tongue and the teeth. The oral parts, for example, enable people to eat, converse in groups, philosophize and worship. The parts are used to verbalize and interact in face-to-face conversations.
Oyule, an informant, notes that *Omunwa* ‘mouth’, *ol’limi* ‘tongue’ and *ameeno* ‘teeth’ are a source of expressions in Olunyole. The oral parts are depicted as a source of misunderstanding among speakers, and expressions revolving around these parts therefore emphasize on the need to regulate their use. The speakers use *omunwa* ‘mouth’ in conversations to cover the tongue and teeth as well. There are, however, a limited number of idioms that consider the tongue and teeth as independent parts. These expressions regulate the manner speakers use oral parts to foster interpersonal relationships. The expressions package and comment on the speakers’ use of the body parts in a manner that provides insight into the cultural evaluation of social behaviour. In Olunyole, speech and silence are contextually interpreted to serve different purposes determined by the prevailing circumstances. For example, *okhura amaatsi munwa* ‘to put water in one’s mouth’ expresses the need to restrain from talking in situations where speech is likely to aggravate a conflict. The advisory act of the expression is inferred from the pragmatic knowledge that one cannot speak with water in the mouth. The water metaphor is used to relate ‘the cooling effect’ to the effort of quelling or avoiding tempers. Water signifies peace and a speaker could say *nyweyekho amaatsi* ‘I have at least drunk water’ to communicate that one has experienced some quiet peaceful moments with one’s relations. A woman with a noisy abusive husband could utter *nyweyekho amaatsi* ‘I drank some water’ to indicate that the husband did not trouble her as he usually does.

Otieno, an informant, confirms that another idiom, *okhunia omul’lo* (to defecate fire), is a figurative phrase used to condemn any behaviour that results in conflicts that compromise harmonious co-existence. The idiom notably defies the politeness principle in the use of language by explicitly referring to a taboo word ‘defecate.’ This word seems to feature in other idioms in Olunyole such as *okhunia khutaabo* ‘to defecate on the bowl’ (to annoy whoever sustains one) and *okhunia khumundu* ‘to defecate on another person’ (to undermine another person). These idioms project a negative evaluation on the behaviour that goes against the social norms (Appendix C1, item 9). Maganga notes that the Olunyole speakers also say *okhunia induli* ‘to defecate induli’ to refer to any utterances
that stoke conflicts in interactions. ‘Induli’ is a container with concoctions that would be hit on the ground to incite warring groups to violence.

In the following exchange, the speaker asks the hearer to avoid lighting up a fire:

*Olunyole*

**Speaker:** *Mwana, wakhatsiaka!*

**Hearer:** *Ni sina?*

**Speaker:** *Wenya okhunia omul’lo?*

**Speaker:** *Lekha ra butwa etsilola.*

**Translation:** (literal)

**Speaker** : (Vocative) you’ve started it!

**Hearer** : What is it?

**Speaker** : You want to defecate fire?

**Hearer** : Let me engage those that see (eyes).

The idiom *okhura etsilola* ‘to engage those that see’ means to controllably use more of one’s eyes than the mouth. In other contexts, the same expression is used when one has given up on a situation one has unsuccessfully tried to correct. Oloo says that a speaker, who utters, *rehe etsilola,* ‘I have only engaged those that see,’ is communicating the message that the unfolding events have been left to fate. From the idioms collected, lexemes from the Olunyole oral parts are structured with verbal and adjectival units to form figurative phrases that activate messages that are interpretable within the various realistic social contexts. Through the use of such idioms, the speakers advise each other on the need to determine and regulate conformist behaviour, and condemn those who are unable to control their body parts.
Peris, an informant, confirms that the idiom *omunwa omurambi* ‘a long mouth’ is used to describe one who engages in meaningless talk. The expression scolds people who talk in situations where they would ordinarily be silent listeners. *Okhuba nende omunwa,* ‘to possess a mouth,’ means that the subject in reference cannot conscientiously use the mouth as socially expected. One who feels irritated by the verbal behaviour of another person may say, *mbiniakho omunwa* ‘get your mouth off me’ to express displeasure at the insensitive use of the mouth. Body part expressions are generally loaded with what Leech (1974: 43) refers to as “...content that has evaluative affective meaning.” He also distinguishes between the conceptual and affective meanings that expressions communicate. In addition, Leech (1974:44) notes that whereas the conceptual meaning is overtly derivable from the speakers’ objective interaction with reality, the affective meaning is ‘covert, implicit and has something insidious.’ Thus, emotions and attitudes associated with idiomatic constructions functionally evaluate social behaviour against a set of cultural norms, values and beliefs. The evaluative utterances are a means for ensuring conformity through social control. Although the body parts expressions package messages with negative social evaluations, there are a few that are used as ordinary interactional commentaries. For example, *omunwa omubisi* ‘a raw mouth’ is an expression uttered to express a sense of immediacy, when people’s memory is still alive. In the context of a spouse who may have been pardoned over misconduct, there could be a discourse exchange as follows:

**Speaker:** *Khandi omusacha ulia ukabukhiye mo.*

That man [known to both interlocutors] has made the

same mistake again.

**Hearer:** *Wo! Omunwa mubisi iku?*

*(Exclaim) This raw mouth! (It is coming so soon after another mistake).*

The adjective ‘raw’ does not refer to the mouth itself but an event that occurred most recently and that the people involved have not forgotten.
Apart from verbalizing propositions about the state of affairs of the objective world and expressing their feelings about such affairs, the oral parts are a source of idioms that realize a variety of social acts performed through spoken discourse. *Okhureeba omunwa*, ‘to seek one’s mouth’, is to ask for permission to undertake an activity or take up an opportunity. The person from whom permission is sought responds in the affirmative by saying, *khweeye omunwa* ‘I have granted you my mouth.’ This means that the speaker has permitted the hearer to proceed with the intended action. Any person who undertakes an action for which one must seek permission is asked whether one ‘sought the mouth’ of those who wield institutional or social authority, *oreebale omunwa*? The person who holds such authority may express displeasure when one is not consulted over a matter. Such a person may pose the question: *okhuheye omunwa ni wina*? This is translated as whose ‘mouth’ (permission) did you seek?

*Okhwoma omunwa* ‘to have a dry mouth’ is an expression used when an individual is miserable after failure to observe due diligence in a process. This is a situation where one is shocked at the unexpected turn of events. One who gets to a dead end as a result of one’s fault is scolded thus ‘*niwe ngwoyu woomele omunwa ka*’, ‘here you are, dry-mouthed.’ It is in similar contexts that the idiom in English, ‘to be between the rock and a hard place’ may apply. The idiom is also used in a situation where an individual has been caught ‘red-handed’ and is unable provide a credible explanation for the misbehaviour. A speaker could say *mwomisie omunwa* ‘to cause someone not to talk’ to indicate that the person being referred to was unable to talk as a result of embarrassment. The expression is the equivalent of ‘being tongued-tied’ in English.

In a small group conversation, ‘the mouth’ idiom is also used to indicate support for what has been said by an earlier contributor. In a formal meeting, for example, a speaker could say ‘*n’nomele munwa kwa John*, ‘may I speak through John’s mouth.’ The literal interpretation is taken that the speaker has ‘borrowed John’s mouth’ by taking up part of
John’s talking time. The reason of taking up another participant’s ‘mouth’ is to concur with the contributor or add a related issue.

The elders among the speakers of Olunyole provide wise counsel to the younger generation. Before any major event, the elders are obligated to not only advise but also invoke the power of the ancestors to bring blessings and luck. The whole process, referred to as *okhubiita*, involves traditional leaders uninterruptedly reciting incantations that connect the spirits with the occasion. Consequently, the speakers strive to respect traditional and family leaders because whatever they utter under provocation may affect the lives of the hearers. The Abanyole say:

*Ng'ane na loloma ling’ana ne lihambila*

(if so and so says a word, it will come to pass)

The speakers attribute some of the challenges facing them to the fact that elderly kinspeople may have uttered dreaded curses. Prolonged strange illnesses, barrenness and impotence, unstable marriages are some of the issues that could be traced to pronouncements from elders with traditional authority. The remedy to the problems may involve persuading the aggrieved elder to recant the utterances through arranged rituals. The idiom *okhukabusia eminwa* with the literal meaning, ‘to return mouths’, involves withdrawing the adverse utterances so that normalcy is regained. For example, if the barrenness is traceable to some incident that may have resulted in some curse uttered by another person with traditional authority, say a parent, the woman is asked to persuade the suspected source of the curse ‘to return mouths’, *okhukabusia eminwa*. The idiom is uttered in a social reconciliatory context. The process involves the victim of the curse acknowledging the authority of the elder, demonstrating remorsefulness and asking for forgiveness. The elder accepts the apology and makes a formal verbal withdrawal of ‘the curse’ such as the one below, which captures barrenness as a social problem:

The barren woman in Olunyole:

*Papa, wandeera musibala menye nende omulembe, nombe*
Oluyia. Ngwitsanga makulu ko nireba tsimbabasi, hamba

Nindabirila undekhele, okabusie eminwa, inda eboholokhe.

Translation:

The barren woman (addressing the father): Father, you bore me and brought me to this world so that I may live happily in peace, and make a generation. I humbly submit myself to you and ask for forgiveness for my bad conduct. Please forgive me and ‘return your mouths’ so that my womb is ‘loosened.’

The father’s response in Olunyole:

Awinja ndakhulikha mama, omukhana Musubyi.

Oli omwana wanje wandebula, nikhukhusia ma nikhusomia

Okhwetutuyia khu bebuli nende abakhulundu no oluyaliolwe

Ikulu… omwene uribuye nende omunwa kwo. Kaba bulolomi bwanje bwakhwikala, khubololanga. Olombe oluyia! Inda eboholokhe. Ungulikhee!

(Source: Phoebe Atulo in an interview)

Translation (father’s response)

Awinja, I named you after my beloved mother, daughter of

ebusyubi. I bore you, my daughter, I brought you up and educated you. My daughter, being humble before parents and elders is a show of respect…You have said it with your own ‘mouth.’ If it is my utterances that ‘tied’ you, I hereby ‘untie’ you- make a generation. Let your womb open; Bear children and name me!

The father in the above conversation acknowledges ‘the victim’s’ sentiments and gives a background to the source of the trouble. The event is witnessed by close relatives and the
elders, and its climax is marked by sharing a meal prepared in the home. Traditionally, the food would include slaughtering a sheep in the home, but the conversion of the people to Christianity has led to the abandonment of such practices that are thought to contradict biblical teachings. Where they are performed, they are blended with Christian sermons and prayers.

Teeth, *ameeno*, and the tongue, *olulimi*, also provide a rich source of idioms in Olunyole. *Ameeno* ‘teeth’ is positively used to refer to humorous contexts that cause amusement. A person may say *yambee ameeno*, ‘someone gave me teeth,’ to imply that the speaker was made to laugh because of the amusement by someone else. Another idiom *okhukhwayula ameeno* ‘to gnash teeth’ is used in a context where people are thought to be rejoicing the misery of others. This ‘teeth’ idiom expresses the negative evaluation of insincere association; people can be happy when others are suffering.

The idioms constructed from the tongue are used to encourage controlled verbal interaction that fosters cordial relationships. The idioms therefore caution and advise people to weigh and consider the impact of their utterances on the social circumstances. For example, *Okhulinda ol’limi* ‘to guard the tongue’ is an expression that reminds the speakers of the need to conceal information and secrets that could result in conflict. A person who many times uses oral persuasion to convince other people to grant particular favours is described using the tongue idiom, *okhuba nende ol’limi*, ‘to have (possess) a tongue’. *Okhuba nende ol’limi* ‘to have a tongue’ is not as much a condemnation as the idiom *okhuba nende omunwa* ‘to have a mouth.’ ‘To have a tongue’ in many contexts of usage compliments a personality that has shrewd persuasion prowess that makes other people do things in one’s favour. ‘To have a mouth’, as earlier noted, is a negative evaluative comment on a personality that does not consider the effect of utterances on other people. Such person is advised by the idiom *titiyia omunwa* ‘reduce your mouth.’ This means that one should exercise self-control in the use of one’s mouth or one’s speech.
5.3.1.2 Olunyole Idioms from Limbs

Informants Maganga and Amukhuma in the focused discussions observe that Olunyole idioms constructed from hands ‘amakhono’ and legs ‘ebileenje’ are used to express social meanings. The hand includes the fingers, the palm, the wrist and the point extending to the elbow. Hands enhance positive relationships through hand-shake greetings and sharing resources. The Abanyole insist that only the right hand is used for such social acts. The left hand is considered a sign of bad omen and a show of disrespect and hostility. For example, the speakers talk of muhe omukhono omutaaka ‘give one a left hand’ to caution people not to trust those that could be plotting to bring them down. Stretching the right hand to someone is to demonstrate that the interactants hold no grudges or hold no hard feelings. ‘To give the left one,’ on the other hand, is to express lack of confidence in a relationship. Amakhono amasiro ‘heavy hands’ is used to describe people who generously share out whatever they have (Appendix C1, item 10). The speaker who wishes to request that an offer is increased says sonda omukhono ‘stretch your hand a little further’ to mean add a little more or improve the offer. A person who does not share out resources in adequate measures is said to have a dimunitive hand, olukhono.

Another hand idiom, Omukhono omurambi, ‘a long hand’ refers to an individual who steals, in the sense that one stretches one’s hand to get other people’s possessions (Appendix C1, item 11). To say that one has a long hand is therefore to imply that one is a thief. A person who is easily provoked into a fight is said to have ‘a light hand’, omukhono omwangu. This means that the person is quick to physically react to any provocation. A person who is enraged could warn a listener wicha okhumba amakhono amabi, ‘you will give me bad hands’ to mean that one is being provoked and could cause harm to the listener. An idiom related to the finger okhuriaba esitere, ‘an act of hitting a finger against the thumb’ as an expression of outrage and a threat to seek revenge. This gesture is made by one who harbours evil intentions against someone else.

Esileenje ‘the leg’ is used to refer to the part comprising the foot, ankle and extends to the knee. There are idioms that are formed from this part to express the speakers’ feelings and
make propositions about their world view. This body organ symbolizes stability and focus in making decisions on crucial matters. *Okhura esileenje hasi* ‘to put one’s foot down’ is used to mean to remain firm and take decisive action. The speaker who is said to have ‘put the foot down’ is usually the person who is required to provide the ultimate direction in a situation where there are competing positions on a matter. Failure of such a person to do so may result in confusion and the social event stalling. *Okhusinjila esileenje silala* ‘to stand on one foot’, on the other hand, is to be uncertain of a position one is taking. The person who appears undecided on whatever course of action or the position to take is said to be ‘standing on one foot.’ In this context, one may change one’s mind and therefore ‘stand on the other foot.’ Once one has taken a particular definite position on a matter, the expression, *Okhusinjila tiili*, ’to stand upright’ is used. In other contexts, *okhusitsila tiili* ‘to stand upright’ is used to indicate that an individual harbor no ill motives or feelings towards another person. For example, one may say *sinjiye tiili khu mukho kwo omwana wefwe*, ‘I am standing upright on my sibling’s function’ to be interpreted that one should not be suspected of harboring negative feelings towards whatever social function the sibling is holding.

*Okhukwa mumakulu* ‘to drop into someone’s lap’ depicts humility before those in positions of authority or capacity to assist. Someone seeking to be pardoned or asking for particular favours could be urged *tsia okwe mumakulu ke* ‘go and drop into his lap.’ The addressee will not actually get anywhere close to the lap. It figuratively simply means that one should plead with politeness and humility for forgiveness after wayward behaviour.

The Abanyole talk of *okhusena omundu khu musila*, (to-infinitive okhu + verb sena + indefinite pron omundu + PP khu musila) ‘to step onto someone’s tail.’ The expression is used to mean, ‘provoking one by talking about the most sensitive and guarded secret touching on the individual.’ This recognizes that people have certain unknown bits of information that are ‘as hidden as the tail.’ To divulge such secretive information about an individual is to provoke one’s anger. The expression relates to the politeness principle that requires that speakers endeavour to remain sensitive to the listeners’ feelings in the use of
language for social interaction. This tail idiom is the equivalent of the expression ‘step onto one’s foot’ in English. Such Olunyole idioms discourage verbal behaviour that is considered an intrusion into the private life of the others.

Another idiom constructed from *esilenje* ‘the foot’ is *okhusenana mo* ‘to step into an issue.’ This utterance means to overlook or ignore acting on an issue that should otherwise get your attention. It is used to give negatively evaluative comments on people who are arrogantly rigid and do not take divergent views positively. ‘To step into an issue’ is to remain defiant, and not to be bothered about taking action on an issue that concerns or is pointed out to someone.

The speakers are encouraged to emulate the positive deeds of those people they interact with. In Olunyole *okhuchenda mubilenje bio omundu* ‘to walk into someone’s feet’ means that one has been inspired to emulate the effort of an older successful person. The expression is the equivalent of walking into the footsteps of another person.

5.3.1.3 Olunyole Idioms from other body Parts

Oyule, an informant, observes that idioms in Olunyole are partly constructed from the oral parts and limbs. There are however a number of idioms that are based on the other parts of the body notably the eyes *tsimoni* ‘eyes’, *omurwe* ‘the head’, *likosi* ‘the neck’, *omukongo* ‘the back’ and *inda* ‘the stomach.’ The expressions formed from these parts reflect and regulate behaviour as speakers communicate for interaction.

*Tsimoni* ‘eyes’ are sight organs. The constructions from eyes talk about desirable conduct. *Okhwoma imoni* ‘to be hard-eyed’ is lack of respect and being rude toward the people who are older than one. The hard-eyed idiom is commonly used to comment on the conduct of wives and people considered to be younger or subordinate in social authority. It is common to hear utterances such as *omukhasi ula yoomelanga omusatsa imoni* ‘that
woman is hard-eyed towards her husband’ or *omwana ula wayoma imoni* ‘that child is dry-eyed’, and not *omusacha ula yoomelanga omukhasi imoni*’ that man is hard-eyed towards the wife. The idiom asserts the cultural expectation of respect for and humility towards the people in authority.

Another Olunyole idiom *Okhuwa amaatsi m’moni* ‘dry-faced’ is used to portray commendable confidence. One who is able to fearlessly articulate one’s thoughts before an audience or people in authority is thus complimented *waa wa amaatsi m’moni* ‘one has a waterless face.’ Unlike *okhwoma imoni* ‘dry-eyed’, *okhuwa amaatsi m’moni* is a positive evaluative comment on the fluency and confidence of speakers who are young or thought to be subordinate.

*Tsímoni tsindafu,*’ clear eyes’ is contextually interpreted as a state of sobriety. To have clear eyes communicates that one has not drunk alcohol as one usually does. The contribution or behaviour of a known alcoholic will be judged according to ‘one’s state of eyes.’ The utterances of such a person will be trusted only upon confirmation that the person had *tsímoni tsindafu*’ clear eyes.’

Apart from the descriptive phrases revolving around eyes, elder Imbira notes that the Olunyole speakers are keen on the way their looks express emotions and attitudes. Jael, another informant, explains from the example, *okhuhenga omundu imoni* ‘to look somebody a bad eye’ is an expression of displeasure at undesirable behaviour or unwanted presence. She adds that disapproval, in this non-verbal cue of the eye, is reinforced by the frowning of the face and clicking. *Okhuhenga omundu tsímoni tsimbi* ‘to give another person evil eyes’ culturally means to bewitch one so that the person becomes ill and eventually dies. *Tsímoni tsimbi* ‘bad or evil eyes’ therefore suggests that people have engaged in witchcraft that is believed to cause death among the Abanyole. Another idiom *esíndu sie imoni* ‘something with an eye’ is a show of generosity. If whatever is given is
not sufficient, one may complain that it does not have an eye. This means that it is invisible, it is too little or generally insufficient for the present purposes.

*Okhuhenga omundu khu moni* ‘to look someone into the eye’ means to closely monitor the movements or presence of another person with the intention of doing mischief. For example, a parent could complain that *omwana ya mengele tsa khu moni ma na kora hango* ‘my child just looked me on the eye and disappeared from home. The person that is monitored is one who could restrain the other one from executing the intended plan. When people have a strained relationship, one may say *siba hengana tawe*, ‘they do not look at each other.’ English has a similar expression, ‘they do not see eye to eye.’

*Omurwe*, ‘the head’, is a human organ that carries brains. It is also responsible for the human psychological processes and mental capacity. The proper functioning of the head ensures rational thinking and sound judgment. One who is thought to be out of one’s mind and whose behaviour does not exhibit a clear human conscience will be described as ‘*wa biya omurwe*, ‘one’s head is spoilt.’ Any behaviour that goes against the norms may be attributed to *okhubiya omurwe*, ‘to have a spoilt head.’ The speakers interviewed say that this situation results from personality disorders, mental illness, witchcraft or inability to control emotions.

*Okhusimba omurwe* ‘to have a swollen head’ is to be in a state of embarrassment or shame. Therefore, to ashame or embarrass one is ‘to cause one’s head to swell-*okhusimbwa omurwe*.’ This would be an act that brings one’s conscience to question. In other contexts, it is used to mean an act of disappointment that demeans another person before judgment. A child who behaves disgracefully and subjects the parent to public ridicule is said to have caused the parent’s head to ‘swell.’ The opposite expression is *okhusimbulusia omurwe* ‘to ease the head.’ This is an act that boosts another person’s self-esteem or makes one proud before the public. A child who passes an examination makes
the parent proud and so the parent may say *omwana usimbulusiye omurwe*, ‘my child has made me proud.’ In English, we may talk of ‘walking with heads high.’

*Okhuchinga omurwe* ‘to raise one’s head’ is used to mean that one has suddenly become disrespectful. One who disregards or defies authority is described as *waachinga omurwe*, ‘he has a raised head’ or *wayoma omurwe* - ’he is hard-headed.’ *Okhubira omurwe kwo omundu* ‘to outgrow another person’s head’ is another ‘head idiom’ that comments on open defiance. This expression is used when someone in authority has no control over a subordinate person. For instance, in the Olunyole culture a wife takes instructions from the husband. In cases where the husband acts to the whims of the wife, the utterance *omukhasi wa mubira omurwe* ‘the wife has outgrown the husband’s head’ is used to criticize such behaviour. This is explained by the fact that the head signifies leadership; a wife who does not recognize the position of a husband and always overrules him is therefore said to surpass the cultural matrimonial limits.

*Omukongo* ‘the back’ provides a number of expressions. *Omukongo omutoro*, ‘a soft back’, is a used to positively comment on someone who takes the first step of a profitable venture and inspires communal participation (Cf. Appendix C2, item 1.). The idiom is used in the context of voluntary public contribution. An individual may be asked to be the first one to give or lead a communal activity because *ali nende omukongo omutoro*, ‘one has a soft back.’ The initial involvement of such an individual portends the success of the communal project. Margaret, an informant, adds that *Okhurekukha omukongo*, ‘to have a snap back’, is an idiom used in the context of childbearing. It means that a woman has lost a pregnancy through a miscarriage. A woman, who conceives, *okhutiila amatsai*, is expected to be handled cautiously for fear that she could miscarry, *okhurekukha omukongo*.

*Okhukhalikha omukongo* ‘to have a cracked back’ is a state of being jealous at another person’s success (Appendix C2, item2). The person with such ‘a back’ wishes that no one
else prospers and could plan evil for other people. This idiom has a synonymous expression *okhuyia inda* ‘to have a burning stomach’. The idiom is used to satirize one who is uneasy and bitter with another person’s fortunes. Elder Imbira, in a discussion, notes that the Abanyole say such a person ‘has a burning stomach’ *uhiye inda* or *ukhalikhile omukongo katu katu*, ‘one has a cracked back.’

The speakers use the expression *inda okhukwa khumukongo*, ‘the stomach has fallen back’, to mean that one has starved. The utterance is a comment that one has not had a meal for long and so must be hungry. Oloo further observes that the expression is used by elderly women to complain that a married woman is taking longer than expected to bear children.

Finally, the neck, ‘*likosi*’ is connected to the back. The neck provides an idiom that criticizes rigidity and rudeness (*Appendix C2, item,8*). *Likosi eliomu*, ‘a stiff neck’, is a negative evaluation of somebody who does not accommodate divergent views. Such a person will do whatever he wishes, whatever the circumstances. Informant Otieno explains that the idiom is said to be drawn from the hardness of the meat from the cow’s neck. One requires extra effort to cut or even chew such meat. Similarly, it is difficult to change the thinking or intention of someone described as having *likosi elioomu*, ‘a stiff neck.’

### 5.4 Olunyole Idioms and Social Relationships

Olunyole idioms, as instances of interactional language in the contexts, are considered a means of reflecting interpersonal relationships in social and language groups. Lattey (1986: 54) supports this view by noting:

> Contextual organization of idioms on the basis of recurring pragmatic functions related to the interaction of speaker and
listener, speaker and the outside world, positive evaluations and negative evaluation of people and phenomena.

The speakers of Olunyole recognize their identities in conversations and monitor their relational contributions as they collaboratively interrogate and share their culturally constrained perceptions about the world. The speakers and listeners make such perceptions known through creative linguistic options (including idiomatic constructions) to enable them to make evaluative comments that reveal their attitudes and points of view on their observations and views of the world. Idioms of any language therefore become “communal tokens that express cultural and social solidarity” (McCarthy, 1998:145). The idioms are thus constructed and interpreted within the participation framework in which people are continually taking up roles, defining identities, aligning relationships to the dynamic interactional and conversational contexts (Schiffrin, 2006: 195). The linguistic form and the content of the contextually uttered expressions such as the Olunyole idioms functionally shape the interpersonal relationships of the speakers.

The Olunyole idiom *okhufuutsa omundu* (to + infinitive, verb *fuutsa*) +Indefinite Pronoun-*omundu*) has the literal meaning, ‘to spit someone.’ In the context of social use, Oyule notes, the idiom means to condemn or reprimand one for wrong doing. The idiom is not only a fixed expression in terms of its form, but also in the specification of its utterer and the targeted individual ‘to be spat.’ The person being ‘spat’ (condemned or scolded) must be younger or junior in the ranks of social order. These identity categories of the participants are part of the internalized knowledge the native speakers accumulate over time through practical interactional use, and these speakers are able to relate such categories to the appropriate use of the idioms. Blommaert (2006:204) on identity as ‘the who and what’ of the participants’ notes:

Identity is dependent on content, purpose and occasion…an act in which we give off information about ourselves. Such acts are of tremendous complexity, for they involve a wide variety of situating
processes: situating the individual in relation to several layers of (real, sociological) groups and (socially constructed) ‘categories’ (age category, sex, professional category, but also national, cultural, and ethno-linguistic categories), situating this complex in turn in relation to other such complexes (young versus old, male versus female highly educated versus less educated, and so on), and situating this identification in relation to the situation at hand…

The construction of linguistic phrases thus largely relies on the cultural values attached to familiar images drawn from the immediate environment and the networks of social relationships of the speakers. The identity categories, roles and characteristics are key contextual components in the use (construction and interpretation) of idioms. The social parameters that define identity and relationships of participants include kinship and family, age and administrative authority (Leigh, 2001).

5.4.1 Olunyole Idioms Related to Kinship and Family

Representation of kinship systems is one of the social functions of language (Wardhaugh, 1986). The use of some Olunyole idioms is dependent on the kinship relationships that hold family lineages. The language behaviour of the people and their conduct is partly determined by the position of individuals within the nucleus and extended family. For example, it is the responsibility of the head of the family to perform ‘blessing’ rituals to the younger members of the family. Informant Josphat explains that the Abanyole talk of okhufutsa amare ‘to spit’, in referring to the gesture that accompanies such speech occasions. He adds that, the Abanyole family set-up being patriarchal, the father and his relatives play a pivotal role in maintaining family unity through rational control of behaviour. Oyule observes that the utterances of the older relatives are generally believed to affect the lives of children and young speakers both positively and adversely. For instance, okhufuura mumarwi ‘to breathe into a child’s ears’ by an elder is to wish the child a healthy life.
An uncle’s or an aunt’s curse may cause misery (Taylor, 1973). Maganga notes that among the Abanyole, a relative who utters a curse may be required *okhukabusia eminwa* ‘to return mouths’ in regard to younger member. Speakers constantly invoke these kinship relationships in using certain expressions in their utterances. Speakers justify certain actions by making propositional assertions about the kinship ties. One could thus state: *I am your X and so action Y* … One common one utterance by aunts to their nieces and nephews is *ndi senje uwo. Ni khuchuna esirwi, ne tsimbolo bole nitsituma khumurwe* translated as ‘being your aunt, if I pinch your ear, ants will fly from your head.’ The aunts do not actually pinch anyone; the utterance reminds the youths to always respect older relatives. The speakers generally rely on the family for the perpetuation of cultural values that ensure harmonious co-existence (Leigh, 2001).

### 5.4.2 Olunyole Idioms Related to Age

The age difference among speakers is another determinant of language use for social interaction (Hudson, 1996). There are privileges and responsibilities associated with age. The elderly preside over cultural rituals that define the community. For example, it is only an elderly person that ‘bursts’ the rumen of an animal slaughtered in the home for cultural ceremonies. The expression *okhufutula esihu*, ‘to burst the rumen’, is used to indicate that an individual has not engaged in any acts that compromise the moral social values or negate the spirit of the family unity. If one engages in acts of immorality or executes ill schemes against a member of the family, one will excuse oneself from communal functions to avoid being picked upon to carry out the *okhufutula esihu* ritual. People’s social behaviour is therefore judged from such conducts. The speakers usually declare that they would willingly cause ‘the rumen to burst’ to indicate that they are morally upright in their dealing with members of the clan.

The idiom *okhuhambia lisafu* (to infinitive (*okhu*) + verbal (*hambia*), ‘to hand a leaf over to someone else’, is used by older people to deter ridicule from younger members of the speech community. The ‘leaf’ would be handed to a younger person who laughs unnecessarily as an older person passes. This may be explains from the fact that vegetation
would traditionally be used for clearing off visible dirt from the body. Handing over a leaf to a youth by an elderly speaker is regarded as a curse among the Abanyole, and a challenge to the younger person to wipe away the source of laughter from the agitated older person.

Another age-based Olunyole idiom that regulates interactional behaviour is *okhu-funaka omukongo* (*to-infinitive+ verb-funaka+NP omukongo*) ‘to break a younger person’s back.’ The speakers are culturally expected to take up their shares of available resources according to their age. This is based on the belief that the young people who defy the requirement will grow old earlier than expected. The older speakers caution the younger ones when they warn or remind *nda khufunaka omukongo* ‘I will break your back.’ The speech community values respect for age in the distribution of roles and possessions.

### 5.4.3 Olunyole Idioms Related to Administration and Leadership

The speakers maintain order by ensuring adherence to the social code of behaviour and the law of the land (Taylor, 1973). The Olunyole idioms, as a component of language, functionally provide the self-regulatory mechanisms for creating a balanced social order through the reinforcement of recognized structured interaction. One of the ways of creating the social order is the formation of political and traditional administrative levels, shaped by both modern formal ideology and socio-cultural systems (Leigh, 2001). Chief David Asila observes that Olunyole has specific expressions that recognize and define differences based on, and between *abaruki* ‘the rulers’ and *abarukwaa* ‘the subjects’, *abeemeli* ‘the leaders’ and *abemeelwa* ‘those being led.’ For example, he adds the democratic leader who engages the subjects in mutually binding decisions for the common good would be described as *yahilaa lisafu,* ‘one who herds with a leaf.’ Asila further notes that a leader, in the expression, is equated to a herdsman, whose responsibility is to guide the domesticated animals to access pasture and return them home to safety. The ‘leaf’ metaphor in this idiom is used to capture a leadership that espouses inclusive engagement of the subjects through open communication that remains sensitive to people’s feelings, views and opinions. The related contrasting idiom on leadership is *okhwahila elabusi* ‘to
herd with a staff.’ *Elabusi* ‘a staff’ represents the hardness and stiffness of autocratic leadership as opposed to the soft and flexible *lisafu*, ‘a leaf.’

Idiomatic expressions depict behavioural patterns of the subjects that recognize and accept their leaders and administrators, and undertake to conform to the prescribed conduct. There are idioms that exert control on the personality system of the speakers for social order. The example provided by informant Buradi, *okhwooma imoni* ‘hard-eye’ is behaviour that does not show respect for the leaders. Buradi further explains that a person who is defiant, and generally does not take instructions from the leaders and administrators is described in the idiom *wayoma omurwe*, ‘one is hard headed.’ Such person is unheeding and does not act in the interest of the common social good.

The regulatory function of the expressions in the speech community is integrated into cultural system of the social organization that includes the personality system. Parson (1978:27) on the social system views personality as:

…the aspect of the living individual, “as actor”, which must be understood in terms of the cultural and social content of the learned patternings that make up his behavioural system personality is autonomous as a distinct sub-system of action. It forms a distinct system articulated with social systems through their political sub-systems, not simply in the sense of government but of any collective ordering. This is to say that the primary goal output of social systems is to the personalities of the members…

The language use of the expressions therefore positions the participants in terms of their socially patterned status and their roles in the interactive relationships. The idiomatic expressions reflect these social interpersonal networks by suggesting varying degrees of solidarity distance, intimacy and (non) formality (Olsen, 1978: 22).
5.5 Olunyole Idioms and Social Acts

The pragmatics of language cuts across the spheres of sentence meaning, context of use and the speaker’s intended meaning that is recognized by the hearer (Portner, 2006:157). The idiomatic expression is used in an utterance to portray the intention of the speaker as interpreted by the hearer, resulting in specific actions or reactions. For example, one uttering the idiom suundakho omukhono ‘stretch your hand’ to a mutual friend that is giving someone else some material. This idiom is interpreted as an act of a request to the hearer to give a little more. Meaning is therefore more of something performed dynamically rather than a passive static entity. The hearer of the ‘stretch your hand’ idiom recognizes the intention of the speaker as an act of request, and executes action as requested or constructs another utterance to justify why the request cannot be granted in the circumstances. Leech (1974:320-1) notes that meaning ‘...involves action (the speaker producing an effect on the hearer) and interaction (the meaning being ‘negotiated’ between speaker and hearer on the basis of their mutual knowledge).’

The intentions of the speakers in encoding messages in Olunyole idiomatic expressions are drawn from the broad transactional and interactional functions of language. Speakers and hearers exchange information to get enlightened on world developments and how human endeavours contribute to or harness such developments. The latter function utilizes the expressions to manipulate behaviour of members of the society (Putnam, 1975:28). The social speech acts that result from the Olunyole idioms functionally regulate behaviour that is judged against the belief system, values and norms of the speech community. The idioms are used in utterances to proclaim negative evaluation on undesirable conduct and positively reinforce behaviour that propagates and perpetuates the moral values of the speech community. Meanings of the expressions, to this end, are built not only from the combination of the linguistic constituents that form the expressions, but also the top-down process that is based on the internal psychological state of the interlocutors and the knowledge that they socially and culturally acquire through continued interaction (Segal and Larson, 1998:8).
The following tables analyse representative Olunyole idioms in terms of their social acts and their regulatory functions. The acts and functions are analysed from the Questionnaires (Appendix C_1&2), Interview and focused discussion (Appendix C_3):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Olunyole idiom in Utterances</th>
<th>Literal non-figurative Meaning</th>
<th>Figurative Contextual meaning</th>
<th>Social Speech Act</th>
<th>Regulatory functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Okhwoma imoni ‘Omwana uyu wa-yoma imoni.’</td>
<td>To be dry-eyed This child is dry-eyed</td>
<td>Lack respect for elders or people in authority.</td>
<td>Condemning</td>
<td>Negative evaluation: Defiance; disrespect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Okhusuunda 3. Omukhono Amakhono omusiro</td>
<td>To stretch a hand Heavy hands</td>
<td>Give more of something. Give generously.</td>
<td>Request Compliment</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation: Generosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Omukhono omurambi ‘Olekhe omukhono omurambi Noboaye’</td>
<td>A long hand Stop having a long hand. You will be jailed</td>
<td>The habit of stealing</td>
<td>Condemning Advising Warning</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Okhuboha omukoye ‘Tsiye okhuboha omulina watse omukoye’</td>
<td>To tie a rope I went to tie my friend a rope</td>
<td>To comfort or support the bereaved. Empathize with the people grieving.</td>
<td>Consoling</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation: Friendship/solidarity and communal cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Okhweha omunwa hasi ‘Aliyie ma niyeha omunwa hasi’</td>
<td>To wipe down one’s mouth He ate and then wiped down his mouth</td>
<td>To falsely deny that one has benefited. To fail to be contented with what one has already got.</td>
<td>Scolding Condemning</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Greed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Okhukwa mumakulu ‘Tsia okwe mumakulu ke, omusabe obulekheli.’</td>
<td>To go down to someone’s lap. Go down to his lap and seek forgiveness.</td>
<td>To show remorsefulness by being humble.</td>
<td>Apologizing Pleading</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation: Humility &amp; respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Okhukwa munwa ‘Ibe wakwa munwa saana’</td>
<td>To be loose-mouthed. You are so loose-mouthed</td>
<td>Talking without weighing the consequences. Quick to divulge information without consideration.</td>
<td>Blaming Scolding Condemning</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Lack of confidentiality; failure to keep secrets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Okhulinda ol’limi ‘Khulinde ol’limi. Amakhwara yaka kararula tawe.’</td>
<td>To guard the tongue. Let us guard the tongue. This information</td>
<td>To be cautious not to reveal divulge specific resolutions. Not to reveal that which could result</td>
<td>Cautioning</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation: Guarding Secrets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Other Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Okhukabusia eminwa. 'Khub' boleye samwana akabusie eminwa.'</td>
<td>To return Mouths</td>
<td>To withdraw curse utterances e.g of a parent to a child.</td>
<td>Recant Blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Okhuluma musikalo 'Olume musikalo. 'Esibala nesitinyu'</td>
<td>Bite the palm. Bite the palm. The world is full of hardships.</td>
<td>To persevere difficult painful moments</td>
<td>empathizing encouraging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Okhuchuna ofiye 'Sianyala okhuha tawe. Yachuna ofiye.'</td>
<td>To pinch a corpse. He/she cannot give you. He pinched a corpse.</td>
<td>Utterly mean/ selfish</td>
<td>Complaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Okhweyakila es'sokoro 'Yamelenyele nge obulayi. Ndelo ye yakilanga es sokoro.'</td>
<td>To scratch with a dry maize cob. He/She has been living well. These days he/she scratches with a maize cob.</td>
<td>To experience hard life after a duration of luxurious living.</td>
<td>Mocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Okhusena mwisasa 'Us'sene mwisasa. Witsa okhuriabwa.'</td>
<td>To step into wasps You have stepped into wasps. You will be beaten up.</td>
<td>To provoke someone into violent reaction To anger the most feared person.</td>
<td>Warning Complaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Okhuseena omundu khumisila 'Okhunyeke mama no okhus'sena mukhumisila.'</td>
<td>To step onto someone’s tail To insult my mother is to step onto my tail</td>
<td>To talk about the most sensitive aspects of another person life</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Selfishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Okhulakaila m’mwosi 'Ohenge obulayi. Nolakaile m’mwosi.'</td>
<td>To cry from smoke Be careful. You will cry from smoke.</td>
<td>To live in regret after squandering resources and opportunities.</td>
<td>Regretting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Omukongo Omutoro 'Abetsanga owomukongo omutoro. Amang’ondo kanyolekhele bwangu.'</td>
<td>A soft back He/she has a soft back. The money needed was fast raised</td>
<td>One who inspires collective participation. To get to be the first contributor to some communal project or venture which later reports massive success</td>
<td>Compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Okhuyia inda Inda ndulu</td>
<td>To have a burning stomach</td>
<td>Ill-feelings&amp; bitterness over</td>
<td>Condemning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td>Translation and Description</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Uuye inda olwa omwana wo omurende ab ‘bire amarebo.'</td>
<td>To have a hot stomach He has developed a burning/hot stomach over the neighbour’s child’s good performance in exams.</td>
<td>Jealousy/envy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Okhuhenga Omandu oluboni 'Mbula wamengakho oluboni.'</td>
<td>To look an eye on somebody Could you look an eye at me?</td>
<td>TREAT another person favourably. To extend some favours to somebody e.g money.</td>
<td>Requesting (to be given resources) Thanking (after one is given resources)</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation: Hospitality &amp; generosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Okhweteta tsinyende mubwoba 'Lekha okhweteta tsinyende mubwoba'</td>
<td>To poke out jiggers from mushroom. Do not poke out /look for jiggers from the mushroom.</td>
<td>To irritatingly look for negative details that obscure the key issue.</td>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Lack of clear focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Okhuriaba esitere 'Nise woriabilia esitere'</td>
<td>To hit the finger Is it me that you are hitting the finger at?</td>
<td>The act of expressing anger and intention to avenge some wrongdoing.</td>
<td>Threatening</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Okhusinga nekatukhile 'Pole Osingile nekatukhile.'</td>
<td>To harvest (rain) after it has stopped. Sorry. You trapped after it had stopped.</td>
<td>To try to access or get something at the time it is no longer available.</td>
<td>Regretting</td>
<td>Negative Evaluation: Lack of focused timing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data

The construction and interpretation of idioms enhance communicative interaction by enabling the speakers to accomplish actions, and the hearers to decipher the actions from the context of the “container” utterance (Portner, 2006:162). Social action in language use is advanced by Austin (1962) in the speech acts theory. Under the theory, the pragmatic analysis of the idioms is less concerned with the locutionary acts of the speech acts (the grammatical configurations), but more with the illocutionary acts that accrue from the speakers’ intentions and the hearers’ inferences of such intentions and the perlocution acts that entail the effect of the acts - annoying, frightening or amusing (Portner, 2006). For example, let us look at the Olunyole idiomatic utterance:
Yali tsimoni tsindafu? ‘Were his/her eyes ‘white’/ clear?’

The hearer infers from the context that the speaker’s utterance is an INQUIRY on the referent’s sobriety. The hearer interprets the utterance from the speaker’s intention to ascertain the level of judgment of the person being referred to, and whether the person executed the action known to both the speaker and hearer after drinking alcohol. If the response to the INQUIRY act is affirmative, then the speaker engages another act of DOUBTING the action that may have been done by the drunken person. This could further be followed by the act of DISMISSING whatever may have been done or uttered under the influence of alcoholic beverages. The resulting perlocution acts could range from ANNOYANCE and DISAPPOINTMENT to light-hearted AMUSEMENT at the behaviour of the referent.

The idiomatic expressions of Olunyole, as in any other language, therefore go beyond the abstract state of world notions like truth and falsity, reference and logic, and represent the participant-related acts like threatening, quarreling, advising, ordering, believing, doubting, consoling interpretable from the information state and idea structure of the shared world-view of the speech community (Bolinger, 1977:53). On the internal significance of language, that includes instances of language as it relates inward to the mental lives of speakers, (Segal and Larson, 1998:7) note:

Once again, that observation that language has internal significance that we discover what people believe, want, demand, and might do on the basis of what they say, is a commonplace that we draw on implicitly everyday of our lives…A speaker utters a sentence meaning p. By that act, the speaker asserts that p, indicates a belief that p, indicates a wish to inform the audience that p, and so on…
The Olunyole idioms, as language expressions, are thus constructed to perform interactive acts that have broad social significance. The idioms are concrete instances of the collective mental consciousness of the speech community as speakers relate in diverse contexts for social survival.

5.6 The Structural Analysis of Olunyole Idioms

The realization of the idiomatic expressions arises from the mapping of the linear organization of the linguistic signs to the concepts they represent from the world phenomena they represent. There are therefore conventionalized relationships between the forms of the units as expressions (E) and the associated concepts (C) that yield their interpretations (Makkai, 1993:296). The idioms are composite units constructed and uttered within the rules of morphology and phonology of the language, and interpreted as reflections of the world as perceived by the speakers. The following figure represents the interwoven relationships between the structure of the expressions (E) and their manifestations as pragmatic units of concepts resulting from the people’s world view:

![Diagram of Olunyole idiom structure](image)

Figure 5.3: *Omukhono omurambi* as an idiom and its place in a lineup of concepts and expressions.
The idiom *omukhono omuraambi* ‘a long hand,’ illustrated in the figure above is drawn from a combination of the body part denoted by the noun sign *omukhono* and the descriptive adjective *omuraambi*. The adjective shifts the denotative semantic meaning of the omukhono ‘hand’ as a limb falling from the shoulders and used to lift and carry things to the contextual realization as human behaviour or personality of theft or pilferage. The concepts are drawn from people’s interactions with and perceptions of the physical environment. The material objects, natural features and phenomena and living creatures are the source of the concepts from which the processing of the idiomatic expressions and other forms of figurative language is drawn.

The structure of the idiom can be analyzed as consisting the element of departure that only gives the idiom a syntactic category and other elements that provide the realization. *Omukhono omusiro* comprises *omukhono* ‘hand’ which initially (departure point) places the expression within the nominal category and *omusiro* ‘heavy’ that shifts the expression to the contextual interpretation (ultimate realization) in line with the life, knowledge and situation of the speakers and hearers in the specific instances of conversations. The adjective ‘heavy’ *omusiro*, is mapped onto the noun ‘hand’ *omukhono* to give the expression an interpretation of somebody who willingly gives other people sufficient quantities of possessions, being generous.’ These relationships between the syntactic units that form the idioms and their resultant semantic interpretations are considered functionally projecting from the specific social circumstances that determine their utterance.

The comprehension of the idioms of a language is not only dependent on the top-down processing procedure that draws from the inbuilt mental knowledge that speakers possess, but also the bottom-up flow of the combinations of linguistic constituents (Swinney and Cutler, 1979:47). The units that form the idioms are syntactic forms that are merged from the lower levels (morphemes, words) to complete phrases and sentence utterances. Peterson and Burgess (1993:202) note, “...many idioms are structured in syntactically appropriate ways, although the structure cannot be used, in combination with the
meanings of the individual words of the idiom to derive the idiom’s figurative interpretation.” This suggests that the semantic and syntactic systems exist and operate independently in the construction and interpretation of idioms.

The constituents of the syntactic structure contribute to the contextual figurative meaning. Omission or substitution of any element, for example, results in loss or distortion of the meaning. For example, okhuboha ‘to tie’ without the NP omukoye ‘a rope’ fails to produce the idiomatic meaning ‘to console’ in the context of a funeral. The substitution of the NP object omukoye ‘a rope’ with another NP likhuwa ‘a word’ in the context of a formal conversation produces an idiom that is interpreted differently. It contextually means ‘to make reach a unanimous decision on an issue that is kept a secret.’ The same lexeme okhuboha ‘to tie’ in reference to omukhaana’a girl in the idiom omukhaana waboha means that a girl is mature enough for marriage. Okhuboha ‘to tie’ in the context of a wife who has disagreed with a husband in the idiom omukhasi yaboha means that the woman departed from the matrimonial home.

The syntactic processing of the Olunyole idioms okhuboha omukoye ‘to tie a rope’ and okhuchuna ofiye ‘to pinch the dead’ for example, are represented as:

(i) To -V (infinitive) + NP  
(ii) To -V (infinitive) + NP

```
Okhu-boha     +   omukoye                           Okhuchuna    +   Ofiye
```

To tie a rope (to console) to pinch the dead to be mean

The syntactic configuration of the above idioms does not contribute to the functional figurative social meaning that native speakers assign the utterance. The syntax of the idioms is nonetheless constrained along and analyzable within the structural rules packaged by the grammar of the language. One of the syntactic features of idioms is frozenness which refers to the flexibility of an idiom in permitting transformations and still retaining its figurative meaning; the ones that allow several transformations are unfrozen (Peterson and Burgess, 1993:208). For example, okhunia khulutaabo ‘to defecate
on the bowl’ is a V+NP sequence which receives its figurative interpretation ‘to provoke and annoy the person who provides for an individual.’ This meaning is only possible with the sequence of constituents in the active voice and the passive transformation of the idiom as *olutaabo okhuniebwakho* ‘the bowl to be defecated on’ loses the figurative meaning. The idiom *okhuboha omukoye* ‘to tie someone a rope’ as in the active voice sentence *khwaboyele omulina uwe omukoye* ‘We tied our friend a rope’ (*NP1 + V+ NP2 + NP3*) ‘we tied our friend a rope’ may undergo the passive transformation to become *omulina uwe yaboyelwe omukoye*, ‘His friend was tied a rope’ (*NP2+Vpassive+NP3*).

The idiomatic units in Olunyole are syntactically head-first phrases; the heads that determine the phrase are followed by their dependents. The two notable structural types are the Verb Phrase and the Noun Phrase. These are briefly illustrated in the following subsections:

### 5.6.1 Olunyole Idioms formed from Verb Phrases

The Verb Phrase idioms are functionally used to represent actions with connotative meaning and social significance. The VP idiom has the verb co-occurring with other constituents. The constituents co-occurring with the verb are obligatory as far as the idiom interpretation is concerned. A test to substitute the constituent after the verb results in a non-figurative meaning. For example, *okhuchuna ofiye* ‘pinch the dead’ will lose idiomaticity if a different element replaces *ofiye*. *Okhuchuna omwana* ‘pinch a child’ it assigned the literal meaning of the act of using a finger nail to pull one’s skin.’
The following table shows the verb idiomatic constructions

Table 5.7: Representative Olunyole idioms with the structure V + NP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To-infinitive</th>
<th>NP (object)</th>
<th>Contextual Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Okhulinda ‘To guard’</td>
<td>Ol’limi ‘the tongue’.’</td>
<td>To be cautious with what one says; not to divulge sensitive information; Confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Okhuchuna ‘to pinch’</td>
<td>Ofiye ‘the dead’</td>
<td>To be extremely mean/selfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Okhumela ‘to grow’</td>
<td>Tsinjika ‘Horns’</td>
<td>To become arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Okhunywa ‘to drink’</td>
<td>Obusela ‘porridge’</td>
<td>Of a sick adult male, to engage in sexual act as sign of hopeful recovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Okhukabusia ‘to return’</td>
<td>Eminwa ‘Mouths’</td>
<td>To recant a curse that is responsible for misfortunes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data

Few idioms take two NP objects after the verb. Okhubira omusaacha omurwe ‘to surpass one’s husband's head’ has the structure V+ NP+ NP. Another structural possibility is the concurrence of the verb with prepositional phrases.

See examples below:

1. Okhukwa m’munwa
   
   To+ V+prep+NP
   To fall into one’s mouth

   to be unnecessarily talkative without weighing the effect of what is said

2. Okhukona khumaika

   To+ V+ prep+NP
   To sleep onto the cooking stones

   to stay awake at night because of a discomforting issue eg sickness
3. *Okhutila Khulusiche*  
To +V+Prep+NP  
To participate only in the final stages of a function or ceremony.

4. *Okhwukwa nende amadebe*  
To+V+Prep+NP  
of a man-(impotent);  
To fall with debes (huge tins) incapable of siring babies.

5. *Okhuluma musikalo*  
To+V+Prep+NP  
To endure difficult times of pain, grief etc.  
To bite into the palm

There are also few one word verbal idioms that express complete figurative comprehension without co-occurrence with other constituents. *Helaanakho*, ‘breath’, is a polite invitation to the addressee to give views on the topic under discussion. In the context of a discussion the person is being requested ‘to breathe’, not with the nostrils, but with ‘the mouth’. *Okhuheya* ‘to sweep’ means that one has loose morals, and that one is in the habit of engaging in extra-marital affairs.

5.6.2 **Olunyole Idioms formed from Noun Phrases**

The Noun Phrase idioms are constructed with the noun as the head followed by descriptive adjectives. The noun phrase idioms contextually communicate the affective (attitudinal) meaning related to people’s personality and behaviour. Most of the Noun Phrase idioms collected for this study take body parts as heads with the Noun+Adj structure.
Figure 5.4: Noun Phrase Olunyole Idioms

A. *Omwangu* (adjective N (singular) + Adjective)

C. *Amabi* (Adjective)
   ‘Bad’

D. *Amasiro* (Adjective) ‘Heavy’
   N(plural)+Adjective
   ‘A generous hand’

B. *Omurambi* (Adjective)
   ‘Long’
   N (singular + adjective)
   *Omukhono omurambi*
   A thief

*Omukhono omwangu*
‘Quick to fight’
There are Noun heads that yield more than one idiomatic construction. The hand ‘omukhono’ noun illustrated above is productive with four idioms formed from it. The Noun+ Adjective structure used in utterances has a possessive meaning that figuratively describes the character of people. For example, *Omukhono Omuraambi* ‘a long hand’ idiom in the utterance *ali nende omukhono omuraambi* ‘one has a long hand’ means one possesses a long hand, and interpreted as ONE IS A THIEF. Another example of a less productive Noun *Omunwa* ‘mouth’ is provided below:

![Figure 5.5: Example of a less productive idiom](image)

Figure 5.5: Example of a less productive idiom
5.7 Conclusion of the Chapter

Chapter five provides an incisive discussion of the functionality of Olunyole idioms under the pragmatic domains of social interaction. The construction and interpretation of the idioms reflect the cultural identity of the speakers against social constructs such as gender, marriage, age-sets, kinship, death and burial. In addition, the idioms regulate the behaviour of the members of the speech community in conformity with the values and norms that define the community. The chapter therefore analyses the functionality of the idioms not only in terms of their representation of social reality, as relationships created by the speakers’ interaction and their cultural significance, but also the social acts realized through the utterance of the idioms in speech contexts. The chapter also considers the interpretation of the Olunyole idioms as related to their structure. The structural composition of the idioms is linguistic creativity that is determined by the grammar of the language as part of the knowledge that the native speakers possess and use for interactive communicative functions.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction
The chapter provides summarized reviews of the issues interrogated in the preceding five chapters. Chapter six specifically provides a summary of the findings and the reviews of each of the chapters covered in the study report. It also gives recommendations from the study and suggestions for further research. In addition, the chapter briefly discusses the general concluding views on the study of Olunyole idioms in contextual social conversations, and their significance in reflecting the cultural identity of the speech community. The chapter further provides justification to the study of the functional aspects of African languages in generating indigenous knowledge.

6.2 Summary of Findings and Review of each Chapter

6.2.1 Summary of Findings
The study was guided by four objectives. First, it sought to determine the pragmatic usage of the Olunyole idioms by the speech community. The pragmatic approach to the study of the Olunyole idioms relied on the speakers’ experiences and accumulated knowledge that enhances interactional relationships among members of the speech community in actual contexts. The use of the idioms is generally dependent on the situational and conversational dynamics that arise from the speakers’ cooperative interaction in diverse contexts. From the study, there are a number of pragmatic considerations that are central to the construction and comprehension of Olunyole idiomatic expressions. These factors include the setting of the conversations and the nature of the participants, in terms of their identities, roles and the relationships conditioned by the distribution of power and status in the interactive behaviour of the speakers. In addition, the strategic intentions of the interactants also guide the use of the Olunyole idioms.
The second objective was to investigate how the Olunyole idioms reflect social reality. The study established that the Olunyole idioms are a product and representation of the social perceptions about and the consciousness of the speakers’ environment – all that they encounter and harness for their collective survival as a speech community in their various social units. The people creatively use language tropes to re-structure objects and phenomena, and re-align them to their collective thinking about and interpretation of the social world order. For instance, the study established that the human body parts are a crucial component in the creative reconstruction of the Abanyole social reality through the use of Olunyole idioms. The speech community therefore continually exploits language as a resource to (re)construct the social reality that accrues from its shared world view.

Additionally, the study sought to interrogate the extent to which Olunyole idioms enhance social control. The Olunyole idiomatic expressions are used in conversational exchanges to provide positive or negative evaluation of behaviour based on the acceptable social code of conduct, and therefore influence the network of interactions among members of the speech community. In this regard, the regulatory function of the idioms in speech interactions ensures that speakers adhere to a socio-culturally defined code of behaviour that promotes harmony within the social units. The utterance of the idioms in pragmatic contexts realises particular speech acts that, in effect, condition or control the behaviour of the interactants.

Lastly, the fourth objective was to examine the ethnolinguistic factors that determine the use of the Olunyole idioms. The study established that the construction and interpretation of the Olunyole idioms revolves around the cultural norms, values and the belief system that give the speakers a distinct social identity as a group. The study draws its findings from the speakers’ accounts and discussion of their practices and experiences embodied in the specific idioms. Generally, the idioms are a reflection of the values of the speech community such as solidarity, generosity, hospitality, loyalty and respect for one another.
The Olunyole idioms are also representations of the socio-cultural aspects that have been passed down from earlier generations, and therefore define the Abanyole social group.

### 6.2.2 Chapter Reviews

#### 6.2.2.1 Chapter One

The aim of the study was to investigate the functionality of the Olunyole idioms in reflecting social reality and controlling interactive behaviour of the speakers. The specific objectives focused on the contextual use of the Olunyole idioms in the reinforcement of the norms and values of the Abanyole. Olunyole is considered a language with recognizable structural and functional systems. Olunyole is a speech system usually considered a dialect of the larger Luluhya language. It is therefore related to other dialects on account of mutual intelligibility. Despite the common features of the dialects within Luluhya language, the speech communities for these dialects have particular expressions that characterize their cultural diversities. Sociolinguistically, the speakers prefer to refer to their speech codes as languages rather than dialects; the former is considered more prestigious and a means of asserting their socio-cultural autonomous identity.

This Chapter gives justification to the study. The study is considered a contribution to the preservation of the indigenous languages. In the face of the innovations in the field of science and technology, the local speech codes are faced with imminent extinction. The younger generation is drifting towards national and international languages that promise prospects of career development and global networking (Fishman, 1987:67). The expressions that give the languages authentic identity are diminishing with the death of the older speakers. It may be argued that the expressions such as idioms are considered endangered and so are the languages themselves. The study is therefore a step towards objectively documenting the Olunyole idioms for posterity, especially as culturally situated constructs in language.
Furthermore, the chapter presents the research problem, with particular focus on the usage of idioms in relation to the social variables of the speakers’ interactions. The specific objectives of the study are listed and the geographical location of the study also given.

6.2.2.2 Chapter Two

The chapter discusses the conceptual framework and the relevant literature. The variables of the study are investigated within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (1995) and Blommaert (2004; 2006). The CDA has roots in the functional models of language study propounded by (Halliday, 1975, 1985). The CDA considers language as a reflection of the imbalances that result from politics and other factors such as cultural categories that guide the coexistence of the speakers. The CDA considers the idioms as a verbal resource that partly structures power and authority relations along the social constructs of interaction. The chapter also provides a background to the functional approach to language study. The approach considers language a product and entity of situational contexts determined by the social order (reality). The speech acts, styles and varieties are context-dependent in influencing interpersonal relationships in diverse cultural domains.

It further interrogates the relationship between idioms and other aspects of indirect language such as proverbs, metaphors and sayings. The principles that guide the comprehension and interpretation of figurative language seem to apply to all these aspects of language use. The processes involved in the analysis of idioms include the direct (Direct Access), the pragmatic or other intricate cognitive channels. The pragmatic approach adopted by this study examines the relevance of socio-cultural contexts to the construction and comprehension of Olunyole idiomatic expressions.

The literature review reveals recognition of idioms as a distinguishing feature of a particular language. The idioms are generally linked to conversational dynamics, with scanty mentions of their cultural orientation. It is noted that the expressions are instances
of utterances that constitute exophoric content decipherable from the speakers’ world view.

6.2.2.3 Chapter Three
This chapter presents the research design and the methodology used in the study. The study employs the qualitative descriptive research design with focus on the objective interpretation of language as viewed by the people in their natural settings. The specific variables that the study covered were social reality, social control and pragmatic contexts in relation to the construction and interpretation of idioms.

The sample consists of native speakers selected from the locations that form Emuhaya sub-county that is the geographical area of the research. Over 240 native speakers were involved in the initial collection and confirmation of a data of Olunyole idioms. A smaller sample of 30 native speakers counter-checked the idioms and their social meaning from their intuitive experience. Twelve participants are engaged in six discussion sessions (FGDs) lasting three hours each. Four participants were engaged in face- to face interviews. These sessions involving a total of 286 participants provided insights into the Olunyole idioms in relation to Abanyole cultural practices and experience. The data collected from the interview and focused discussion with the informants formed the basis of the content in chapter four and five.

It also examines the ethnographic method that the study adopts. The method hinges on working with the native speakers and documenting their views and thoughts. The data is collected using the questionnaire, the interview and observation, and analysed qualitatively by determining the relationship between the variables.
6.2.2.4 Chapter Four

This chapter provides the world view of the Abanyole (the speakers of Olunyole). The chapter discusses the perceptions of the Abanyole in their socio-cultural units, and the contribution of language in the shaping of the people’s world view. It is generally noted that the Abanyole speech community values the kinship organization in the perpetuation of cultural beliefs and norms. They trace and maintain close ties in order to share resources, and be able to face times of difficulty in solidarity. The proverb *obukuundu bwenyanga omwene*, ‘the stench needs a kinsman’, summarizes the significance the people attach to family ties and relations.

The Abanyole speech community has mechanisms of ensuring conformity to the norms and observance of behaviour that promotes harmony, social stability and communal co-existence. The fear of isolation, banishment and possible death act as regulators of behaviour. The rigorous and prohibitive nature of the rituals performed in cases of non-conformities compels the people to remain loyal to the acceptable codes of behaviour, and collectively enforce their observance.

There is hence a confirmed relationship between the Olunyole idioms as figurative expressions and the socio-cultural categories that determine interaction through language use. The people’s world view influences the construction of the idioms by providing cultural images that form part of conceptual content of the expressions. Language use in relation to the speakers’ world view, therefore, becomes one of the criteria of defining the social identity of a speech community.
6.2.2.5 Chapter Five

It focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion. The Olunyole idioms are analyzed from the prism of cultural domains of language usage. Specifically, this chapter discusses six critical domains namely: gender, disease and illness, death and burial, religion, hospitality and social authority as the domains that are manifested in the contextualized usage of Olunyole idioms.

In addition, this chapter examines body parts Olunyole idiomatic constructions as used in language to regulate behaviour among speakers of Olunyole. The idioms from the body parts reflect and reinforce the values and taboos of the speakers, and in effect enforce the adherence to norms of cultural identity. The regulatory function of the Olunyole idioms is discussed as the acts that the utterance of the idioms represents in contexts. The desirable behaviour is reinforced through utterances that give positive evaluative comments, whereas conduct that goes against the norms and taboos is deterred using negative evaluation.

Finally, this chapter attempts to discuss the structural configuration of the idioms. The view taken is that the construction of the Olunyole idioms conforms to the grammar of the language. Most of the Olunyole idioms have the verbal or nominal elements as the nucleus. The modifiers contribute to the overall interpretation of the idioms. Indeed, there are idioms that maintain constant structure for their meanings to be interpreted in context. Their idiomatic meanings disappear with any transformational grammatical operations.

6.3 Conclusion of the Thesis

The study was concerned with Olunyole dialect, a speech code that shares system features with other related dialects of the Luluhyia. The principal objective was to examine the social reality that is represented in the utterances constructed from the Olunyole idioms.
Social reality encompasses the interpersonal relationships, the norms and values evident in the cultural practices, and the collective consciousness of the Olunyole speech community, and perceptions of all that they interact with. The Olunyole idioms in utterances are indeed a functional means by which the Olunyole speakers are constrained to observe the norms and values of the cultural group.

The Olunyole speech community values closely knit family and kinship units that form the basis of cultural identity. The Olunyole native speakers take it as a responsibility to assist or share resources with the less fortunate groups. The world view of the Abanyole is a key factor in the creative use of Olunyole idioms. The Olunyole idioms are composed and interpreted from the cultural beliefs and practices as understood and internalized by the speakers over a long period of continuous use of the language. The older native speakers of Olunyole are therefore more competent in the use of the expressions as a result of their relatively longer period of interaction with the language, and their profound practical understanding of the cultural systems the Abanyole people.

The Olunyole idioms are studied along the CDA conceptual framework that views language as a factor that influences the distribution of resources, and therefore a possible cause of the imbalances in society. The CDA builds from the functionalist approach that maps language use to the social structure. The distinctions in the interpersonal relations are reflected in the construction and interpretation of the Olunyole idioms. The ideation, tenor and mode sub-components of the functional theoretical framework guide the structured analysis of the expressions. In particular, the experiences, knowledge and ideas form the content of the idioms. The construction and interpretation of the idioms is dependent on the interpersonal relations of the speakers in the actual definable contexts.

The Olunyole idioms are analyzable within the socio-cultural functional domains that structure the interactive relationships within the social group. Ethnographic studies reveal that the people collectively ensure that the identity of the group is maintained through
observance of the norms and customs as reflected in the Olunyole idioms. In this case, the construction and interpretation of the Olunyole idioms is determined by the unique socio-cultural conditions of the speech community. The study presented the speakers’ world view through participant observation. The focused ethnographic discussions related socially-constrained ethnolinguistic factors to the functional processing of the idioms in Olunyole. In addition, the use of the idioms in varying contexts is a reflection of the native speakers' grasp of their social reality that encompasses their interactional relationships and the cultural prisms of domains that characterize their co-existence in a speech community.

The pragmatic study further demonstrated that the Olunyole idioms regulate the behaviour and interactions of the speech community for social harmony, cultural continuity and communal co-existence. This regulatory function of the Olunyole idioms is realized in conversational utterances that serve various speech acts of social control through positive and negative evaluation of behaviour.

6.4 Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

6.4.1 Recommendations
A number of recommendations can be made from this pragmatic study of Olunyole idioms. The study focuses on the function of the idiomatic expressions in the revealing the social reality of the speakers. Awareness of this reality could be integrated within the school system through the operationalization of the teaching of indigenous languages.

Yet there is the dilemma of the status of the indigenous languages in the formal school curriculum. The indigenous languages are expected to be the media for instruction for the lower primary levels of schooling that run from early childhood units to standard three as proposed by UNESCO and adopted in the Kenyan school curriculum. There is therefore need to develop the indigenous languages by promoting the study of their systems and usage. The attitude of speakers toward their languages poses a challenge to the inclusion
and implementation of indigenous languages in the school curriculum. The codification and development of pedagogical techniques for the learning and teaching of the vernaculars would contribute to the growth and maintenance of the languages.

It is recommended that state agencies provide funds for rigorous research of the local languages. Indeed the Kenyan constitution (2010) Article 7 (3) recognizes the role of the government in the preservation of languages:

3a. The state shall promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people; and (b) promote the development and use of indigenous languages, Kenya sign Language, Braille and other communication formats and technologies.

In addition, the right to use language as a means of cultural identity is entrenched in the Kenyan constitution (2010) in Article 44 as one of the citizens’ rights:

1. Every person has the right to use the language, and participate in cultural life of the person’s choice.

2. A person belonging to a cultural or linguistic community has the right with other members of that community:-

   a. To enjoy the person’s culture and use of the person’s language;

   b. To form, join and maintain cultural and linguistic Association and organs of civil society.

It is further recommended that cultural activities be funded to enhance belonging and promote national cohesion. The linguists and language experts should continually provide fora to sensitize the people on the need to maintain their indigenous philosophy by promoting local languages.
The Pan-Africanist view advocates for the promotion of the African languages by ensuring that the languages are integrated in the development discourse of the African nationalities (interview excerpts, Daily Nation, 23rd October, 2015, DN2). Masinde, a linguist leading the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), underscores the need for maintaining linguistic equity and complementarily between the indigenous African languages and international ones. On the question of the relevance of African languages to scientific innovation and linguistic diversity, Masinde (2015: 2) says:

I think that in order to ensure that ICT benefits the vast majority of Africans; we need the interplay between it and African languages. In order for this to be possible, we need to focus on applied research that produces multilingual applications that can be used in the socio-economic mainstream Africa. The M-peas success story in Kenya was a result of the marriage that brought ICT applications in Kiswahili and English, and the mobile phone. That marriage has allowed the majority of Kenyans to benefit from the facilities provided by Mopes. One of the Acalan’s main projects, called African languages in Cyber-Space, is aimed at enhancing the presence of Africans in Cyberspace through language use…

The study provides the impetus for incorporating indigenous language into the realm of applied linguistics. It seeks to establish the practicability of language in improving the quality and standards of living of the speakers. For example, the ethnographic method could be used to find appropriate lexical reference to the alien scientific and technological discoveries in order to improve access to global knowledge for local development. Understanding ICT related terminology such as computer, software, mouse, keyboard and blog would be easier if they were given equivalent references in the local languages. There is therefore need to align the study of indigenous languages to the recent innovations in order to embrace the dynamic global scientific and technological advances. In this way, the languages will not only serve the local interests of cultural transmission and preservation, but also link the speakers to the global reality.
6.4.2 Suggestions for Further Research

The study exclusively concentrated on the functionality of the Olunyole Idioms in terms of their reflection of social reality. This reality is reconstructed by the speakers, and is aimed at controlling people’s behaviour within precincts of the speakers’ world view. For further research, it would be necessary to investigate cross-boundary dialectal variations in the construction of the idioms. It is likely that other Luhya dialects such as Lusisha, Lulogoli and Lwidakho that border the Olunyole speakers have similar expressions or their speakers are able to interpret the Olunyole idioms. The study of the similarities and differences between the dialects could provide insights into the shared world view of these dialects.

Secondly, research initiatives could focus on the other tropes of indirect language. The proverbs, metonymy and metaphors of Olunyole could be subjected to formal research activity. Although these tropes may be interdependent in their conceptual construction, it is likely that they have distinctive characteristics worth pursuing through further research ventures.

Finally, the study presents a brief discussion of the formal structure of the Olunyole idioms. There is need to document research findings that specifically focus on the syntactic structure of the idioms. This would establish, for example, whether the idioms are amenable to particular syntactic principles of universal grammar, and whether the grammatical operations have a bearing to the semantic (meaning) component.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A1: ELICITATION TOOL

We are interested in the social and cultural meaning and the contextual use of the Olunyole idioms. Kindly write freely about the connection of the following expressions to the cultural practices of and their contextual use by the Abanyole people.

Also, make any corrections on their orthography (writing).

Further, kindly give us any other expressions you are aware of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Okhutila amatsai</td>
<td>13. Okhumila itsalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Okhusenaka khumaika</td>
<td>14. Okhutsia emakombe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Okhukona khumaika</td>
<td>15. Okhumenya/okhukona khwiselo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Okhurekula amaika</td>
<td>16. Okhuhila esinini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Okhukwa nende amadebe</td>
<td>17. Okhunia khu taabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Okhwima omusacha/omukhasi obukono</td>
<td>18. Okhuchuna ofiye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Omukhasi/omusacha okhuheya</td>
<td>19. Okhusuunda omukhono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Okhuhengahania</td>
<td>20. Okhwaya mabombolo</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Okhutila maa</td>
<td>22. Okwahila omwilo</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Okhura amatsi munwa</td>
<td>23. Okhumela tsinjika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Okhul’lomela munwa kwo omundu</td>
<td>24. Okhurekela okhukhoola</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>25. Okhutilwa akwanyeela</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A2: ELICITATION TOOL

We are interested in the social and cultural meaning and the contextual use of the Olunyole idioms. Kindly write freely about the connection of the following expressions to the cultural practices of and their contextual use by the Abanyole people.

Also, make any corrections on their orthography (writing).

Further, kindly give us any other expressions you are aware of.

1. Okhukhalikha omukongo
2. Okhurekukha omukongo
3. Omukongo omutoro
4. Okhusunda esilindwa
5. Okhukwa makulu
6. Okhulakaila m’mwosi
7. Okhuboha likhuwa
8. Okweteta tsinyende
9. Okhuboha emikoye
10. Okhuboha omundu omukoye
11. Okhweyakila es’sokoro
12. Okhutila likulu
13. Ekhwetuya esindu
14. Okhuba nende amare
15. Okhuba nende olukhono
16. Imoni inyomu/okhwoma imoni
17. Okhuwa amatsi m’moni
18. Omurwe omwomu
19. Okhusunda omukhono
20. Omukhasi/omusacha okhukatula
21. Okhukona khumaika
22. Omwoyo omuyu
23. Okhunywa obusela (omusatsa)
24. Okhuhila obusela
25. Okhweya omunwa hani
**APPENDIX A3: ELICITATION TOOL**

We are interested in the social and cultural meaning, and the contextual use of the Olunyole idioms. Kindly write freely about the connection of the following expressions to the cultural practices of and their contextual use by the Abanyole people.

Also, make any corrections on their orthography (writing).

Further, kindly give us any other expressions you are aware of.

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Okhuluma musikalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Okhweya omunwa hasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Okhusena mwisasa</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Okhukwa munwa</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Omunwa omurambi</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Okhulinda olulimi</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Okhurekela olukhoola</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Okhulia imondo ndala</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Okhuboha ling’ana</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Okhuriaba ingumu</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Okhwi khala khusokoro</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Okhusena khumaika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Okhusaba omunwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Okhukabusia eminwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Okhukhala eb’bele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Okhunia om’mulo/induli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Okhura amatsi munwa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: ELICITATION TOOL 2

(ADMINISTERED TO 210 LITERATE AND ORALLY TO 30 NON-LITERATE PARTICIPANTS)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study.

As a speaker of Olunyole, fill the gap in each idiomatic expression.

For the one you are not sure of or you do not know kindly leave it unfilled.

Also, feel free to provide any other expression you know.

1. Omundu oribulanga amang’ana na rapare abetsaa wa kwa ________________.

2. Omundu wibiliye okhuboola amakhuwa abetsaa umil’le ________________.

3. Omukhasi okhubelekha abetsaa utiile ________________.

4. Okhuba halala nende omukhasi/omusacha ofiliywe omusacha nohomba omukhasi no okhukhalaka ________________

5. Omulwaye okobelanga abetsa akhupaanga ________________.
6. Omulwaye oranyala okuhona abetsanga asundaanga 
____________.

7. Omundu omwimani abolwanga mbu yachuna______________.

8. Omundu omuhani abetsanga mbu ali nende amakhono ____________

9. Okhuhotselesia nende okuhkhonya yabo abafiliywe no okhuboha 
_______.

10. Okhuhambachila esichu nochelebele obetsanga otiilanga khu 
__________.

11. Omundu okhubula okuhula amalako abetsanga 
umeele______________.

12. Okhurekelwanga __________ obetsanga utiilwe mubutoro.

13. Okhwefila mubuchune obetsanga ulumile ____________.

14. Omundu wo okhweinjisia mubusolo bwo obulembani abetsanga ali nende 
omunwa ________.

15. Okhunyoola esiindu sio okhurumikhila ma wambakhane obetsanga wehele 
omunwa ________.

16. Okhukabusia _____________ no okhukalukha hanyuma khu amakhuwa 
amabi ko omundu aba niyaloloma.
17. Okhukona __________ no okhubula okhunyola tsindolo khulwa okhuchunwana nohomba okhuba nende omulwaye.

18. Okhukwa ______________ ko omundu no okhusaba obubeeli.

19. Okhuba nende isiendekha khu malayi ko omundu undi no okhukhalikha ____________.

20. Omwemeli orukanga abaandu mubwoona (kalaha) abetsanga yayilanga ________.

21. Omulwaye omusacha onyala okhuakana nende owesikhasi abetsanga anywechanga kho _____

22. Omundu omwibi abetsanga ali nende omukhono ________________.

23. Omusacha esichili oranyala okhwbula abetsanga wakwa nende ____________________.

24. Okhwononia ha olilanga nohumba onyoola obuhonyi kabetsanga unieye ____________.

25. Okhukoona omundu________________ no okhukhalisia obwo okhumu salisia.

26. Okhurunilisia amakhuwa amatiti munjila yo okhukoyania no okhweteta ____________.

27. Okhuhenga omundu __________________ no okhumuhesiakho esindu sio okhurumikhila.
28. Omundu otsiakianga esindu ma siekholekha obulayi abetsanga ali nende omukoongo _________.

29. Inda okhukwa ______________ kabetsanga omundu ali nende itsala nohonba obutinyu mubulamu.

30. Omunwa ____________ no okhukhola likhuwa nohomba esindu okhwekhola mubwangu ma saa kasili okhwesuunda.
APPENDIX C₁: QUESTIONNAIRES- CONFIRMATION TOOLS

(30 Native Speakers)

Dear Participant

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study.

The present questionnaire is concerned with the so called idiomatic centres/utterances in Olunyole.

Kindly for each idiom indicate:

1. Whether or NOT you have heard the idiomatic expression (Columns 3 and 4).
2. Whether or NOT you have actually used the idiomatic expression (Columns 5 and 6).
3. Whether or NOT you agree with meaning(s) or use(s) given for each idiom in column 2,(columns 7 and 8)
4. If you do NOT agree with the meanings, provide the correct/acceptable/alternative meaning(s).
5. Use √ in columns 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, where appropriate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Olunyole idiomatic expression</th>
<th>Idiomatic expression in a functional sentence; meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
<th>I have HEARD</th>
<th>I have NOT HEARD</th>
<th>I have USED</th>
<th>I have NOT USED</th>
<th>Agree with the provided meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
<th>I do NOT AGREE with the provided meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
<th>Correct/acceptable alternative meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Okhukwa muunda</td>
<td>Sentence: <em>Amereeb</em> <em>ka</em> <em>mukuiye muunda</em></td>
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<td>Exams have ‘fallen’/got into his stomach.</td>
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<td>One is afraid/scared of examinations.</td>
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<td>Expresses anxiety, uncertainty, fear or lack of confidence;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scared of competition; afraid that one could be outdone or</td>
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<td>outshone by another person. Of food: to eat food that causes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>stomach upsets or diarrhoea</td>
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<td>2. Okhukona khumaika</td>
<td><em>Nyina akoone khumaika</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘to sleep onto cooking stones’</td>
<td>The mother did not sleep comfortably:- To have trouble at night</td>
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<td>as a result of</td>
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</table>
|   | especially sickness; Not to sleep because of a problem, especially sickness.  

**Okhukoona omundu khumaika**

‘To sleep onto cooking stones for someone else. To scheme/plot to cause evil to someone else; not to rest until someone else suffers.

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</table>
| 3. **Okhueya omunwa hasi** ‘wipe one’s mouth down/on the ground like a hen’  

**Ni yeye omunwa hasi**

‘He ate and wiped his mouth down/on the ground.

To deny that one has received a favour e.g. food so that one gets more,  

Reprimands people who are not contented.

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</table>
| 4. **Okhueteta tsinyende (mubwoba)** To poke jiggers  

**Leikha okhweteta Tsinyende mubwoba**

Do not poke
<table>
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<tr>
<th>(from the mushroom)</th>
<th>jiggers form the mushroom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To try to focus on trivial issues instead of the most important or significant ones.</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Okhumila amare ‘to swallow saliva’</th>
<th>Ndali khuboole ma ni mila amare.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I was to tell you but I swallowed saliva.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>To forget to pass a message after engaging in a prolonged conversation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salivate; have the urge or lust for something’</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Okhutiila amatsai ‘to catch blood’</th>
<th>Omukhasi uwe yatiile matsa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>His wife caught blood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of a woman; to conceive</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>7. Okhusiimba esiekenyi ‘to cover someone else’s nakedness</th>
<th>Olwo omwane uwe yafiye khwa musimbile esiekenyi</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When his child died, we covered his nakedness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To assist</td>
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</table>
someone else so that one’s lack of essentials at the time of a problem i.e. funeral, is not exposed to the public.

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<tr>
<th>8. Okhuchuna ofiye</th>
<th>Omusaacha ulia ya chuna ofiye.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘to pinch a corpse’</td>
<td>That man pinched a corpse/the dead.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selfish; Extremely mean.</td>
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<tr>
<th>9. Okhunia khulutaabo</th>
<th>Unieye khulutaabo; nanyakhane po</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘to defecate on the eating bowl’</td>
<td>‘He has defecated on the bowl; he will suffer.’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To annoy or provoke the person who supports one’s survival.</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>10. Amakhono amasiro</th>
<th>Ali nende amakhono amasiro.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘heavy hands’</td>
<td>‘He has heavy hands’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generous in character;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. *Omukhono omuraambi*  
A long hand

A person who gives others a lot of or sufficient material possessions.

11. *Omwana uliano owo omukhano omuraambi*  
‘That child has an elongated stretched hard,’

Of character; a chief.

12. *Okhulia imondo nda*  
‘to share a gizzard’

*Bafwaana baliia imondo ndala*  
Of related men-they seem to have shared a gizzard; relationship that exhibits hatred.

13. *Okhukwa munwa*  
‘Mouthy’

*Omwana uyu wa kwa munwa.*  
‘That child is mouthy; he falls into the mouth’

Of character; loose-tongue; not to weigh one’s utterances.

‘to hit the

*Omusacha ulia 'Akhupanga omukhono.'*
| hand on the ground’ | That man is hitting the hand (on the ground).  
|                    | On the verge of death; the last stage of terminal illness. |
| 15. *Okhuwa amatsi m’moni*. ‘waterless eyes’ | *Onukhana ulawawa amatsi m’moni.*  
|                    | ‘That girl has waterless eyes.’  
|                    | Of a child or woman; fearless and impressively confident. |
Dear Participant

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study.

The present questionnaire is concerned with the so called idiomatic centres/utterances in Olunyole.

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<th>I have NOT USED</th>
<th>I AGREE with the provided meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
<th>I do NOT AGREE with the provided meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
<th>Correct/ acceptable alternative meaning(s) and use(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omukoongo omutoro</td>
<td>Mbetsanga nende omukoongo omutoro</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘soft back’</td>
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<td>I usually have a soft back, To be the first one to start a successful venture e.g. funds raining</td>
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<td>Okhukhalikha omukongo.</td>
<td>Ya khali khile omukongo.</td>
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<td>‘have a snapped back’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>He developed a snapped back, To be jealous at the success of someone else.</td>
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<td>Okuhambia lisaafu.</td>
<td>Leka okhuchekha chekha; no ha mbibwe lisaafu</td>
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<td>‘to give a leaf to a young person’</td>
<td>‘Stop laughing with reason; you will be given a leaf by an elderly people; to give a leaf to a young person to wipe off the cause of laughter; considered a curse’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Okhusuunda omukhono.</td>
<td>A maale asundekho omukhono ma nisangala</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘stretch a hand’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>He finally stretched the hand and that made me happy. To provide increased supplies of something. To give more of something.</td>
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A request to be generous; consider adding provisions.

*Okhwe yakila es’sokoro.*
To scratch oneself with a dry maize cob

*Yalienge obulayi ndelo ye yakilanga es’ sokoro.*
‘He has been living well. These days he stretches himself with a dry maize cob.’

Leading a miserable regretful life after a period of windfall or good life.

*Okhusinga nekatukhile*
‘To harvest rain water after it has subsided’

*Osingile nekatukhile Amang ondo kaweye.*
To try to get something late. To try to do something after its benefits are finished or reduced.

7. *Okhuluma musikalo*
‘To bite into one’s palm’

*Akabusie eminwa omwana uwe yebule*
Let him return mouths so that his daughter gives birth To recant a curse so that misfortune is forestalled/ended

*Likosi liomu*
‘a stiff neck’

*Siha huula ta. Ali nende likosi esiomu.*
He does not heed; He has a stiff neck. Rigid; unheeding; one
who takes a hard position on an issue, usually arrogant.

Okhurekela olukhoola.
'to trap using a thin banana string'

Nakhurekele olukhoola.
I will trap you easily
To catch one when least expected:
warning that one could be caught very easily

11. Esindu/ling'ana lie imoni 'something or a word with an eye'

Mbekho esindu sie imoni.
Give me, something with an eye
A request to give someone something sufficient (visibly sufficient).
Raise an issue with significant benefit rather than a trivial matter e.g. mboola ling’ana lie imoni
Tell me something important/significant

12. Omukhono omwangu
‘light hand’

Omwana ula ali nende omukhono omwangu.
‘That child has a light hand. Easily provoked to fight; quick to engage in physical fights

13. Okhutil’la akwanyeela
To catch one at the narrowest point

Wamenya nakhoola
Ndele atililwe okwanyeela
He has done it repeatedly:
Today he was caught at the narrowest point.
To be caught re-
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<td>14. <strong>Okhulinda olulimi</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘to guard the tongue’</td>
<td><strong>Stalindanga ol’limi tawe</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘He does not guard his tongue.’</td>
<td>To divulge secrets or confidential information.</td>
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<td>15. <strong>Okhunywa obusela</strong>&lt;br&gt;To drink porridge</td>
<td><strong>Nanywetsaakho obusela nahone.</strong>&lt;br&gt;If he is drinking some porridge, he will get well.’&lt;br&gt;Of a male patient, engaging in a sexual act; Shows he is on the path of recovery.</td>
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### APPENDIX C3: THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

*(Guided the FDG and face-to-face interviews)*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Guide questions and cues (X is the idiom)</th>
<th>Target information from interviewees’ Responses</th>
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</table>
| Do the Abanyole talk of (x)?  
Have you heard of (x)? | Affirmative  
The existence of (x) as an idiom.  
The recognition of the idiom (x) by the interviewee.  
Negative: Denial  
Reformulation of the idiom – say – (the corrected form).  
Confirmation of the structure (composition of the idiom). |
| Build up of (x) as an idiom using its constituents  
What kind of person is said to have ‘Omukhono omusiro’?  
Hand heavy  
When do the Abanyole say (x)?  
Why do Abanyole use the expression/word (y) in the idiom X? | The personality behaviour or character of the referent e.g. one who is GENEROUS  
Context (Social circumstances) of usage.  
Relevance of the expressions to the practices, values and belief system of the speakers.  
Etymological information |
| What kind of person/who would undertake the activity or action denoted in the idiom (X)? e.g. Okhukalusia eminwa?  
How is the activity in (X) carried out  
For what purpose/reason do the Abanyole carry out the practice denoted in the idiom?  
Why do the Abanyole generally say (X)?  
Do you agree that X? (content of the idiom)  
What is your feeling about X (the concepts covered in the idiom (X))? | Identity of the participants in cultural activity represented in the idiom  
Social relationships  
Social roles and influence  
Details on the process  
Mode and means  
Resources/material  
Social significance of the idiom (X)  
Cultural domains  
Values, norms and belief system of the interviewees.  
Social Acts in context.  
Transactional and interactional |
functions.

Subjective/personal thinking in relation to the social content of the idiom.

Attitude and emotions of the speakers in regard to idiom (X)?
APPENDIX D: PHOTOGRAPHS RELATED TO RESEARCH

The members of the Olunyole Speech community at the local Luanda market
The Rocky landscape of the area of research

The Ebuhand Hills of the Bunyole area
Preserved Abanyole Artefacts: *Liseelo* (Cow’s hide)

The Abanyole use the idiom *okhuminya khwiseelo* ‘to remain ill for a long time’
Abanyole Artefact: *Olwika* (the horn). The horn was used for traditional communication. The Abanyole talk of *okhukhupa olwika* to blow the horn to mean ‘to send out a distress call.’ It is also blown at the funeral of respectable Abanyole.
The Researcher working from the African house, Stone Mountain Resort, where the Abanyole Artefacts have been preserved. Some of the traditional objects are visible in the background.