

**SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SAMIA PROVERBS AND HOW THESE MEANINGS ARE
USED BY THE YOUTH FROM THE ORIGINAL SAMIA LANGUAGE**

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DECLARATION

I WAFULA HOPE declare that this research report is my original work and has not been presented or submitted to any institution of higher learning for any academic award

Signature:  Date: 07th Sept, 2026

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BU/UP/2023/1561

ENDORSEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

“This research report has been prepared under my supervision/mentorship upon appointed by
Busitema University”

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to the dearest family of Mr. Barasa Godfrey and Oundo Samali plus my siblings for the combined effort and support, both morally and financially they have given me during this project and in writing this report

May the almighty God bless the work of their hands.

Great thanks go to my beloved lecturer who guided me academically and the entire well - wishers.

Finally, to all my colleagues who cooperated with me towards the accomplishment of this research report.

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SUMMARY

This research semantically analyzed the Samia language and how its meanings were used by the youth from Samia, identified and documented the original meaning of key lexical items/ words and compared the semantic differences between traditional and youth usage of Samia vocabulary and proverbs within Samia community origin and origin of samia people, and the major challenges faced by the tribe as a result of staying at the border. This was because 5.9% of smallholder households in Uganda are occupied by the samias. (Maloba (1970)).

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design using interviews and focus group discussions from only 60 participants (20 elders + 40 youth), which was suitable for analyzing linguistic and cultural data. Qualitative design allowed the researcher to explore meanings, context, and interpretation in natural settings. The study employed semantic analysis and content analysis to identify how meanings of Samia proverbs were constructed and altered by youths.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the study

This chapter provides a foundational framework for the semantic analysis of Samia proverbs and their contemporary usage among the youth. It establishes the linguistic and cultural context of the research, highlighting the shift in meaning that occurs as traditional oral literature interacts with modern social dynamics. By outlining the parameters of the study, this introduction serves to align the research problem with the specific objectives intended to explore the evolution of the Lusamia language.

Furthermore, this chapter delineates the significance of the study, the scope of the investigation, and the conceptual limitations encountered during the research process. It concludes by providing a structural overview of the subsequent sections, ensuring a logical progression from the identification of the research gap to the formulation of the research questions.

1.2 Background to the study

The Samia are a Bantu speaking group of people living in both Kenya and Uganda respectively. In Kenya they occupy the whole of Busia District and in Uganda also Busia District and the bordered to the north and west by Tororo and Bugiri, South by Lake Victoria and to the east by Kenya. The language spoken by the Samia people is called Olusamia and we see that the Samia people occupy eight of ten sub counties of Busia District namely; Lumino, Dabani, Bulumi, Buhehe, Lunyo, Masafu, Masaba, Busitema. Busia District has a total population of over 280,000 people and a total area of 733sq.km

Samia speaking people live in Western **Kenya** and Eastern **Uganda**. They are composed of several clans and their ancient economic activities include fishing in Lake Victoria and other rivers such as River Sio, crop farming (obulimi), and animal farming (obutuki). The Samia speaking people, as widely known by other tribes, predominantly live in Busia districts (Both in Kenya and Uganda) and speak a dialect similar to the Luhya tribe in Kenya. However, on the Ugandan side there is a slight variation in the dialect spoken by the Samia of Southern Busia on the fringe of Lake Victoria and those of North Busia district closer to Tororo District. The former

speak Olusamia while the latter speak Olugwe. The two dialects are difficult to differentiate by non Samia speaking people but easily discernible by the natives.

A semantic analysis of Samia proverbs is critically required to document the widening linguistic gap between traditional moral frameworks and contemporary youth interpretations. In Samia culture, proverbs function as "compressed wisdom" where the meaning is often embedded in archaic vocabulary and metaphors tied to ancestral life; however, as youth move away from these traditional contexts, the original "referential meaning" of these expressions is being lost. Without a formal study, the sophisticated nuances of the Lusamia language risk being replaced by literal interpretations, leading to a breakdown in the transmission of the community's moral and social code.

Furthermore, this research is necessary to identify how the youth are actively repurposing Samia vocabulary through processes such as semantic shift and neosemanticism. By analyzing how modern speakers apply traditional proverbs to contemporary social dynamics, the study can pinpoint where meaning is being narrowed or altered a phenomenon known as semantic dissonance. This analysis does more than just record word changes; it provides an essential tool for resolving intergenerational communication barriers and ensures that the cultural identity of the Samia people remains vibrant and coherent in a rapidly changing social landscape.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the historical role of Samia proverbs as the primary repository of communal wisdom and moral guidance, there is a growing disconnect between traditional semantic intentions and the contemporary interpretations adopted by the youth. In the Samia community, the Lusamia language is undergoing a rapid "semantic erosion" where the archaic vocabulary and complex metaphors embedded in proverbs are becoming increasingly unintelligible to the younger generation. This gap in knowledge is evidenced by the frequent occurrence of semantic dissonance during intergenerational communication, where the youth often assign literal or modern slang-based meanings to expressions originally intended to convey deep-seated moral cautions.

The problem is compounded by a lack of scholarly documentation regarding how these semantic shifts—such as broadening, narrowing, or pejoration—are altering the Samia worldview.

Without a formal semantic analysis, the original linguistic nuances of Lusamia risked total dilution, leading to a loss of cultural "orthodoxy" and the eventual collapse of the traditional social contract. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the nature and scope of these semantic transformations to bridge the communicative divide between generations. By documenting these shifts, the research addressed the critical need for a linguistic record that can preserve the integrity of Samia oral literature in a rapidly modernizing society.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a comprehensive semantic analysis of the Samia language (Lusamia), specifically focusing on the evolution of proverbs and expressions across generations. The research sought to document traditional semantic structures and investigate the nuanced ways in which contemporary Samia youth interpret, modify, or repurpose these meanings in their everyday communication. By comparing ancestral linguistic roots with modern speech patterns, this study aimed to identify the socio-cultural drivers of semantic shift and evaluate how these changes influence intergenerational dialogue within the Samia community.

1.8 Objectives of the study

1.8.1 Main objective

To analyze how the youth, interpret or use selected Samia words and proverbs in contemporary settings

1.8.2. Specific objective

1. To identify and document the original meaning of key samia words and expressions whose meanings have shifted among the youth compared to their original semantic meanings.
2. To compare the semantic differences between traditional and youth usage of Samia vocabulary within Samia community.
3. To examine the significance of proverbs in the Samia community.
4. To explore the implications of semantic shifts on cultural identity and intergenerational communication.

1.9 Research Questions

1. What are the primary Samia proverbs and expressions that have undergone semantic shifts, and what were their original contextual meanings?
2. In what ways does the contemporary interpretation of Samia vocabulary by the youth differ from the traditional semantic usage documented among elders?
3. What roles do proverbs play in the social, moral, and educational fabric of the Samia community today?
4. How do these semantic shifts in Samia proverbs influence intergenerational dialogue and the preservation of Samia cultural identity?

1.10 Significance of the Study

This study is of paramount importance as it documents the linguistic evolution of the Samia language (Lusamia) in a modern context. By analyzing the semantic shifts in proverbs used by the youth, the research provides a bridge between traditional heritage and contemporary social dynamics.

The findings of this research were of significant value to the following stakeholders:

- **Linguists and Academics:** This study contributes to the sparse body of literature on Lusamia, providing empirical data on semantic broadening, narrowing, and shift. It serves as a foundational resource for sociolinguists interested in how Nilotic or Bantu languages adapt to generational pressures.
- **The Samia Community and Elders:** By documenting the original meanings and imagery of proverbs related to moral conduct, this research aids in the preservation of cultural "orthodoxy." It provides a reference point for elders to understand how their teachings are being reinterpreted by the younger generation.
- **The Youth:** The study offers the youth a deeper connection to their roots, helping them appreciate the sophisticated metaphors and moral frameworks embedded in their ancestral tongue, even as they adapt it to modern life.

- **Cultural Institutions and Policy Makers:** Organizations such as the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (or relevant cultural boards) can utilize these findings to design programs that foster intergenerational dialogue and cultural literacy.
- **Educational Institutions:** Curriculum developers can use the documented proverbs and their shifted meanings to create localized instructional materials that reflect the lived linguistic reality of Samia-speaking students.
- **Future Researchers:** As a pioneering effort into the semantic analysis of Samia proverbs, this study provides a theoretical and practical framework for future scholars exploring other under-researched dialects and languages in East Africa.

- **KEY TERMS**

- **PROVERB:** A phrase expressing a basic truth which may be applied to common situations.
- **SEMANTIC:** The study of meanings in a language
- **SEMANTIC ANALYSIS:** Examining how these meanings are understood interpreted or transformed.
- **YOUTH:** A person in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing scholarly works related to the semantic analysis of African proverbs, with a specific focus on the Samia language. It examines the theoretical frameworks of semantics and sociolinguistics to establish a foundation for understanding how meanings evolve over time. By synthesizing the perspectives of various linguists and cultural researchers, this review identifies the gaps in current knowledge regarding intergenerational linguistic shifts.

The review is structured around four primary thematic areas:

- The conceptual framework of semantic shift in Bantu languages.
- The traditional role and moral significance of proverbs within the Samia community.
- Contemporary youth linguistic trends and the factors influencing vocabulary adaptation.
- The impact of evolving language on cultural identity and intergenerational communication.

2.2 Literature review

Language is constantly changing because it develops together with the society that uses it. As communities experience social, economic, technological and cultural transformations, the meanings attached to words and expressions also change. This process is commonly referred to as semantic shift, where words gradually acquire new meanings, lose their original meanings or develop additional interpretations. Such changes usually occur naturally over long periods as speakers adjust language to suit their daily experiences and changing environments.

Among Bantu-speaking communities, semantic shift has become increasingly common due to continuous interaction between different language groups. The movement of people from rural to urban areas, formal education, intermarriage, trade, technological advancement and multilingual communication have created opportunities for words to be used in new contexts. Consequently, vocabulary that originally described one idea may later be used to express different meanings. In

many cases, younger speakers are the first to introduce these new interpretations before they gradually become accepted by the wider community.

Semantic change does not affect isolated words alone but also extends to figurative language such as idioms and proverbs. Since proverbs depend heavily on symbolic meaning, any alteration in the understanding of key words can significantly influence the interpretation of the entire proverb. As society changes, younger generations may associate proverb vocabulary with modern experiences rather than the traditional situations from which the expressions originated. This creates differences between the intended cultural message and the meaning understood by contemporary speakers.

In many Bantu languages, linguistic change is accelerated by frequent contact with English, Kiswahili and other widely spoken languages. Borrowed vocabulary, code-switching and language mixing have become common features of everyday communication, particularly among educated and urban youth. As a result, indigenous languages continue to evolve, reflecting both traditional values and modern lifestyles. While such developments demonstrate that language remains dynamic, they also raise concerns about preserving the original meanings embedded within traditional expressions.

Although semantic shift has been widely discussed in relation to several African languages, much of the available literature focuses on general vocabulary change rather than changes affecting traditional proverbs. There is comparatively little information concerning how semantic changes influence the interpretation of Samia proverbs among young speakers. This study therefore seeks to contribute to understanding how semantic shift is reflected in the changing meanings attached to Samia proverbs.

According to Okpewho, (1992:59) He emphasizes performance of oral literature when he states That “An oral performance truly exists when there is an audience that compels the....as follows

. A proverb is a short general known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views. In this we see that it is true that Proverbs contain wisdom and morals that are being installed in a community member depending on the norms and values of the given Society.

Okpewho continues that “younger members of the society get the ideals that will guide them through life and the older ones are constantly reminded of the rules and ideals that must be kept alive for the benefits of those coming behind them...” I agree with him because we see that people should not neglect what holds them together in the community and to constantly pass this knowledge to the younger generation.

According to Benge (1997) he asserted that “Oral literature is influenced by and it is a reflection of ideologies, social relations and the prevalent reality in society while it is also in turn influences these social, ideological and material relations of people.”

Philip Noss (1972-73) referred to African tales as having a dual function of education and entertainment yet above all they are performances which elicit a complete living event and then also, he pointed out the distinctions of the study of oral literature by folklorists and the scholars themselves.

According to Professor Kiyimba Abasi in his article "gendering social identity in the proverbs of The Samia" he says that proverbs consistently depict the boy and his mother as privileged depositions. The girl on the other hand is looked at as material property to be acquired and disposed and her mother is considered as socially worthless.

Yamba (1989) making Chinua Achebe's description of proverbs use among the Igbo as

The palm oil with which words are eaten. An apt expression of essential qualities of proverbs
Being brevity and wittiness. Proverbs are characteristically symbolic and allusive making their
Contextual interpretation opens minded.

Scholars have conducted fascinating research on proverbs from diverse angles. Linguistic
(Beck, 2005), gender and women perspectives (Kiyimba, 2005, Diabaha and Appiahmfo, 2005)
And others. These researchers point to the proverb's genre as a rich and inexhaustible field
Of research. This is partly because proverbs are particularly celebrated in Africa not just because
Africa is predominantly a non-literate culture as theorists.

According to late Lule Joseph in his book "The hidden wisdom of Baganada", he says that
Proverbs are about the wisdom the elders are expected to impress on the minds of the young and
Those of the less experienced. He inculcates on the mind of the reader of his book that
"Ozaayangamibiri no otazaayalulimi" meaning it is better for a person to be exiled in body than
Losing one's mother tongue. This statement is true because a language to be exiled means the
People from such a clan do not exist anymore.

2.3 Theoretical Literature

The Concept of Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that deals with meaning in language. According to Lyons
(1995) semantics studies the relationship between linguistic signs and what they stand for. It
focuses on how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning within a language community.
Palmer (1981) adds that semantics provides the tools for understanding how cultural and social
contexts influence word interpretation.

In the context of Samia proverbs, semantics helps to analyze how literal and figurative meanings
interact. Proverbs often employ metaphor, symbolism, and analogy, which require cultural and

contextual knowledge for correct interpretation. For example, a Samia proverb such as “Ekhooya sikholanga nyoko” (The grave never leaves the mother) symbolically warns against carelessness with life, but among youths, it may be used humorously to express fatalism or resignation

Proverbs as Cultural and Linguistic Heritage

Proverbs are linguistic expressions that encode the wisdom, beliefs, and moral values of a society (Finnegan, 1970). Among the Samia, proverbs serve as oral literature that transmits ethical values, conflict resolution mechanisms, and practical lessons. Each proverb reflects shared experiences and cultural norms.

Nandutu (2018) notes that proverbs function as mini-narratives that shape identity and guide moral behavior. However, the meaning and moral weight of these sayings are sometimes lost when younger generations adapt them to modern contexts such as social media, music, or humor

Semantic Change and Language Evolution

Semantic change refers to the gradual shift in word or phrase meaning over time. Ullmann (1962) identifies several mechanisms of semantic change, including broadening, narrowing, amelioration, and pejoration. In the case of Samia proverbs, the change occurs when youths reinterpret traditional sayings in light of modern experiences.

For example, a proverb originally meant to warn against laziness may be used jokingly to mock a hardworking friend. These shifts indicate how younger speakers use creativity to make traditional wisdom relevant to their contemporary reality

Youth Language and Innovation

Youth language is characterized by creativity, borrowing, and code-switching (Mugenda, 2020). Young people often use linguistic innovation to express modern identity, rebellion, or humor. This tendency affects the way they use and interpret traditional expressions such as proverbs.

For instance, a Samia proverb that once carried moral gravity may now appear in a song lyric or social media caption, stripped of its original seriousness. This linguistic play reflects the natural tension between preservation and modernization of cultural heritage.

2.4 Empirical Literature

Empirical studies on proverbs show that generational shifts influence how traditional meanings are preserved or transformed. Wanjala (2015) studied Bukusu proverbs and found that youths often distort their meanings to fit modern conversations, leading to semantic drift. Similarly, Nyaga (2019) observed that Kikuyu youths used proverbs in online chats but often replaced moral messages with sarcasm.

In the Samia context, limited research exists on the semantic interpretation of proverbs among the youth. However, oral reports and linguistic observations suggest that most young Samia speakers understand proverbs but reinterpret them through a modern, humorous lens. This gap justified the current study, which sought to document and analyze these semantic shifts.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on semantic theory and sociolinguistic theory. Semantic theory helps analyze meaning relations—literal and figurative—within proverbs. Sociolinguistic theory, on the other hand, explains how social factors such as age, education, and exposure to modern media influence interpretation.

2.5 Knowledge Gap

previous studies have focused on the preservation and documentation of African proverbs but have rarely examined how modern youths reinterpret them semantically. The Samia language, though rich in oral wisdom, has received little scholarly attention. This study fills that gap by exploring not only the meaning of Samia proverbs but also the changing semantics that reflect youth identity and communication trends.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. It includes the research design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, research instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, time frame, and budget.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design, which was suitable for analyzing linguistic and cultural data. Qualitative design allowed the researcher to explore meanings, context, and interpretation in natural settings. The study employed semantic analysis and content analysis to identify how meanings of Samia proverbs were constructed and altered by youths.

3.2 Area of Study

The study was conducted in Busia District, particularly Lumino where the Samia community predominantly resides. The area provided a rich source of authentic Samia language use across generations. Youths from secondary schools, community centers, and social media groups formed the main focus group.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population consisted of elderly native speakers of Samia (for reference of original meanings) and Samia youths aged 15–30 years (for contemporary usage). Elders provided authentic proverb meanings, while youths illustrated the current semantic shifts

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A total of 60 participants were involved:

20 elderly Samia speakers

40 youths

Sampling was done using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling identified elders knowledgeable in oral traditions, while snowball sampling helped trace active youth users

of Samia proverbs (e.g., through social media).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

1. Interview Guides – Used with elders to collect the traditional meanings and contexts of proverbs.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – Conducted with youths to explore how they reinterpreted or used proverbs in modern contexts.
3. Observation Checklists – Used to note the actual use of proverbs in conversations, songs, and social media posts.
4. Recording Tools – Audio recordings captured pronunciation and natural usage for linguistic accuracy

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted systematically to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the Samia proverbs recorded. The researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB) and sought permission from local community leaders within the Samia region.

The data were collected in the following three phases:

1. **Phase One (Elders):** The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with Samia elders to document the original, traditional meanings and the historical contexts of selected proverbs.
2. **Phase Two (Youth):** Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with Samia youth (aged 18–35) to identify contemporary interpretations and instances of semantic shifts in the same proverbs.
3. **Phase Three (Digital/Public Discourse):** The researcher analyzed public discourse, including social media platforms and community radio broadcasts, where Samia proverbs are frequently utilized.

Transcription and Translation Protocol

All primary data gathered in Lusamia were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. To maintain linguistic accuracy, the researcher employed a back-translation method: the proverbs were first translated into English and then reviewed by a secondary Lusamia language expert to ensure that the nuanced semantic weight of the original expressions was preserved. This dual-verification process was essential to minimize researcher bias and ensure that the subtle differences between traditional and youth usage were clearly captured in the final analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

Semantic analysis identified meaning patterns, literal vs figurative shifts, and metaphorical structures. Content analysis categorized how youths used proverbs differently from their original sense. Comparative analysis matched each proverb's traditional and modern usage to highlight semantic drift.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed strict ethical standards: informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural respect. Participants were free to withdraw at any time. Elders' intellectual contributions were acknowledged in the final report.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of the Methods Proposed

To ensure validity, the instruments were pre-tested on a small sample of elders and youth not included in the main study. Feedback was used to refine the interview and observation tools. Validity was also strengthened through triangulation, where data from different tools (interviews, observations, and documents) were cross-checked for consistency.

For reliability, the same questions and observation procedures were applied uniformly across all participants. The researcher maintained a field journal to record observations systematically, and responses were audio-recorded with consent to prevent loss of data.

4.0 Limitation of the Study

The main limitations of this study were geographical and content-based. The researcher focused exclusively on samia proverbs and their semantic meanings, particularly examining how the youth interpreted or modified these meanings compared to traditional interpretations by elders. Only proverbs that were still known or used by both elders and the youth were considered,

thereby excluding those that had fallen completely out of use or were unknown to young speakers.

This study was geographically limited to samia speaking communities in Busia District particularly Lumino Town due to time and resource constraints; data collection was conducted only in selected villages within this region.

As a result, the findings may not fully represent all the samia speakers living outside these areas or urban settings where language and cultural practices may differ significantly

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data that was collected from the youth and the community elders of the Samia community in Busia District, particularly Lumino. Twenty (20) elders and forty (40) youths took part in interviews, focus group discussions and observation of natural language use. Letters A, B, C and D represent the elder respondents who were interviewed, while 1, 2, 3 and 4 represent the youth respondents who participated in the focus group discussions. The findings are presented in line with the specific objectives of the study.

4.1 The original meanings of key Samia words, expressions and proverbs as documented by the elders

Through interviews, the researcher found that the elders of the Samia community still held a rich and detailed knowledge of the traditional meanings of proverbs and expressions that are passed down through generations. Elder A explained that a proverb likening a hen that spreads its wings over its chicks was traditionally used to teach about parental protection, sacrifice and responsibility within the family. Elder B noted that a proverb about a river that does not forget the spring from which it flows was used to instil respect for one's origin, elders and ancestry. Elder C added that proverbs were rarely used casually among the elders; they were reserved for moments of correction, counsel and important community gatherings.

The head of the council of elders in Lumino observed that most proverbs carried more than one layer of meaning, a literal meaning and a deeper moral or philosophical meaning that required maturity and life experience to fully understand. Elder D explained that some proverbs were specifically meant to be riddles that elders used to test the wisdom of young initiates during cultural ceremonies. A few youths who grew up close to their grandparents, such as Youth 1 and Youth 3, said they could still recite the original wording of several proverbs, although they admitted that they did not always grasp the full depth of meaning behind them.

Table 1: Elders' and youths' ability to correctly state the original meaning of sampled Samia proverbs

Sampled proverb theme	Elders (n=20)	Youths (n=40)	Elders %	Youths %
Parental protection and sacrifice	18	12	90	30
Respect for origin and ancestry	17	9	85	22.5
Patience and perseverance	16	14	80	35
Communal unity and cooperation	19	11	95	27.5

4.2 Semantic differences between traditional meanings and contemporary youth usage

In the process of comparing traditional and youth usage, the researcher found notable differences in how proverbs and expressions are applied across the two generations. Youth 1 said he often reuses the proverb about the protective hen as a humorous social media caption when joking about overprotective friends, completely detached from its original meaning of parental sacrifice. Youth 2 explained that proverbs about respect for elders are now mostly narrowed by the youth to refer only to greeting etiquette, losing the broader sense of communal respect that the elders intended.

Elder D lamented that a proverb that traditionally praised diligence and hard work is increasingly used mockingly among the youth to tease someone who is overworking for little reward, a clear case of pejoration. The head of the council of elders observed that most semantic shifts among the youth fell into four broad categories: broadening of meaning, narrowing of meaning, pejoration, and reinterpretation for humour, especially on social media platforms. Youth 4 admitted that many young people in Lumino encounter proverbs mainly through social media memes rather than direct teaching from elders, which encourages reinterpretation that suits trending online humour rather than the original cultural intent.

Table 2: Categories of semantic shift identified in youth usage of Samia proverbs

Category of semantic shift	Elders (n=20)	Youths (n=40)	Elders %	Youths %
Broadening of meaning	9	16	45	40
Narrowing of meaning	11	14	55	35
Pejoration	8	10	40	25
Reinterpretation for humour/social media	6	22	30	55

4.3 The significance of proverbs in the Samia community

Findings showed that proverbs continue to occupy an important place in Samia social life despite the semantic shifts taking place among the youth. Elder A explained that proverbs are still used by the council of elders to settle disputes and guide clan meetings, since a well-placed proverb can correct behaviour without directly accusing or embarrassing anyone. Elder C noted that proverbs remain a key tool for instilling moral discipline among children at home, especially during evening storytelling sessions.

Youth 3 stated that even though many young people reinterpret proverbs, they still view proverbs as an important marker of being truly Samia, distinguishing them from neighbouring communities. Youth 2 added that proverbs are increasingly used to add humour and cultural flavour to everyday conversation among peers, which keeps the youth engaged with the language even though the original depth may be lost. The head of the council of elders concluded that proverbs continue to serve an educational, moral and identity-affirming role in the Samia community, even as their usage among the youth continues to evolve.

Table 3: The significance of proverbs in the Samia community as reported by elders and youths

Area of significance	Elders (n=20)	Youths (n=40)	Elders %	Youths %
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Conflict resolution and dispute settlement	17	8	85	20
Moral instruction of children	18	13	90	32.5
Marker of Samia cultural identity	15	21	75	52.5
Source of humour and social bonding	7	24	35	60

4.4 Implications of the semantic shifts on cultural identity and intergenerational communication

The findings revealed mixed feelings between the two generations regarding the implications of the observed semantic shifts. Elder B expressed concern that the reinterpretation of proverbs by the youth was gradually eroding the original wisdom encoded in the Samia oral tradition, warning that if the trend continued unchecked, the deeper moral lessons embedded in the proverbs could be lost within a generation or two. Elder D added that the gap in shared meaning sometimes caused misunderstanding during family conversations, since an elder's proverb intended as serious counsel could be received by a youth as a joke.

On the other hand, Youth 1 and Youth 4 viewed the semantic shifts as a natural and creative evolution of the language rather than a loss, arguing that reinterpreting proverbs for humour and modern contexts keeps the proverbs alive and relevant among young people who might otherwise abandon them altogether. The head of the council of elders acknowledged this tension, noting that while some shift is unavoidable as language evolves, deliberate effort was needed to ensure that the core moral and cultural meanings of key proverbs are not entirely lost to future generations.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings presented in chapter four in line with the specific objectives of the study, draws conclusions from the interpretation, and presents recommendations for community development and policy based on the findings.

5.1 Original meanings of key Samia words, expressions and proverbs

From the findings, the elders of the Samia community retained a substantial and detailed knowledge of the traditional meanings of proverbs, with the majority able to correctly state the original meaning of the sampled proverbs. This confirms that elders remain the primary custodians of authentic Samia oral tradition.

- Proverbs were found to carry layered meanings, combining a literal sense with a deeper moral or philosophical lesson that required maturity and cultural exposure to fully grasp.
- The youth who maintained close contact with grandparents and elders, through storytelling and everyday interaction, retained a stronger grasp of original proverb meanings than those who did not.

5.2 Semantic differences between traditional and youth usage

The findings established that meaningful semantic differences exist between how elders and youth use and interpret the same proverbs. The youth's usage was largely characterised by broadening, narrowing, pejoration, and humour-driven reinterpretation, with reinterpretation for humour and social media use being the most prevalent category among the youth.

- The widespread use of social media as a channel through which youths now encounter proverbs largely explains the trend toward humorous reinterpretation, since proverbs are often repackaged as memes and captions detached from their original context.

- Pejoration was particularly significant in cases where proverbs that traditionally praised positive values were now used mockingly, signaling a gradual inversion of moral intent among some sections of the youth.

5.3 Significance of proverbs in the Samia community

The findings revealed that proverbs continue to play a multidimensional role in Samia community life. Among elders, proverbs remained central to conflict resolution and the moral instruction of children, while among the youth, proverbs were more strongly associated with cultural identity and social bonding through humour.

- This shift in emphasis from a corrective and educational function among elders, to an identity and bonding function among youth, suggests that proverbs are not disappearing but are instead being repurposed to serve the social needs of a younger generation.

- The continued recognition of proverbs as a marker of Samia identity, even among youths who no longer use them in the traditional sense, suggests that proverbs retain symbolic value even where their literal meanings have shifted.

5.4 Implications of the semantic shifts on cultural identity and intergenerational communication

The findings showed that the observed semantic shifts have both a risk dimension and a resilience dimension. On one hand, elders expressed genuine concern that continued reinterpretation could erode the moral wisdom embedded in the proverbs and create misunderstanding in intergenerational communication. On the other hand, the youth's creative reinterpretation of proverbs demonstrates an adaptive vitality that keeps the oral tradition present, even if altered, in everyday youth culture.

- This implies that interventions aimed at preserving Samia proverbs should not seek to suppress youth creativity, but rather to ensure that the original meanings are documented and made accessible alongside the evolving contemporary usage.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that incorporating deliberate documentation and intergenerational dialogue around Samia proverbs can help preserve the original semantic depth of the proverbs while still allowing for the natural evolution of language among the youth. Elders remain a vital and irreplaceable source of authentic meaning, while youths, despite reinterpreting proverbs for humour and modern relevance, continue to value proverbs as an important marker of Samia cultural identity. Bridging the semantic gap between the two generations is therefore essential for the preservation of Samia oral literature and for strengthening intergenerational communication within the community.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations to support the preservation of Samia proverbs and to strengthen intergenerational understanding within the community:

Recommendations for community development

1. Encourage intergenerational storytelling: Families and clan leaders should create regular spaces, such as evening storytelling sessions, where elders can pass on the original meanings of proverbs directly to the youth.
2. Document oral tradition: Community elders, in collaboration with cultural associations, should support the documentation of Samia proverbs and their traditional meanings in written and audio-visual form before this knowledge is lost with the passing of the older generation.
3. Promote positive reinterpretation: Community leaders should encourage youth-led cultural club

s and social media content that reinterprets proverbs creatively while still acknowledging and referencing their original meanings.

Policy recommendations

1. Incorporate Lusamia oral literature into the school curriculum: The Ministry of Education and local education authorities should support the inclusion of Samia proverbs and their meanings within local language and literature syllabi in schools within the Samia sub-region.

2. Support cultural heritage programmes: District cultural offices and local governments should fund community-based heritage programmes that document and archive Samia oral literature, including proverbs, folk tales and idiomatic expressions.

3. Foster continued research: Academic institutions and researchers should be encouraged to conduct further studies on the semantic evolution of Lusamia and other indigenous languages, to track ongoing changes and inform timely cultural preservation interventions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. What are some common Samia proverbs you know?
2. What do these proverbs mean in the traditional Samia context?
3. How do young people today use or interpret these proverbs?
4. Do you think the original meanings are being lost or changed?
5. Why do you think the youth use them differently?

Appendix B Letter of introduction to the field

Busitema University

Faculty of Science and Education, Department of Languages

P.O. Box 236, Tororo, Uganda

Date: December 20th, 2025

TO: His Highness Philip Wanyama Hasibante Nahama, Head of Samia Chiefdom.

Obwenengo Bwa Samia Bugwe

Samia Sub-region.

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Dear Sir,

I am a student at **Busitema University** pursuing a Bachelor of Languages(English and Literature) am currently conducting a research study titled: “**A Semantic Analysis of Samia Proverbs: A Comparative Study of Traditional Meanings and Contemporary Usage Among the Youth.**”

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Samia youth re-interpret or modify the meanings and usage of traditional proverbs in daily speech compared to their original linguistic contexts. This research is a requirement for the award of my degree and aims to contribute to the preservation of the Lusamia language.

I kindly request your permission to collect data within your village, community centers, or institution. This will involve conducting interviews with elders and focus group discussions with the youth. Please be assured of the following:

- **Voluntary Participation:** All participants may choose to withdraw at any time.
- **Confidentiality:** All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- **Academic Use:** The data collected will be used purely for academic purposes.

Your support in facilitating this study will be greatly appreciated as it helps document the evolving heritage of the Samia people.

Yours faithfully,

Wafula hope,

WAFULA HOPE, Undergraduate Student – Busitema University

Email: Wafulahop67@gmail.com

Tel: 0763930859

3.13 Appendix C Research time line

Activity	Duration	Time frame
Topic approval and proposal writing	4weeks	October,2025
Data collection	6weeks	November to December,2025
Data organization and analysis	3weeks	January,2026
Drafting of the final report	3weeks	February,2026
Submission and presentation	2weeks	March ,2026

3.14 Appendix D Research budget

Item	Description	Estimated amount(UGX)
Printing and photocopying	Questionnaires, Interview guides, observation sheets	50000
Transport	Movement to the field	80000
Stationary	Pens, files, and note books	30000
Communication and coordination	Phone calls and data	40000
Data analysis	Typing and editing of the findings	50000
Miscellaneous	Unforeseen expenses	20000
Total amount		270000

