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### Euphemising Strategies Underlying Sex Euphemisms Used in Selected Radio Talk Shows in Kenya

Job Ngoge Amwoma<sup>1\*</sup> & Dr. Emily Atieno Ogutu, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenyatta University, P. O. Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.

\* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0952-2211>; Email: [amwomangoge@gmail.com](mailto:amwomangoge@gmail.com)

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Language is essentially a tool for communication, a means through which we pass information and express our attitudes, emotions, and worldviews. We argue in this paper that as an integral part of human social interaction, there is more to the communicability of language. We do not just communicate but do so in the 'right' way; this paper explores sex euphemisms as an effective tool for enhancing interpersonal communication in love and relationship radio talk shows. Radio talk shows form a common meeting point for people from different backgrounds and realities. It is our interest to study how these interlocutors manoeuvre the taboo topic of sex on Classic 105's Maina and King'angi in the Morning Show. Using the cooperative principle and Warren's euphemisms interpretive maxim, we extracted our data using the reading and note-taking technique. The paper adopted the descriptive research design, and the results showed that sex euphemism is an effective discursive strategy for discussing the taboo topic of sex. Further, the analysis revealed that Warren's model of euphemism formation processes accounts for most of the euphemizing strategies deployed by interlocutors in the show, except for instances where participants borrow grammatical features from more than one language to form euphemisms. The model did not also account for euphemisms formed through the reduplication processes. Our data also showed that participants in the selected shows did not use blends and acronyms.

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## INTRODUCTION

This research explored the euphemism phenomenon with a narrow focus on sex euphemisms and their use as taboo/offence avoidance behaviour in talk radio. We aim to describe the underlying euphemising strategies used in creating sex euphemisms in the *Maina and King'ang'i in the morning* show on Classic 105 FM. We proceed with the assumption that the euphemism as a form of communication is determined by choice. As such, participants in the *Maina and King'ang'i in the morning* show employ a variety of euphemising strategies to avoid directly mentioning sex taboos and dispreferred or offensive expressions.

The subjects of sex, love, and relationships are particularly highly emotive and socially constrained. In most traditional African settings, these subjects were considered taboo and characteristically reserved for private discussions or talks (Ndlovu & Hove, 2015). The topics and the language used therein could only surface into mainstream speech on special social occasions, which were typically self-restricting. Mano (2004) suggests that the situation in modern Africa has changed. The traditional African structures where X-rated language was possible are fading away under the overbearing weight of modernity, globalization, and urbanization. The new media has taken its place and has become the most practical space for sex, reproduction, and relationship-related talk. Nowhere is this evident other than in talk radio, the latest media craze (Omollo et al., 2015), which has redefined media communication as a perfect channel for public engagement in Kenya. In particular, radio talk shows form a common meeting ground for individuals from diverse backgrounds (age, religion, region, and occupation). Considering these background realities, the current study sought to investigate how the participants manoeuvre the taboo subject of sex euphemisms in radio talk shows. We seek to answer the questions what sex euphemisms are in use in the *Maina and King'ang'i in the morning* show? And what euphemising strategies underlie the

identified sex euphemisms in the *Maina and King'ang'i in the morning* show.

The study preceded with the view that using taboo or direct expressions in public discussions or talks are face-threatening acts likely to elicit embarrassment and disapproval and subsequently cause a communication breakdown. Euphemisms become a critical tool for softening the hard edges of meaning in these expressions, allowing conversations to flow seamlessly.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Euphemisms are expressions commonly used to avoid words considered taboo or offensive. They are used instead of unpleasant, hateful, or sad words and phrases; as Maoncha (2017) notes, euphemisms serve as a veil. Speakers normally substitute taboo expressions with more pleasant and less shocking ones according to necessity. As such, a euphemism can consist of substituting “the original signifier, perceived as being offensive or unpleasant, by another expression... as if to conceal it” (Jamet, 2012, p.3).

Linfoot-Ham (2005) describes euphemisms as “powerful linguistic tools embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, ever get through a day without using them” (p. 228). In light of Linfoot-Ham’s description, the use of euphemisms in communication is a common phenomenon deeply entrenched in our language systems. Since euphemisms occur in our regular language use and keep changing, with new forms coming up and older ones becoming obsolete, there is a need to study euphemisms as they come and go.

Research into the various euphemism formation devices indicates that the universal euphemizing strategies can be summarised into five primary devices, namely phonetic, lexical, grammatical, figurative, and pragmatic devices. Huabin (2017) notes that phonetic devices refer to neglecting or changing a word's sound; for example, the ‘mosob’ for bosom is spelt backwards, and the *G-man* for the garbage man (Rawson, 1981). Lexical devices involve the use of vague expressions,

synonymous expressions, and loanwords. Notable in English are loan words from French and Latin, for example, *Lingerie* [underwear] from French and *anus* [asshole] from Latin. Others include grammatical devices that involve grammatical processes such as negation and ellipsis. Figurative devices refer to those that use metonymy, analogy, periphrasis, and more. Pragmatic devices include those that connote indirectness. For example, one can say, 'I can't hear myself in place of a more direct form, for 'Be quiet!' Huabin's study mainly focused on the pragmatic analysis of English Euphemisms. Unlike his research, the current study viewed pragmatics and context as influencing factors in determining euphemisms. We borrowed Huabin's observations regarding Euphemism classification to classify and describe the identified sex euphemisms in their euphemising strategies.

Euphemising devices and processes are also extensively expounded in the works of Allan & Burridge (1988). Allan and Burridge came up with the following strategies: Euphemism and verbal play (which include using figures, metaphors, flippancies, and remodelling). Others include circumlocutions, clippings, abbreviations, omissions, one-for-one substitution, general for specific, part for whole euphemisms, hyperbole and understatements and euphemisms created through borrowing. Describing euphemising strategies employed by participants was one of the focuses of this study. The current study drew insights from Allan and Burridge's classification model in identifying and describing the euphemising strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researchers used Grice's cooperative principle and Warren's theory to identify and interpret sex euphemisms and their formation processes. Gricean conversational maxims include quality, manner, quantity, and relation. The maxim of quality states that you should try to make your contribution to a conversation true. That is, do not say that which you believe is false or which you lack adequate evidence to support. The maxim of relation states, be relevant in

whatever you say in a conversation. While the maxim of manner seeks to answer the question, how is something said? According to the manner maxim, speakers avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity; they are to be orderly and clear. The maxim of quantity has to do with the quantity of information provided. Under this maxim, a contributor in a conversation should make his contribution as informative as required. On that note, one's contribution should fall within the current purpose of the exchange (Grice, 2019), and it should not be more informative than is required. We propose that violating these maxims is not by chance but on purpose. It hints at indirect (euphemistic) language use that serves various linguistic and extralinguistic functions. The researchers searched through the transcribed text for any possible violation of the cooperative principle, which is evidence of the speaker's desire to denote some sensitive phenomenon tactfully. After thoroughly examining the transcribed texts, we identified 139 instances of euphemistic language use throughout the selected shows, which we interpret, analyse, and discuss in the analysis and discussion sections of this paper.

To correctly interpret the identified euphemistic instances as such, we employ Warren's theory of euphemisms and word formation processes. The theory is built on the precept that word meanings are dynamic and negotiable. In spontaneous speech, participants continuously connect word forms to contextual referents that do not match their out-of-context referents. So, when interpreters successfully find new referent(s) for a word form, they create new/ novel meanings. Warren argues that word meanings are constantly created according to context. As a result, knowing the dictionary meaning(s) assigned to a word is not enough to interpret the word. In addition to knowing the dictionary meaning of a word, one must redefine the word in the context it has been used to assign meaning to it effectively. Warren (1992) argues that dictionary meanings are successfully transformed into new meanings if the following interpretation norms are met.

- A word is matched with a proper referent(s) seen as the best alternative in the particular setting. The new term will only contain novel meanings if the referent it has been assigned does not fall under the conventional referents associated with the word.
- New meanings will only be accepted if there is a connection between the particular novel meaning and the established conventional meaning.
- Out of the given reasons, such as consistent reuse, the novel contextual meaning has been mastered and thus conventionalized.

She notes further that only when these maxims are met can the interpreter confidently say they have understood the word's meaning. Warren, however, notes that not all euphemisms are formed through semantic innovation processes. She identifies three other primary euphemism formation processes:

**Word-formation devices** involve the encoder utilising the word-formation devices of the language in question. These could include compounding and derivation, blends, onomatopoeia, and acronyms, among many other devices. A typical example of compounding is a hand job [masturbation] (Rawson, 1981).

**Loan words** - involve borrowing words from other languages to cover up/ use better alternatives for explicit/ offensive terms in the receiving language. For example, words like lingerie [underwear] and affair(e) [extramarital], which have been conventionalized in the English language, are borrowed from French.

**Offensive word modification** – the perceived offensive word is modified according to given rules to scale down the degree of the degree of the target expression's offence. An offensive or dispreferred word can be modified into back slang, rhyming slang, an abbreviation, or a phoneme replacement. Shoot [shit] (Rawson, 1981) is a typical example of phoneme replacement.

We used Warren's model of euphemisms to classify the identified euphemisms in their various euphemism formation categories. We used the model because it mainly categorises euphemisms based on semantic strategies. Since part of this research concerned itself with examining the meaning shift behind terms and establishing the extralinguistic aspects for such shift, such as the cause and intent, this model was deemed plausible compared to alternative models like the one suggested by Allan and Burridge (1991) as it did not only provide us with a model into which to classify sex euphemisms but also, it provided us with helpful insights into understanding the underlying intent of a euphemism.

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed a qualitative research design approach because it involved describing and explaining our data as it is. The target population included all love and relationship radio programs aired on the national broadcaster Classic 105 FM's *Maina and King'ang'i* show in 2021. While there is no standard defining criterion of what constitutes a national radio, we assert that national radio programmes are those aired by radio stations with a nationwide listenership. The radio stations broadcast in English or Kiswahili, which are the most dominant languages used in the country. Additionally, we chose Classic 105 FM's *Maina and King'ang'i* show based on their popularity and wide listenership. Kenya radio data statistics indicate that classic FM's *Maina and King'ang'i in the Morning Show* are the most popular among all English-speaking radio programs in Kenya (Okulo, 2019).

We used purposive sampling to draw a sample for analysis. The researcher purposely selected 12 shows, narrowing them down to those that best represented the features being studied and poised to answer the research questions. The sample size was deemed large enough to uncover various euphemisms and answer the research questions. The researchers replayed the shows on an audio player, listened, translated (where necessary), and transcribed the shows orthographically. Since the study sought to analyse natural conversations,



only conversation hours were considered for transcription. Data that included sex euphemistic expressions (words, phrases, and clauses) was taken out through the reading and note-taking technique. The researcher then thoroughly read the transcribed texts and used Warren's (1992) Euphemism interpretive maxims and the cooperative principle to identify and interpret all sex-related euphemisms and noted them on the recording sheet. We recorded 139 instances of euphemistic language use in our sample.

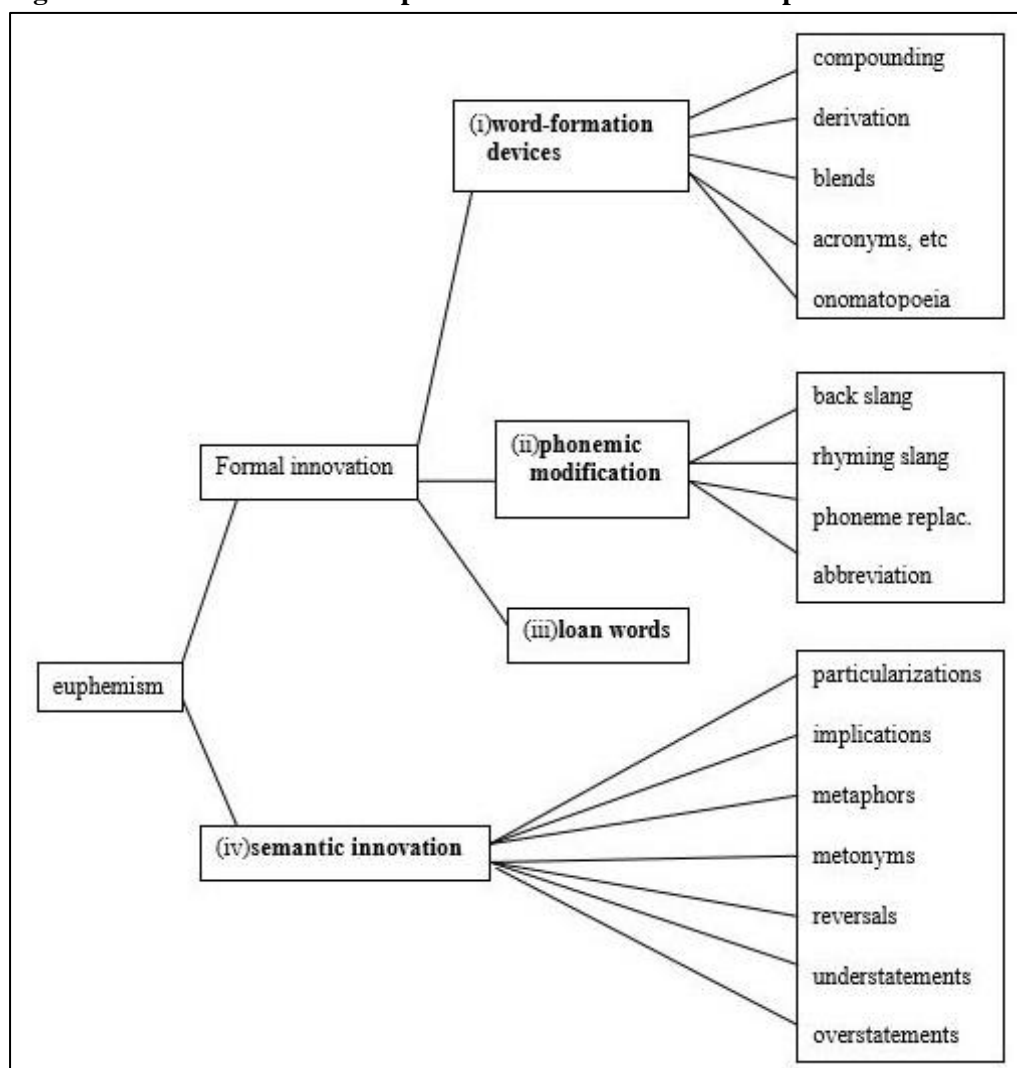
On data analysis, the identified euphemisms were further analysed vis-à-vis the listener's interpretation. This involved noting down a euphemistic entry, matching it with its gloss form, and then comparing it with its dispreferred or taboo expression. The direct comparison allowed

the researchers to establish a pattern, the shift in form, and make valid conclusions about the means-to-end speakers use to arrive at a given euphemistic expression. This followed the analogy of what led a speaker to use a specific euphemism strategy.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Warren's ideas on euphemisms and word formation processes guided the data analysis in this paper. Warren postulates that linguistic devices for forming euphemisms belong to four all-encompassing mechanisms, namely: word formation devices, phonemic modification, loanwords and semantic innovation. The euphemism formation processes are further exemplified in the figure below.

**Figure 1: Warren's model of euphemism and word formation processes.**



Source: (Warren, 1992, p.6)

Warren's model for interpreting euphemism focuses on how interpreting words in context can bring about novel senses. Given that this study looks at the euphemizing process as a linguistic substitution process, we also give prominence to word-for-word substitutions that involve establishing new senses for established words through processes such as overstatements, particularizations and implications since it is a major source of euphemistic language. Next, we go for euphemisms formed via loan words, which is a word-for-word substitution process but involves a second language, and later, we delve into phonemic modification, which involves modifying the offensive/ taboo expression through processes such as back slang, phoneme replacement and the use of rhyming slang. Lastly, we look at new word formation processes, which involve forming new words as a substitute for offensive alternatives. Notably, in our data, we have compounding, derivation and the use of the onomatopoeia word-formation device.

### Semantic Innovation

Semantic innovation contrasts a word's established senses with its novel senses (Warren, 1992). The processes under this category reinvent and give new meanings or senses to an already existing word. Semantic innovation is realized in seven ways: particularizations, implications, metaphors, metonyms, reversals, understatements, and overstatements. In the following subsections, we assess each category and show how it occurred in our data.

#### Particularization

Particularization as a euphemizing strategy occurs when a more general word/ phrase transfers its meaning into a more specific term deemed the most plausible in that context. According to Warren (1992), the new contextual referent is a subcategory of the conventional category of referents of the offensive/unsaid, taboo, or dis-preferred term. Data analysis and interpretation show that speakers on classic 105's *Maina & King'ang'i in the Morning* show resorted to particularization when tactfully referring to

various sex-linguistic phenomena. Consider the following extracts:

**Example 1:** *You must deny hata kama umekutwa (even when caught) in the act.*

**Example 2:** *Ladies, if you're a single mother looking for love, have you experienced a lot of bile towards your situation? The fact that you've got kids?*

In the extracts above, the speaker employs particularization to achieve euphemistic goals. In the first example, the speakers particularize the word *act*. Notice that the word 'act' in *deny hata kama umekutwa* (even when caught) *on the act* extract is used as the object of the verb caught. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary lists conventional senses of the word act, including pretence, statute, action, and deed (Merriam-Webster, 2015). While it is clear that the word *act* has been used in referring to the process of doing something, it is not clear which 'thing'. The listener has to particularize the otherwise too general term in context and rule out possible referents to arrive at sexual connotation.

In example 2, 'single mother' can either refer to a widowed or an unmarried mother with a dependent child. In this extract, the participant reduces all these senses of a single mother to one, referring to an unmarried mother with a dependent child. Interestingly also, our data shows that in the Kenyan context, while the term single mother can be used as a euphemism for its course equivalent, widow, the phrase is more pragmatically appropriate when referring to younger mothers with dependent children and no father present.

#### Implications

Next, we have implications for semantic innovation. An implication is something suggested or one that happens indirectly. Warren (1992) observes that in implications, conventional and contextual referents are in a relationship of association. She suggests that for a euphemism to be interpreted as an implication, the interpreter must establish the relationship between the implying and the implied following the analogy

that if X is correct, then Y is correct too. In doing so, the interpreter can draw a conclusion from a statement or expression even though it is not explicitly stated. Our findings revealed that the speaker resorted to implications in the show as a euphemistic discursive strategy to avoid mentioning taboo or offensive sex language. Consider the following examples extracted from the selected shows.

**Example 3:** *...imagine you have a beautiful girl, Akafresh kashamba (a small fresh shamba). Na unakataa kumpatia mtoto (and you refuse to give her a child)*

**Example 4:** *Wa! XYZ, you saying the attitude of women sleeping with married men ... she's entitled but realized that that doesn't mean replacing the wife.*

In the above extracts, the expressions *...akafresh kashamba* (a small fresh shamba) and *sleeping with married men* are euphemistic implications. Typically, collocates for a fresh shamba include plant, seed, or such as is with the use of small and fresh adjectives that modify and determine the headword shamba. The appearance of give pregnancy (impregnate) in the same sentence, as used in example 3 above, points to something else. It is only proper that by saying shamba, the interlocutor here refers to a feral being and that 'small fresh shamba' refers to a young woman. As such, it is apparent that, as Warren (1992) suggests, the relationship between a small, fresh shamba and a young, beautiful woman is a relationship of association. The speaker associates a fresh shamba or virgin land with a young, beautiful lady, and when they say a fresh shamba, they imply a young, beautiful lady.

Similarly, in example 4, *sleeping with married men* has an implied meaning. Typically, the speaker borrows from the otherwise dead euphemism *sleep with* (someone), which associates the act of sleeping with someone with having sex with (someone). It follows then that if *sleeping with* = having sex with married women *sleeping with married men*, then it implies promiscuity. Note that in both examples three and

four, the implied can be a secondary sense. As a result, the implied meaning does not, in totality, disqualify the expression's literal meaning. For example, *sleeping with married men* does not necessarily mean having sex with them; the meaning can also be literal.

Our analysis shows that the contrast between the explicit and the implied becomes evident in context. Warren (1992) observes that when the diametrical relationship between the explicit and implied becomes obvious, an expression becomes euphemistic, especially if it has been used tactfully to dodge the mention of an offensive, taboo, or dispreferred expression. The listener infers from context to nullify any possible secondary interpretations, thus correctly assigning meaning to a word or expression.

### Metaphors

The radio conversations were not only full of implications but also metaphorical euphemisms. The process of metaphORIZATION is a literary device in which a word is used to indirectly refer to the referent(s), which is not part of its conventional referents. Warren (1992) suggests that, for metaphors, the conventional and contextual referents share some semantic properties. That is, some properties of the conventional referent are also a property of the contextual referent. She suggests further that metaphors closely follow the analogy that thing A is thing B. Following Warren, metaphors can be said to state that one thing is another thing. So, for interpreters to successfully interpret a metaphor as a euphemism, they must establish a relationship of likeness, comparison, or symbolism between the novel referent(s) and the conventional referent(s). On this line of thought, a metaphor equates the novel referents and conventional referents not because they are similar but for the sake of comparison or suggesting a similarity. Consider the following excerpts.

**Example 5:** *there was another man before you always keep that in mind those women are always unsettled kazi ni kuruka ruka (their work is to*

jump and jump). *Hao ni moto ya kuotea mbali* (They are dreaded fire).

**Example 6:** *anachimba, mafuta haipatikni* (Drill oil in vain)

**Example 7:** *Nataka chai fresh. So unataka sisi wanawake tubugie bugie vitu vya jana? Na kuna fresh things kule inje?* (I need fresh tea. So will we women take yesterday's leftovers while fresh things are out there?).

The expressions *kuruka ruka* (jump and jump), *anachimba mafuta haipatikani* (drill oil in vain), and *chai freshi* (fresh tea) are all metaphorical euphemisms. All the expressions in these examples flout the Gricean maxims of quality and relevance, which state that one should be truthful and be relevant in whatever they say; this triggers the interpreter to find reasons why the speaker made such an intentional move. It is unlikely, for instance, that when talking about '*chai freshi*', the speaker is referring to fresh tea. Similarly, it cannot be true that when the participants say *chimba mafuta* (drill oil), they are referring to drilling oil. The expression is metaphorical. By saying *anachimba mafuta haipatikani*, the speaker is referring to having sex but in vain. The underlying metaphor here is that sex = drilling oil. By the expression *haipatikani* (in vain), the participants give additional information for more straightforward interpretability, suggesting that people engage in intercourse with a purpose. It could be for pleasure or procreation. So, having sex in vain further correctly translates to having sex without achieving any of the intended purposes and, in this case, getting pregnant. The same is true of the expression *kuruka ruka* (jumping and jumping), which is a euphemism for cheating. The expression has been likened to the unsettled spouses who hope and jump from one partner to the next, thus the expression *kuruka ruka* (jumping and jumping). Next on our list, we look at metonymy as an innovative strategy for creating novel euphemistic senses.

### Metonymy

A metonym is a part or attribute of a thing that represents the thing itself. A metonym works such

that the novel referent is part of a whole (conventional referent), which stands for the whole. Warren (1992) notes that in metonymy, for interpreters to interpret a wordform as a metonymic euphemism successfully, they must establish a co-occurrence relationship. Warren further observes that metonymy is based on contiguity. For the interpreters to congruently make the correct interpretation, they must show shared properties between the said and the implied through attributive qualities or a cause-and-effect relationship. Consider the following extracts from the selected shows:

**Example 8:** *I'm thinking about the guy now, so he's there anahema* (panting).

**Example 9:** *mtetezi wa wanaume, ngoja kwanza umesema atapush ama ni caesarian?* (Men defender, wait, have you said she would push or go for caesarian)

**Example 10:** *juu ni mwanaume yule skirt haipiti. Skirt haiwezi pita* (because he is the type of man skirts do not pass by)

The expressions *Anahema* (panting), *atapush* (will (she) push), and *skirt haipiti* (skirts do not pass by) are examples of metonymic euphemisms used in the selected show. In the first example, the speaker is talking about panting, but panting can only be translated as referring to the act of having sex, panting being an attribute of the sex act. In the second example, the participants proactively avoid the expression *zaa* (give birth), which is the Kiswahili English equivalent of giving birth. The expression is interpreted as a metonymic euphemism because, in birth, pushing is part and parcel of the process of giving birth. Similarly, in the third example, the participants use the term skirt to refer to women. Ideally, it is impractical for someone to chase skirts. It would be wrong to take the expression literally to mean chasing skirts. The expression is thus correctly interpreted as meaning those men who chase women while *chasing women*, itself, is a euphemism referring to womanizers.

Our data further show that speakers on classic 105's Maina & King'ang'i in the morning show



use the maximally general *it* and *thing(s)* as metonymic expressions to refer to specific sex body parts, sexual acts, and pregnancy. Notably, the participants use the Swahili expression *nini* (it) with a stressed second syllable and *ingine* (the other thing) and its plural form, *zingine* (other things), to refer to extramarital affairs, sex acts and pregnancy indirectly. Consider the following extracts:

**Example 11:** *ilikua bahati mbaya nikaninii secondborn.* (It was by bad luck that I (it) *second born*).

**Example 12:** *usimwonyeshe ninii* (Don't show it to him).

**Example 13:** *wamefanya mambo zingine nyingi sana* (they have done many other things).

In examples 11 and 12, the participant says that it was by accident that she got pregnant for her second child. She uses the Expression *Nikaninii* (I did 'it'). In example 12, the participant says he was denied sex and used the Expression *usimwonyeshe ninii* (do not show it [vagina] to him). Note that the participants use the maximally general proform 'it' to indirectly refer to the act of giving birth and the female genitalia, which are sex taboo words in Swahili. The expression *ninii* (it) is overly general. It can be used to refer to any non-living thing or animal. By using this expression and its various forms to refer to the unsaid, unpleasant, or dispreferred expressions 'Vagina' and 'got impregnated,' in this case, the speakers show their willingness to circumnavigate the direct expressions via overgeneralization such that they are not directly liable for having said what they said. In example 13, the participants refer to the prominent (especially politicians) people who get busted engaging in extramarital affairs in hotel rooms with *mipango ya kando* (mistresses). The speaker uses the expression *mambo zingine* (other things/ words) to disguise and overgeneralize sex acts. This serves to substitute the direct and offending expression and, in this way, reduce the impact the direct expression will have on the listeners.

While the results showed that the speaker in the show consistently reverted to Swahili general-for-specific *ninii* (it) and *ingine* (other (thing)) terms to refer to sex, sex act, and genitalia, they also used English expressions to do so. The example below exemplifies this phenomenon.

**Example 14:** *App 13 XYZ came out and said these things* [love affairs]; *there must be a reason.*

In the African (East Africa) context, it is uncommon for people to discuss their love affairs stories in public. Furthermore, it is rare for someone to come out and openly discuss their extramarital affairs. The speaker in this extract uses the phrase *these things* to refer to extramarital affairs. He is particularly startled that the subject came out and discussed her extramarital affairs in public, which is rare or uncommon. The other form of semantic innovation includes the use of reversals.

### Reversals

In the reversal strategy, the interpreter reverses the meaning of the appropriate conventional meaning to arrive at the contextually novel meaning. Typically, the relationship between the novel and conventional meanings is one of oppositeness. Consider the following extract.

**Example 15:** *Caller1: wakisii tuko na kanya... nyamo... sio kanyamo. Kanyamo wajua ni microscopic* (Abagusii have kanya... nyamo ...and not kanyamo. Kanyamo is microscopic).

**Host1:** *you've got kanyamo.*

**Caller 1:** *EEh! Tuko na nyamo.* (we have nyamo).

In the extract above, the participants use the Kikuyu word *kenyamo* (thing) which is colloquial for the Kiswahili term *kakitu* (thing), referring to money used especially in referring to corruption proceedings. While the expression *kenyamo* 'small' thing is more pragmatically used to refer to proceedings of corruption, the speaker reverses it to *kenyamo* (big thing) to refer to the male genitalia penis. The interlocutor achieves this by using derivational affixes 'ke' (small) and 'ka' (big). The change from small to big, where the

novel sense is expressed as the opposite of the conventional sense, and the confusion arising as to what exactly the speaker is referring to serves to conceal the true referent of the utterance.

Besides semantic innovation, interlocutors used loan words as a euphemizing strategy in the selected shows.

### Loan Words

In loan words, speakers form euphemisms by substituting their local terminologies with those that (Burridge, 2012) call 'learned terms'. Typically, this involves borrowing from an exotic language(s) or a special type of internal loaning through expressions extracted from a sub-variety of the same language, like Jargon or slang. Our data shows that English and Swahili were existentially used throughout the show with minimal interludes from other native languages, with Kikuyu and Kamba as the most used languages. Switching to native Kenyan languages other than Swahili was considered code-switching. Substituting an English/ Swahili expression in free speech from other languages was considered a loan word. Equally, the researcher considered the evasiveness or the quality mildness/ implicitness of an expression in mitigating offence for it to qualify as euphemistic. Consider the following extracts:

**Example 16:** *What makes you think your women are waiting to be katiwad (seduced) by other men?*

**Example 17:** *unataka dem mrembo, mweupe ako na kinyashinyashi.* (You need a brown, beautiful girl with a bum).

**Example 18:** *we are rated number one in terms of kenyamo and deliverance*

The examples above depict various types of borrowing explicated throughout the selected shows. In examples 16 and 17, the speaker substitutes the word seduce with the expression *Katiwad*, which is the Sheng equivalent of seduce. The speaker also uses the expression *Kinyashinyash*, a Swahili nativization form of the Nigerian Pidgin word *nyash nyash* (bum). In example 18, the speaker borrows from Kikuyu,

one of the native eastern Bantu languages in Kenya. The word *Keniamo* (thing) is in substitution for the male genitalia, penis. Note that Sheng was considered a subvariety of the Swahili language in this study. As such, expressions such as *Katiwad* (seduce) or *ngotha* (underwear) are a special type of internal borrowing. Words such as *side chick*, equivalent to Mpango wa kando in Swahili, were treated as informal or colloquial for the expression mistress; thus, they qualified as a special type of internal borrowing from English.

### Phonemic Modification

The phonemic modification process involves modifying or altering the taboo, offensive, or dispreferred expression according to set rules (Warren, 1992). Speakers achieve phonemic modification via back slang, rhyming slang, phoneme replacements, and abbreviations. A thorough search throughout the shows revealed that participants in the classic 105's *Maina & King'ang'i in the Morning* show use rhyming slang and phonemic replacement strategies. Zero abbreviations and back slang were recorded. Subsequently, in the following subsections, we discuss each of the phonemic modification tactics revealed in the show.

### Phonemic Replacement

Phonemic replacement involves substituting phonemes of the offensive word such that the newly formed expression conceals the meaning of the original expression. Consider the following extract

**Example 19:** *Host2: Mnaanza (you start) secreto de nafefeine*

*Host1: ati (what) secreto de nafefeine? [laughter]*

*Host2: Secreto señor*

**Example 20:** *Kanyamo ni hii kitu ya Contus cointrapos*

**Example 21:** *...30 minutes feeling the heat of a machism*

The extract is a conversation between radio hosts; the speakers use the expressions *Secreto de*

*nafefeine* (secret love affair) and *Secreto señor*. In the two cases, the word *Secreto* is a corruption of the English word *Secrete*. The speaker replaces the last phoneme in the English word /e/ to /o/. The goal is to make the new construction sound like Spanish. Further, the speakers pair the word *secreto* with the phrase *de nafefeine* and *señor*, borrowed from the Kikuyu and Spanish languages. The speaker does so in such a way that they nativize native Spanish pronunciation by imitating the passionate and emotive Spanish sounds in a jocular way. In doing so, the speaker achieves some level of semantic disguise, concealing or lessening the original expression's impact via jocularly imitating the dispreferred expression.

Other examples include *machismo* (penis) - Example 21 and *cointropos* (coitus). In the word *machismo*, the speaker replaces the word machine's last phoneme /n/ with /smo/. In the second example, *cointropos*, speakers replace the last phonemes /əs/ of the word coitus. This makes the word sound learned or exotic. Just like in the word *machismo*, the speaker aims to conceal the dispreferred expression but makes the interpretation of the same obvious through the jocular romanticization of the expressions. In addition to replacement, rhyming slang is the other form of phonemic modification evident in our data.

### **Rhyming Slang**

Rhyming slang involves replacing a common word with a phrase of two or more words, the last of which rhymes with the original word. Speakers do so in such a way that makes the original expression elusive to the listener. Consider the following:

**Example 19:** Host2: *Mnaanza (you start) secreto de nafefeine*

Host1: *ati (what) secreto de nafefeine? [laughter]*

Host2: *Secreto señor*

**Example 20:** *Kanyamo ni hii kitu ya Contus cointrapos*

Cases of rhyming slang evident in our study include expressions like *Secreto señor* (secrete affair) and *Contus cointrapos* (coitus), as evident in examples 19 and 20. In both extracts, the last syllables in *secrete* and *coitus* are altered. By employing a rhyming slang strategy, such as in *nafefeine* and *contus cointrapos* in which case the speakers use alteration, the speakers attach an entertainment value to the offensive, taboo, or dispreferred, which makes the expression amusing. As a result, the speaker practically eliminates the offensiveness of the original word/ expression in the process.

### **Word Formation Devices**

The word formation devices observed in the data of this study are compounding, derivation, blends, acronyms, and onomatopoeia. Each of these strategies is explained and illustrated in the sub-sections that follow.

#### **Compounding**

Compounding involves forming euphemisms by joining two or more root/ base morphemes. Usually, the second base morpheme identifies or builds on the key features of the first root morpheme. I.e., hand job (masturbation) (Warren, 1992). This study established that speakers in the show use compounding as a euphemizing strategy when referring to a referent with no direct linguistic, name, or symbol in the target language or culture. It also established that speakers in the show resort to compounding when translating foreign concepts with a linguistic symbol in the source language and culture. Consider the following:

**Example 22:** *Have you ever heard of friendship marriage Mwalimu*

**Example 23:** *Huyo mama, atafute tu mtu wa mkono (Ben 10) mwenye ako karibu.*

**Example 24:** *How does he deal with his morning Appetite*

The extracts elucidate cases of compounding observed in our data. In example 22, the speakers seek to know whether the listeners know what

*friendship marriage/ companionship* marriage is. Our analysis shows that friendship marriage is a type where couples are married but do not live together. It violates the ‘companionship’ or ‘living together’ aspect that defines the ‘ideal’ marriage. Since this concept is new in Kenya's African culture, it has no linguistic equivalent. As a result, the speaker resorts to redefining the new concept through expressions like *friendship marriage*, suggesting that the couples are engaged in a special type of marriage.

In example 23, the expression *mtu wa mkono* (handyman) is used to disguise the dispreferred word a Ben 10, a young man who engages in a sexual relationship with older women. The literal meaning of the word handyman is a skilled artisan. In interpreting the expression *mtu wa mkono*, the interpreter has to look for shared semantic properties of the words handyman and Ben 10. Other instances of compounding include *morning appetite* (morning erection), in which the speaker directly substitutes offensive morpheme erection with appetite to conceal the true meaning of the expression. Likewise, speakers in the show manipulate the derivation word formation process in addition to compounding to create euphemisms in the show. We explain and illustrate this strategy in the sub-section below.

### Derivation

The derivation processes change the meaning of the dispreferred expression. English speakers achieve this through derivational affixes. This study revealed that speakers achieve derivation as a euphemizing strategy mainly via diminutive augmentative prefixes. Consider the following extracts:

**Example 25:** *Host1: akakwambia huyu mama ako na mtoto? (S/he told you this lady has a child?).*

*Caller4: sio kwanza mmoja, walikuwa tuvijana tuwili (Not just one but two small youths)*

**Example 26:** *You're married, or you're just a kipermanent (permanent) come we stay*

In Kenyan Swahili, the expression *vijana* (youths) is usually more pragmatically correct when

referring to male youth. However, adding the augmentative prefixes /tu/ to the word *vijana* (tu+vijana) and replacing the plural inflectional morpheme /wa/ with the augmentative derivational morpheme /tu/ in the word *tuwili* (small) invokes a derogatory sense of the expression. *Tuvijana tuwili* translates to smallest boys and can be correctly interpreted as bastards or illegitimate children (boys). In the second example, the phrase *a kipermanet come we stay*, is a corruption of its English equivalent, come-we-stay, a special marriage arrangement. The speakers use the Swahili augmentative prefix /ki/ to show their mood towards the referent. In addition to helping speakers express their mood towards a referent, the augmentative prefixes make the referents less significant, thus elevating the euphemistic value of the new expressions.

### Onomatopoeia

Lastly, regarding phonemic modification, we have onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia is a euphemizing strategy that involves the creation of euphemisms by imitating objects or sounds of the unmentionable or dispreferred referent. We observed only one instance where onomatopoeia was used as a euphemizing strategy. Consider the following:

**Example 27:** *Of course, we will. We will; we will do our twatwa. I'll be safe always.*

The extract above is from a conversation about a woman unwilling to get pregnant for her husband and not wanting to let him know. The onomatopoeic word *twatwa* is an imitation of sexual sounds produced during intercourse. The speaker uses the expression *twatwa* to avoid the more direct word coitus or intercourse, which may be offensive and thus damages both the speaker's and listeners' face wants.

### CONCLUSION

The study findings show that Warren's classification model accounts for all euphemisms formed in the classic 105's *Maina & King'ang'i in the morning* show. However, it revealed exceptional cases of language use where users



borrow from more than one language's grammatical features to form new expressions whose interpretation relies heavily on context. The study also revealed that the model did not account for special types of euphemisms formed morphologically through reduplication processes. Consider the following examples in our data. *kurukaruka*, *kinyashnyash* and *nunu minjiminji*. Nadarajan (2006) defines reduplication as a morphological process that involves the repetition of the root, stem, whole word, or phonological material that forms part of the word for semantic or grammatical purposes. The example in our extract, *kururuka* (Jumping), showcases an instance of partial reduplication where speakers partially repeat part of the root morpheme. The rest of the examples (*nunu* [vagina] and *minjiminji* [sexy]) showcase instances of full reduplication where speakers repeat the base morpheme entirely.

In the words of Schwaiger (2015), reduplication processes can introduce new meanings and phrases to a language that can be harder to figure out. This is the case for expressions like *nunu* (vagina) and *minjinji* (sexy), whose etymology is a bit harder to trace. While the euphemistic entries *Kurukaruka* (jumping) and *Kinyashnyash* (bum) are derived from existing words, the origin for the expressions *nunu* and *Minjinji* is somewhat opaque and subject to speculation. However, like other cases, the euphemism appears as wordplay, which tends to downplay its equivalent offensive or dispreferred expression, thus lessening the impact of the direct word.

Our data analysis also revealed that speakers did not use blends, which constitute merging two words into one, which happens mainly via clipping or partially overlapping content words. It also revealed zero usage of acronyms that involve shortening an expression by combining its initial letter to form a pronounceable word.

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