

Influence of Cultural Contexts on the Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions by the Basamia of Busia County, Kenya

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Abstract: *This study analyses how cultural contexts influence meanings of idiomatic expressions (IEs) in Lusamia, a language spoken by the Basamia of Busia County, Kenya. Language and culture have an inseparable connection, particularly in how the meanings of IEs of Basamia are influenced by cultural contexts. An idiom is a sentence, phrase, or word whose meaning cannot be accurately conveyed by translating each of its constituent elements. The constituents in the composition of an idiom are greatly influenced by cultural settings, which are a reflection of the group's values, experiences, beliefs, and social standards. The study is grounded in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Kovecses (2015). The locale of study was Nambuku location of Busia county. The research design was descriptive. The target population were the Lusamia indigenous speakers and Lusamia idiomatic expressions. The sample of study was 10 Lusamia speakers and 23 Lusamia idiomatic expressions. Data collection tools were 2 interview guides, writing material and a tape recorder. The research data was transcribed, translated, coded and analysed in line with the tenets of the theory that guided the study. The study will support language and oral literature learning besides serving as a source of reference in upcoming researchers' work.*

Keywords: Language, culture, idiomatic expressions, cultural contexts, metaphor

INTRODUCTION

The research aimed to examine the uniqueness and peculiarity of the Basamia Speech Community's (BSC) idiomatic expressions (IEs) and how they function or influence people's lives in different cultural contexts. This study explores the intricacies of Basamia idiomatic expressions (IEs) and analyses the cultural contexts they reflect, such as marriage, economic activities: agriculture and animal husbandry, seasonal changes, rituals, and various taboos. The marriage ceremonies, for instance, in many African cultures were held in the highest regard and often inspired the creation of idiomatic expressions, shaped by the prevailing mood in the negotiations, whether marked by tension between the two parties or by harmony. This aligns with Ngugi and Ong'onda's (2020) study findings among the Gikuyu community. The cultural contexts in Basamia IEs are generally characterised by intention, mood, emotions, and humour.

Idiomatic expressions form an integral part of every language's vocabulary and are deeply rooted in its history, culture, and heritage, a conclusion made by several researchers in their studies such as Fernando (1996) and Kövecses (2002). According to Stankova and Vulchanov (2011), mastery of idiomatic expressions in any language is a key indicator of fluency and native-like proficiency. Among the Basamia, idiomatic expressions as elements of language are influenced by the community's historical background and cultural contexts to serve specific communicative functions. They are considered unique to their language and culture. Like in many other communities, the Basamia use idiomatic language to reinforce communal values, educate, admonish, warn, and socialize. As Boers, Eyckmans, and Demecheleer (2004) note, mastery of idioms reflects not only communicative competence but also intercultural awareness.

Cultural contexts serve as the lens through which idiomatic expressions are created, understood, and transmitted. Idiomatic expressions (IEs) are more than mere linguistic constructs; they function as cultural instruments that reflect the values, social realities, and worldviews of a community. Olali (2014) emphasizes the importance of cultural contexts by noting that the meanings of idiomatic expressions cannot be anticipated; thus, context is crucial for their comprehension. The Basamia speech community (BSC) places a high value on incorporating humour and proverbs into their discourse, referring to these as '*engacho*,' or '*obunyikusi*,' and '*engaado*,' while maintaining a register that is appropriate for their group. Elders may securely share secrets in the presence of children by using a register that is unique to them, mostly the euphemisms, indicating that they value politeness in speech.

Yan (2017), in the study of the cultural connotation of English idioms, established that English idioms are formed in a particular historical period and passed from generation to generation, embedded with unique cultural connotations such as historical development, natural environments, religious beliefs, customs & habits, among others. He analysed how the English language's historical background has influenced the use and meaning of idiomatic expressions. This information backs the study's investigation and findings on how the historical roots of Lusamia idioms, historical events, economic activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry, or rituals contributed to the creation and transmission of idioms in Basamia culture.

Ayers (2015) offers valuable insights into how idiomatic expressions reflect the interplay between language, culture, and universal human experiences. By exploring the dual nature of idioms, being both universal and culturally specific, her study provides a useful framework for understanding Lusamia idiomatic expressions. Specifically, it sheds light on how these idioms are shaped by cultural contexts while also reflecting broader human experiences. Ayers' work highlights the crucial role that context plays in the creation and interpretation of idioms among the Basamia. It emphasizes that idiomatic meaning is often rooted in shared cultural practices and environmental experiences. This perspective aligns with Kövecses' (2015) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which allows for effective mapping from the source domain, usually the familiar environment, to the target domain in idiomatic expressions, which is the targeted meaning of the idiom, a tenet that guides in understanding the BSC contexts in their metaphoric language.

According to Ngugi and Ong'onda (2020), their study of the role of context in the meaning and interpretation of Gikuyu idioms, reveals that idioms are a reflection of Gikuyu culture. Hence, they are used as a tool of enculturation of the values of Gikuyu society. This serves as a comparative framework for the research on the cultural nuances and contextual influences that shape Lusamia idiomatic expressions. Alati (2015), investigated the relationship between the construction and interpretation of Olunyole idioms, a Bantu language within the Luhya family of Basamia speakers in Western Kenya, in which he concluded that the idioms project the people's cultural beliefs and perpetuate the norms and values. It inevitably reveals that Basamia idioms are fundamentally a reflection of their culture, which the study seeks to establish.

Theoretical Framework

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are the original proponents of the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). These cognitive linguists hold that metaphor is conceptual and not linguistic in nature, that our ordinary conceptual system in the way we think and act is fundamentally metaphoric in nature. Metaphor is an idiomatic category, a process in which people understand, think, and express one thing based on another, and it is conceptual in essence. In everyday life people tend to use concepts that are familiar, structured, and concrete to understand those that are unstructured, complicated, and hard to define. The familiar concept is the source domain, and the unfamiliar, complicated ones are the target domains of CMT.

This definition underpins the understanding of contexts as a factor that influences meaning in the idiomatic expressions. The source domains, usually the familiar cultural contexts among the Basamia speakers, are, for example, marriage, animal husbandry, and rituals/taboo. The target domain is the values, norms, and wisdom sought to be achieved by the expressions. The theoretical perspective of Kovecses (2015) will be more appropriate to this study, based on his additional tenet of contextual influence on the meaning of metaphors.

Kovecses (2015) is a more contemporary proponent of conceptual metaphor theory and categorically addresses the tenets of context and domain mapping in metaphors which appropriately underpins the study's analysis of Basamia idioms and with reference to the cultural contexts that influence their meaning. Metaphors are dynamic and context-dependent according to Kovecses (2015). According to Kovecses (2015), the main contexts to which metaphors are dependent are situational, linguistic, bodily and conceptual cognitive. The context in which a metaphor is used can affect its meaning, and metaphors can shift based on new experiences and cultural changes.

Meaning construction is heavily context dependent, in such a way that even similar utterances may carry different meanings in different contexts. It is, in other words, justifiable that meaning construction is dynamic and a creative process that results from the interaction of the conventional meaning of linguistic symbols and is based on embodied experience and relevant contextual factors. Kovecses (2015) stresses the idealness of context in the interpretation of metaphors by stating different categories of contexts that shape metaphoric meaning. Kovecses (2015), in his advancement of CMT, provides a theoretical framework to understand how idioms are not just linguistic anomalies but are deeply rooted in the conceptual system of the language speakers. Idioms in Lusamia, like in any language, often arise from conceptual metaphors that link abstract ideas to more concrete experiences. For instance, expressions

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development–UK related to wisdom, community values, or emotional states are likely metaphorically structured. The SSC's cultural practices, environment, and social interactions influence the conceptual metaphors underlying their idiomatic expressions.

According to Kovecses (2010), CMT allows for a better understanding of how individual words contribute to the overall metaphorical meaning of idioms, as they are a reflection of the contexts in which the idioms exist or are created. The conceptual metaphor theory offers a robust framework for analysing idiomatic expressions in Lusamia. It helps to uncover the cognitive and cultural underpinnings of idioms, providing deeper insights into their meanings and functions within the BSC. By leveraging CMT, the study can effectively describe, evaluate and determine the significance of contexts in LIEs, contributing to the preservation and understanding of the Samia cultural heritage.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research paradigm, as outlined by Nunan (1992), is pertinent to this study of a speech community's natural life and language contexts. Idiomatic expressions are frequently employed in spontaneous, everyday communication and are deeply rooted in cultural norms and values. The study area was Nambuku Location, in Samia Sub-County. Nambuku is selected for its unadulterated Lusamia due to its lack of or little contact with other languages. Another reason for considering the locale is the natives' rootedness in culture and traditions, such as belief in rainmaking. The locale also still has a substantial number of old people, respondents believed to be custodians of culture, people who were born at a time when cultural values and norms were highly exalted and observed by the natives of any African language community.

The study targeted native speakers of Lusamia and the idiomatic expressions prevalent within the Busamia community. A total of 10 participants, comprising 6 men and 4 women aged between 60 and 75 years, were involved in the research. The selection process employed both purposive and snowball sampling methods. As Patton (1990) notes, snowball sampling is effective in identifying participants who possess deep cultural knowledge and are well-versed in the subject matter, thereby enhancing the richness of the data collected. One participant was intentionally selected based on purposive sampling, while the remaining nine were identified through snowball referrals. The data was collected using unstructured questions for interview in the FGD and in- depth interview guides through one on one interviews with individual participants.

The researcher sampled 23 idiomatic expressions from the total collection of 121 for analysis in relation to their meanings and contexts. Interview guides were employed as an appropriate data collection tool for the focus group discussions, while in-depth interview guides were also prepared to collect data from the two individual participants for more detailed explanation. Note-taking, tape-recording, and taking photos were done to record the raw data and for the validity of the research. The recorded data was transcribed, translated, coded, and analysed in line with the tenets of the theories that guided the study.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Data analysis captures specific aspects of the cultural contexts reflected in the BSC's idiomatic expressions and their influence on the meaning of the identified expressions. The phenomenological analysis of LIE is supported by the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), on which the interpretation of idiomatic expressions is basically about mapping out the target domain, or meaning, out of the revealed contexts which are source domains. The idiomatic expressions are analysed in themes that vary according to contexts, that influence meaning and categories of LIE, which include words, verb phrases, binomials, open clauses, and proverbs. All idiomatic expressions discussed are 23 and coded as LIE¹ up to LIE¹³, then LIE¹⁴–LIE²³ are discussed under the one cultural context of seasons. The information from correspondents is carefully recorded, ensuring a distinction between English, Lusamia, Kiswahili, and other languages; English is written in normal writing, Lusamia is italicised, Kiswahili is bolded, and other languages are both italicised and bolded. The participants in this study are designated as PTD¹ and PTD² for the in-depth interviews, while focus group discussions are labelled PTFG¹, PTFG², and continuing up to PTFG⁸.

Contexts and Meaning of Lusamia Idiomatic Expressions

The topic focuses on different Basamia cultural contexts, which include rituals and ceremonies, traditional beliefs such as taboos, oral tradition, and economic factors: *oburimi nende obwayi* (agriculture and animal husbandry). The concept of contexts in the understanding of idiomatic expressions makes clear the definition of idiomatic expressions of Baldwin and Kim (2010), that they are figures of speech understandable in conversation only by native speakers who are conversant with the language. Participant PTFG8 illustrated this with an example of the word;

LIE¹: *Olubango*

Translation: sons

The word signifies how peculiarity of some Basamia cultural contexts are defined in the language expressions, for instance, explaining further;

One could just say, *oyo abulaho olubango*,
which means that one doesn't have a son(s).
It required a deep understanding of Basamia
Language and culture to comprehend.

It is a metaphor for the fact that having no males in the family was a social disgrace. Very few speakers nowadays will get that *olubango* signifies sons or boys in the family. There are a few examples of such word phrases

Kovecses (2015) argues that context is essential for understanding metaphorical meaning. This view aligns with Chenenje et al. (2023), who conclude that interpreting Oluluhya idioms is challenging without context, even when cognitive approaches are employed. They emphasise that the speaker's intention takes precedence over the meaning within the conceptual structure of the idiom. The intended meaning of the speaker is shaped by various contexts, including tone variation, as well as other distinct cultural contexts explored in the study.

Contextual Shifts in Meaning cultural contexts

The ironic use of LIEs was evidenced from the participants' discussion and interviews; the Basamia are sometimes sarcastic in their use of idioms depending on the context in which the IE is applied. Ironies are revealed from the speakers' tone, and they are intended to give depth and humour in the use of language. Among the Basamia speakers, particular attention is given to the speaker's tone during conversation, as it significantly influences the interpretation of meaning in the expression. This demonstrates how context and speaker intention can shift idiomatic meaning, a phenomenon consistent with Kovecses' (2015) CMT. The participants cited two examples of idioms that reflect sarcasm and irony within LIEs, influencing meaning shift.

LIE²: *Obukofu nengabo*

Translation: Old is gold

And

LIE³: *Efulu yakeraka engeke*

Translation: A small fish called 'efulu' advised the a big one – tilapia which they call engeke.

Obukofu nengabo typically praises the wisdom of age, which is mapped from the familiar *engabo*, in English a 'shield,' a very reliable weapon and symbol of power among the Basamia. *Engabo* depicts cultural contextual connotation of Basamia, which is highly regarded compared to the gold as used in the English idiom. However, the in-depth interview with participant PTD¹ revealed that it could also be used ironically;

when an older person behaves contrary to societal expectations, the idiom's positive connotation shifts to sarcasm.

Another proverb, '*efulu yakeraka engeke*'

(a small fish advised the big one),

could be invoked to highlight that

wisdom does not always accompany age.

Cultural context of age and wisdom are clearly outlined in these figures of speech, so to say concietizing the community to strive against the emabarssment of lacking wisdom in the company of the youth expressed in the sarcasim of '*efulu yakeraka engeke*' - a small fish advising the big one. The contextual shift may be rendered interrogatively as in: '*Efulu yakerakaho engeke?*' which means, Has a small fish ever advised a big one? This rhetorical question could be used to dismiss or resist advice from a younger person to an elder, implying that such an attempt is futile or inappropriate.

Social-cultural Contexts

From the discussion with participants, Basamia idiomatic Expressions reveal that they are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural framework of the Basamia community. These expressions are not arbitrary; rather, they are intrinsically tied to key social domains such as marriage, economic activities, and communal values. They serve to convey moral, social, and relational meanings rooted in the community's way of life. This aligns with Yan's (2017) study stating that socio - cultural contexts significantly shape and influence language use. The study focuses on marriage as an example of the Basamia's Social context of life.

The Context of Marriage

Marriage among the SSC is a communal institution rich with rituals and symbolic expressions. Idiomatic expressions serve roles such as educating the young, preserving values, resolving conflicts, and celebrating milestones. According to Ngugi and Ong'onda (2020), Ayers (2015), and Chenenje et. al. (2023), IEs are crucial in transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next. Idiomatic expressions are noted as elements that can socialise individuals into communal life, and the aesthetic value in some can help break tension during marriage negotiations as noted in Ngugi and Ong'onda's (2020) study. When negotiations began having tension the groom's spokesman would use a proverb such as;

LIE⁴: *Eifumbuhe siyitia olume*

Translation: An animal that has emerged out of the bush to hunt is not afraid of the morning dew. This proverb carries a powerful message of courage and determination, laced with subtle humor. Among the Basamia, as in many African communities, marriage negotiations are often rigorous and emotionally charged. The bride's family deliberately intensifies the process to test the groom's seriousness and resilience. A man who lacks genuine intent may easily give up under pressure. In some cases, the negotiations may even involve playful insults or teasing to provoke emotional responses. This proverb metaphorically encourages perseverance, just like the hunter braves the morning dew, a determined groom must endure every challenge to earn his bride.

Ayer (2015), in her study, states the use of binomials such as 'milk and water'; 'honey and milk' to symbolise union and transformation is inevitable in marriage. Two prominent *binomial idioms* emerged among the Basamia during data collection:

LIE⁵: *Olukina nende esio*

Translation: Big and small grinding stones

LIE⁶: *esikwada nende engeso*

Translation: A sickle and A guard.

The participants elaborated on the cultural connotation of the two binomials. *Olukina nende esio* which means the big and Small grinding stones was efficiently explained by participant PTD¹ saying:

This idiom was applied in the marriage negotiations of a young woman who had given birth at home and was courting a different man for marriage. The phrase signifies inseparability and mutual dependence of mother and child. Literally referring to two grinding stones that work together to process flour, the idiom metaphorically implies that the mother and her child are a unit that should not be separated. The Basamia believed that this child from outside carried along with many blessings.

The community uses this idiom to justify accepting a woman with a child into marriage to symbolise unity and shared destiny. This reflects the Basamia cultural values of inclusivity and communal responsibility mapped from the familiar contexts of grinding stones. The context of married is the historical meaning of the idiom although it can shift to different contexts depending on the intention of the speaker. In the modern world these symbols could reflect any other inseparable units that function together, such as a pen and a book for a student, fish and water, a hammer and nail, needle and thread among others.

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 LIE⁶, *esikwada nende engeso*, a sickle and a guard, are symbols of productivity and partnership in marriage especially between the groom and bride's families. Participant PTD¹ added that, *There application was observed during a marriage ritual where the bride's maternal aunts performed a ceremonial dance at the groom's home. The customary dance was accompanied with slaughtering of a goat which they called, embusi yolume meaning a goat of morning dew, a ritual symbolizing gratitude for the challenges endured in raising the children.* Chenyenje et al. (2023) highlighted what concurs with the participants information in the discussions, that, idiomatic expressions in Oluluhya which includes Lusamia are best interpreted through cultural events like marriage, where the social and emotional undertones give meaning to figurative language.

The idiom represents the tools used during harvest, metaphorically expressing the value of joint labour and the fruitfulness expected in marriage. It reinforces the importance of cooperation, endurance, and the celebration of shared success. Through this ritual and the use of the binomial symbol, both families were encouraged to foster a constructive relationship and to celebrate the union as a foundation for communal growth and harmony.

There are also proverbs within the context of marriage reflecting the cultural influence on the meaning of LIEs according to PTD², such as;

LIE⁷: *Eswa chiakadirisa omweya*

Translation: White ants deceived the bride.

The name *omweya* came from the cultural practice of Basamia community called *obweya*, a ritual whereby the bride was kept inside the house of the bridegroom and was not supposed to come unless permitted and for a good reason. White ants on the other hand are nutritious and liked by Basamia and on appearance, could tempt the bride to come out of the house to pick them and eat.

The context of marriage helps in mapping out the domains in this proverb. *Omweya* is the source domain, meaning the bride who was respected and so much taken care, and had to prove good behaviour beyond doubt to her in-laws. The target domain is the deception caused by white ants- anything that can steal our focus from the targets in life. Marriage context is used to express how deception come our way sometimes and how careful one ought to be. PTD² explained the value of idiomatic expressions as vested in cultural contexts saying; *deception was justified, because it was least expected of the bride to leave the house for white ants.*

LIE⁸, *Amani komweya kari mumwanangina,*

Translation: The strength of the bride is in her sister.

LIE⁸ as well, according to PTD² reflects how much focus was put on the bride among the Basamia. It portrays the care and attention that was given to the bride. He said. *this proverb evidences that marriage is not just a union between two individuals but a union between families and clans.* The targeted meaning is symbolised by 'sister' to express the support, guidance, and reassurance needed in marriage and in life generally, that is, the need for others in life pursuits. Ngugi & Ong'onda, (2020) have noted in this similar view that, idioms in marriage contexts reflect social structures and roles, with meaning often derived from symbolic associations unique to that culture. Kövecses, (2015, p. 102) in his theoretical framework backs up the the concept of marriage as a major cultural context in the

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 understanding LIE, that, idiomatic meanings are not fixed but are activated by the context in which they occur, especially in rituals like marriage where shared cultural experience guide the understanding of the metaphor.

Agriculture and Animal Keeping

The study found that a significant number of Lusamia idiomatic expressions are grounded in agriculture and pastoralism, reflecting the lived experiences of cultural values reflected in the fruits of hard work. These idioms are drawn from familiar domains such as animal husbandry and food production and are used metaphorically to convey social values, moral teachings, and practical wisdom. This concept is supported by the findings of Ngugi and Ong'onda (2020), that idiomatic expressions depict the socio-economic activities of the community, such as farming, and influence their creation and meaning to encode moral and pragmatic messages. Participants discussed idiomatic expressions depicting farming as a serious cultural context familiar to the natives in all its possible domains.

LIE⁹: *Embako siyibachanga omurimi*

Translation: a hoe does not deceive a farmer.

The hoe (*embako*), a central symbol in an agrarian community, stands not just as a farming implement but as a metaphor for diligence, trustworthiness, and consistent productivity. It reflects a deep cultural appreciation for farming as a source of livelihood and as a moral compass that encourages self-reliance and perseverance. The idiom may also serve as a didactic tool, reminding members of the community particularly the youth, of the virtue of industriousness over idleness. Mbiti, (1990) explores how objects and tools in African societies carry symbolic and ethical significance, especially in agrarian contexts, the study findings that supports the Basamia point of view agriculture and farm tools. PTFG¹ stressed on this point of discussion saying; *a hoe defined a newly married woman as either lazy or hardworking. Even the way one held the handle was enough to give impression*

LIE¹⁰: *Esirimubuyu sisimanyiha obukondo*

Translates: What is in the eggshell, the colour is not known.

LIE¹⁰, was added by participant PTFG³ in an opinion that it conveys a message of hope and uncertainty about future outcomes, drawing parallels with sowing and trusting for a harvest. The eggshell represents a protective but opaque barrier between the present and the future. One can see that something is inside the shell or rather that there is life or potential, but one cannot tell what it will eventually look like. case. The idiom reflects the limits of human foresight, especially in matters where outcomes depend on time, effort, and chance.

LIE¹¹: *Mama samaba esiaki*

Translation: Mother set the granary ablaze

It is an open clause category, a humorous expression used to express contentment with food, that one has eaten enough. The Basamia are very humorous and delight in jokes; instead of saying "thank you" after a meal, one would say, "Mama *samba esiaki*." A granary is a source domain, a symbol of food plentitude, used to express the joy of having plenty. The creation of the expression was influenced by a good farm outcome or harvest. The proverb expresses the Basamia historical background of hard work vested in crop farming and harvest.

Rituals and Ceremonies

These data analysis illustrates how cultural practices, once embedded in ritualistic idioms, may lose their resonance in modern contexts. This reinforces the updated CMT perspective of

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 Kovecses (2015) that cultural and cognitive changes directly influence metaphor and idiom usage over time. Despite the attributed value to the use of idiomatic expressions, participants acknowledge the fact that some are no longer impactful to the society but still form a community's history. The study discusses three word expressions that are unique and peculiar to Basamia cultural contexts however not so applicable today; "*Slowly but surely, these proverbs are vanishing.*"

LIE¹²: *Ohukwera*

Translation: Marking the end of the mourning period for the dead.

Traditionally, this involved symbolic performances such as beating close family members of the deceased, communal bathing in the river, and shaving hair. These actions symbolized the transition to a new life for both the deceased and the living. Today, however, with the influence of Christianity, such practices are largely abandoned, and the concept of transition is now framed as divine, with greater emphasis placed on prayer and Christian rituals.

LIE¹³: *Ohweya olullala*

Translation: Sweeping the bride's house at the end of the honeymoon

This idiom stems from a practice in which a young girl would stay with her elder sister during the honeymoon period. The performance, now considered outdated, often exposed young girls to early marriages. Its abandonment reflects broader social changes regarding gender roles and child protection.

Seasons

Seasonal changes have influenced language in several meaningful ways across cultures and time in different studies, as in Evans (2004), Hymes (1974), Labov (1972), and Kovecses (2000). Hymes (1974) elaborates on how seasonal rituals and events influence speech acts and genres in indigenous languages. The Basamia designated names for the months of the year based on various seasonal contexts. The names were unique to the Basamia culture and were well-known among many elders. They assisted the elders in recalling the activities associated with each season. The activities involved burning bushes to clear the land for ploughing, preparing the seed for planting, and storing food in the granaries well for use until the next harvest. The names were recalled by PTD¹, recalling the names of the months coded LIE¹⁴, January called *Duienge* up to LIE²³ October called- *Maungu*,

Months of the Year (LIE¹⁴ – LIE²³)

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Lusamia	English	Interpretation
<i>Dulienge</i>	January	Originates from the singing of birds, during the windy and dry season.
<i>Efweko</i>	February	Believed to be the voice of the girl who was betrayed by her own people, that she ate on the way food give to carry to her marital home. 'efwe' means where I come from. 'Efweko' is the cry, equivalent to saying, Oh my people! It happened at the end of the strong wind but the capping of one common bird- 'efweko'
<i>Mwerasi</i>	March	These comes from the word <i>omwera</i> which means seeds, asi which means down or the ground. <i>Mwerasi</i> means seeds in the in the ground. All grains are planted.
<i>Ofwombole</i>	April	The rains are falling and all rivers are full, <i>ofwombole</i> is the out powering of rivers.
<i>Anjala</i>	May	<i>Njala</i> means hunger. The fifth month is was known for hunger,
<i>Unondaye</i>	June	<i>Unondaye</i> means- 'To where are you following me? That children were fond of following their mothers everywhere and some mothers didn't like to be followed they went to the farms of others to pick ripe farm produce.
<i>Mfunu</i>	July	Harvest
<i>Munyala</i>	August	Everyone is able, because of the harvest
<i>Fulula</i>	September	The act of children searching for left over grains in the farms.
<i>Maungu</i>	October	Plenty of the type of birds called <i>amaungu</i> .
	Novemver	
	December	

The particints could not remember seasonal names for November and December

FINDINGS

The findings affirm that the interpretation of LIEs depends on a speaker's cognitive ability to map linguistic forms to culturally relevant meanings, supported CMT theoretical frameworks. The study reveals that LIEs are not only linguistically diverse but also culturally embedded, with both global parallels and distinctive local flavours that shape identity and social meaning within the Basamia community. The categorization and thematic representation help in understanding the cognitive and cultural dimensions of idiomatic use among the Basamia people.

Idioms are deeply rooted in Basamia social life, particularly *marriage*, where expressions reflect cultural values and roles. *Olukina nende esio* (Big and small grinding stones) signifies unity between a mother and her child, and *Esikwada nende engeso* (sickle and guard) symbolises joint productivity and marital partnership.

Some LIEs in their different categories are complex and may need prior knowledge to be able to relate the meaning with the fixed expression. This prior knowledge was gained through

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learning that took place in different settings, as expressed by the participant PTFG⁴ *We could not know these expressions without being taught, although others needed only the knowledge of language.*

CONCLUSION

Lusamia idiomatic expressions are rich cultural and linguistic artefacts, shaped by metaphor, context, and social values. Their survival depends on continued relevance, active use, and deliberate transmission to future generations. The study provides a nuanced understanding of how idioms function cognitively, pragmatically, and culturally within the Basamia community. Cultural context is essential in interpreting Lusamia idioms, which are not standalone linguistic units but cultural signifiers. Their meaning shifts with tone, situation, and intention, as seen in marriage, economy, rituals, and oral tradition. Understanding LIEs requires a culturally sensitive and context-aware approach. The study affirms the value of documenting these expressions to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage amidst modern pressure.

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