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The Structure and Categorisation of Lubukusu Body-Part Idioms

Authors
Isaac M. Nasikungu [1]; David Barasa [2]; Reginald A. Alati [3]
Main author's email: inasikungu1989@gmail.com

(1.2.3) Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to investigate the syntactic structure and categorisation of Lubukusu human body part idioms. It describes the syntactic structure of these idioms and explores their categorisation from a syntactic point of view. The study draws on Lubukusu human body part idioms and examines their morphological properties and syntactic features, focusing on the structural relationships between words, phrases, and concepts. The analysis employs morphological and syntactic interface tests and constituency tests, including substitution and movement, to establish the structural boundaries of the idioms. The findings indicate that V+N and Adj+N are the dominant syntactic structures of idioms in Lubukusu. The study also establishes four distinct structural categories: verbal, adjectival, prepositional, and nominative clausal idioms. These findings offer critical insights into Bantu morphosyntax and provide a framework for future comparative studies on idiom categorisation.

Key terms: Bantu, idioms, Lubukusu, syntactic features.

INTRODUCTION

Idioms possess unique and well-developed characteristics, ranging from structural, syntactic and semantic features (Naghiyeva, 2025). They are categorizable on the basis of degree of idiomaticity and transparency, semantic compositionality, grammatical function (syntactic categories) and lexical/ thematic groupings.

The structural-syntactical classification focuses on the idioms' grammatical forms and syntactical roles. Smirnitsky's categorisation into one-top and two-top units forms the foundation of such an analysis. Turaev describes one-top units as those which function as single grammatical units, comparable to derived words. He gives English examples under these categories as: *Verb + Postposition:* to give up, to back out, to catch on; *Verb + Adjective/Preposition:* to be tired of, to be akin to; and *Prepositional-Nominal Units:* on the nose, in the nick of time, at a loss. Two-word units; those which resemble compound words with two grammatical centres. Examples include: *Attributive-Nominal:* red tape, blind alley, high road; *Verb-Nominal:* to burn one's bridges, to sweep under the carpet, to break new ground; and Phraseological *Repetitions:* ups and downs, back and forth, cool as a cucumber. McCarthy and O 'Dell expand this framework to include additional categories such as *binomials, trinomials and Whole Clauses or Sentences.* Turaev describes binomials as fixed expressions joined by "and" (rough and ready, safe and sound), t*rinomials* as those with three elements (cool, calm, and collected) and *Whole Clauses or Sentences:* Idioms which function as complete statements (to cut a long story short, what's done is done).

Syntactically, Makkai (1972), Fernando (1996), and Moon (1998) propose syntactic types conforming to the nominal element and adjective (N+ADJ), Verb followed by a nominal element (V+N), among other tournure structures. Matumo (2012) establishes five syntactic types of body part idioms dominated by a nominal element and an adjective (N+ADJ) in Sesotho.

Makkai (1972) proposes the first syntactic classification, distinguishing: Lexemic idioms (phrasal verbs, noun+ adjective), Sememic idioms (proverbs) and Tournure idioms (V+N, e.g., 'kick the bucket') in English. This study is relevant to the present study, as the categories established in the study- V+N and N+ADJ types- are universal. Arnold (1986) observes that idioms are stable and have a fixed structure. The study also observes that idioms show semantic unity, such that there is one meaning for the whole group of parts, and that idioms can undergo separation using glossing morpheme-by-morpheme, though the meaning remains as a unit. The study proposes syntactic types such as Verb + Noun: *to close eyes*, Noun+ Adjective such as *bad heart*, Noun+ Noun such as *heart and soul,* etc. This study by Arnold forms a foundation for Moon (1998) and Fernando (1996).

Fernando (1996) categorises idioms into Pure idioms (those that are non-compositional, such as *spill the beans*), Semi-idioms (where one of the elements is literal while another one is figurative, such as *foot the bill*) and Literal idioms (those idioms that are almost transparent). In addition to this categorisation, Moon (1998) proposes syntactic patterns such as V + N (*kick the bucket*), N + ADJ (*cold heart*), V + Prep + N (*look after*), N + N (*heart and soul*), and comparatives such as '*like a squirrel*'. In her findings, she observes that the structures N+ADJ and V+N are most frequent, representing 45% and 30 per cent of the data analysed in English body idioms, respectively; a pattern that can be replicated in Bantu languages. For Bantu languages, such as Lubukusu, syntactic analysis is crucial because noun class agreement and agglutinative verb morphology impose some language-specific constraints on idiom structure (Maho, 2009).

Nunberg et al. (1994) distinguish idiomatically combining vs idiomatic phrases based on syntactic flexibility. They observe that all combining idioms allow internal modification (*big bad heart*), while idiomatic phrases are frozen (*kick the bucket* - not *kick the buckets*). Idiomatic phrases do not allow modification. This study relevantly compares Lubukusu, as Lubukusu N+ADJ idioms allow adjective gradation *Ku-mu-khono ku-mu-lei* 'long hand' can be modified to be *Ku-mu-khono ku-mu-lei* sana 'a very long hand') and noun class agreement change (singular *Ku-mu-rwe ku-mu-lume* 'hard head' vs plural *Ki-mi-rwe ki-mi-lume* 'hard heads'), showing they are idiomatically combining though not fully frozen. This contrasts with V+N idioms (*Funikh-ilil-a bu-kesi* 'close the brain') which are more frozen and cannot be pluralised.

In Bantu languages, studies on syntactic categorisation of body idioms are marked by Maho (2009) and Katamba (2003). The two studies affirm that such languages have agglutinative morphology and an extensive noun class system which affects idiom syntax. Matumo (2012) analyses 150 Sesotho human body idioms and establishes five syntactic types. The first type established is the N + ADJ unity, which is accounted for by 50 per cent, with idioms like *pelo e mpe* 'heart bad to mean wicked'. The idiom is the same as the Lubukusu idiom *ku-moyo ku-mu-bi* 'bad heart'. The second type is the V + N, which is accounted for by 25 per cent. An example of this type is *kwala mahlo* 'close eyes', which means to ignore - same as Lubukusu *fu-nyikh-a chi-moni* 'close eyes. The third type is the N + Possessive, which accounts for 10 per cent. An example *is pelo ya mmutla* 'heart of hare', which means fearful. This is similar to the Lubukusu idiom *ku-mu-oyo kwa e-ngokho* 'chicken heart'. The fourth type established is the N + V (personification), representing 10 per cent, exemplified by *pelidiom e shwele* 'heart died ', which means discouraged', and has a similar one in Lubukusu: *ku-mu-oyo kwa-fwa* 'a dead heart'. The fifth type is the N + N (coordination), which is represented by 5 per cent, with an example of *pelo le hlooho* 'heart and head'. The key finding in the study is that N+ADJ dominates the collected data of the study due to Sesotho noun class agreement allowing rich adjectival modification. Matumo argues that the Bantu noun class system favours adjectival body idioms over verbal ones. This study differs from the present study as Matumo does not analyse the infinitive marker *ho-* in Sesotho, which is equivalent to Lubukusu *khu-* (to-), which is crucial for verbal idioms. This implies that the dominant structure would be a different one in Lubukusu.

Kraska-Szlenk (2014) observes that the V + N structure is dominant by 40 per cent. She gives an example of *kufumba macho* 'close eyes' to mean ignore a bribe. Secondly, comes the N + ADJ structure with a 35 per cent dominance. The study gives an example of *moyo mbaya* 'bad heart' identical to Lubukusu *ku-moyo ku-mubi*, and *macho makubwa* 'big eyes for greed'. The N + V (personification) structure dominates the analysed data by 15 per vent. Examples include *moyo umekufa* 'heart died'. The locative category accounts for 10 per cent. An example of this category is *moyoni* 'in heart', which is similar to Lubukusu *mu-mu-oyo* 'in heart'. Kraska-Szlenk notes that Swahili infinitive *ku-* (*kufumba)* parallels the Lubukusu *khu-* (*Khu-saaba ki-mi-khono)*, indicating a Proto-Bantu *ku-* infinitive retention. The study relevantly establishes close ties in verbs between the two languages, reflecting cultural similarity.

Agyekum (2015) analyses metaphorical expressions of ani 'eye ', and four syntactic patterns are identified. The N+V structure, where eye is the subject acting as the agent; the N+ADJ structure, where eye takes a quality adjective (*heavy/light face* denoting dignity); the V+N structure, where the'eye' is the object of control verbs; and proverbial embedding. He also finds that Akan body-part expressions have extended meanings that still have some relationship with the original words, with body parts acting as productive lexical items for semantic derivation. This previous study relates to the present study through its data collection from Akan literature books, the Bible, and radio recordings through the documentary analysis method, which is similar to the secondary data collection method used in this study for collecting idioms from a published thesis.

Alati (2015) distinguishes structural categories that are formed from verb phrases (of the structures: [INF.] +V + NP, V + NP + NP and [INF.] + V + Prep + NP) and those formed from noun phrases (of the structure N + Adj.). The structural classification is relevant to the current paper since both Olunyore and Lubukusu are close Bantu languages and both are agglutinating languages. For instance, Wafula (2015) gives an example of the infinitive *khu-* + verb + final vowel -a. He gives examples: *khu-lia* 'to eat' and *khu-tsiina* 'to close'. In addition to this, Mutonyi (2000) studies Lubukusu phonology and describes noun class prefixes: Class 3 *omwoyo* 'heart', Class 11 *lulimi* 'tongue', Class 6 *makanwa* 'mouths, plural', Class 10 *tsimoni* 'eyes. This is essential for explaining N+ADJ agreement: *omwoyo mu-bii* (CL3-bad), *lulimi lu-bii* (CL11-bad), *tsimoni tsi-bii* (CL10-bad), and this is relevant to the present study.

Nalianya (2020) observes that proverbs contain body idioms such as *Omwoyo omubii kwesa omwene* 'Bad heart kills owner'. She categorises proverbs by speech act but not by syntactic type of embedded idioms. The study shows that proverbs embed the N+ADJ of

idioms. The study does not isolate idioms from proverbs, does not quantify syntactic types and does not analyse the infinitive *khu-* structure as the present one does. Makila (1975) studies an outline history of Babukusu and lists idioms in the ethnographic context but without linguistic analysis. The study gives examples of secrecy idioms which provide a cultural context for BLOCKAGE image schema in body idioms like *Kumba-kho e-mu-nwa* 'being secretive'.

There are limited studies documented on Lubukusu idiom categorisation, as most studies have concentrated on Lubukusu morphology, phonology and semantics (Wafula et al. 2023; Masika et al. 2023). Matifari (2016) categorises Lubukusu idioms semantically and identifies four categories of Lubukusu idioms: transparent, semi-transparent, opaque and semi-opaque. This categorisation is based on the ease of their semantic meaning and the motivation provided by the elements towards their interpretation. However, whereas previous endeavours on Lubukusu idioms in general deal with their comprehension and categorisation, they are geared more towards semantics, while the present study deals with a specific subcategory of Lubukusu idioms (human body part idioms) and is limited to their syntactic categorisation.

From the analysed literature, this study hypothesises the expected syntactic types for Lubukusu human body part idioms. Based on the established Bantu patterns (Matumo, Kraska-Szlenk) and general phraseology (Moon), Lubukusu will show N + ADJ due to noun class agreement productivity. Secondly, they will show V + N structure, N (locative), P+N N *nende* N (coordination), not like Swahili (V+N > N+ADJ), because Lubukusu retains more noun class agreement than Swahili. This is according to Wafula (2015), who notes Lubukusu has 18 classes vs Swahili 15 and more agreement.

METHODOLOGY

Categorisation of idioms requires a systematic methodological approach, analysis, and authentic examples. Primary data were drawn from linguistic corpora on Lubukusu human body-part idioms from interviews and natural conversations. Human body part idioms were selected for study in this paper due to their prevalence, the availability of data, and the sense that there is missing scholarly evidence of their categorisation having been studied.

A total of 110 idioms were collected during fieldwork. Then, circular systematic sampling was used to sample the target idioms by picking idioms at a sampling interval of three idioms along the list up to the end, and circling back to the beginning to pick remaining samples until the quota was filled and the target sample size of 39 idioms was reached.

The sampled human body part idioms were analysed for categorisation using a combination of both qualitative and analytical methods. The study focused on looking at the actual appearance and syntactic features of specific words, phrases, and concepts in each of the collected data items without a deep interpretation of meaning. Boundaries of syntactic structures of the respective idioms were determined by first considering the morphological properties of the elements (morphological and syntactic interface) and then subjecting them to constituency tests: element substitution and movement within the structure of the idiom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this paper is based on thirty-nine human body-part idioms sampled for this study for analysis, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sampled Idioms According to Parts

Serial No.	Body part of coinage	Number of idioms
1	Brain	4
2	Ear	1
3	Eye	3
4	Hand	6
5	Head	2
6	Heart	13
7	Leg/feet/thigh	3
8	Liver	1
9	mouth	2
10	Ribs	1
11	Stomach	1
12	Tongue	2
	Total	39

The collected idioms were also analysed according to their categorisation into their respective categories as indicated in Table **2.**

Table 2. Distribution of Idioms According to Their Category to which they are Categorized

Serial No.	Idiom Category	Number of idioms.
1	Verbal idioms	21
2	Adjectival	6
3	Prepositional	7
4	Nominative Clausal	5
	Total	**39**

The sampled data was observed to display various syntactic patterns as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Syntactic Structural Patterns and Distribution of Idioms

Syntactic Pattern/ structure	Number of idioms showing the structure	Percentage %
V+N (Verb +Noun)	15	38.5
Adj +N (Adjective + Noun)	6	15.4
P+N (Prep. + Noun)	2	5.1
N (Noun-Locative)	2	5.1
N+N (Noun+ Noun-Possessive)	2	5.1
V+N+P+N(Verb+ Noun+ Prep.+ Noun)	1	2.5
V+ N+ Adj (Verb+ Noun+ adjective)	1	2.5
V+ N+ N (Verb+ Noun+ Noun)	2	5.1
P+ N+ N (Prep.+ Noun+ Noun)	1	2.5
P+ N+ P+ N (Prep.+ Noun+ Prep+ Noun)	1	2.5
V+ N+ V+ N (Verb+ Noun+ Verb+ Noun)	1	2.5
N+ Adj+ V+ N (Noun+ Adjective+ Verb+ Noun)	1	2.5
V+ Adv(*niyo*)+ N+ V (Verb+ Adverb+ Noun+ Verb)	1	2.5
V+ *nende*+ N (Verb+ nende+ Noun	2	5.1
N+ ye+ N (Noun+ *ye*+ Noun)	1	2.5

From the table above, it is observed that the most productive structure is V+N (Verb +Noun), with 15 idioms, followed by the Adj +N (Adjective + Noun) structure with six idioms. V+N (Verb +Noun) is the most productive, unlike other African and Bantu languages, which have Adj +N (Adjective + Noun) structure dominance, because the Lubukusu verb includes the to-infinitive marking morpheme *khu-* appended to the verb at the initial position and the politeness (pragmatic softener marking morpheme) -*kho* appended to the verb at the final position, which is not the case in Bantu Languages such as Swahili.

The collected idioms were subjected to the examination of their lexical compositionality using content analysis and in alignment with Makkai, Boatner, and Gates, who categorise idioms based on their syntactic form, and the following syntactic categories of Lubukusu human-body part idioms were established.

Verbal idioms include idioms which have a verbal syntagmatic structure. They consist of a verb as the main element and an object, which is the somatic element making the idiom. This study found oud two sub-categories under these verbal idioms: On one hand, To-infinitive verbal idioms include idioms composed of a to-infinitive verbal element, marked by the prefix *Khu-* that is added to the root form of the verb observed in the idioms:

In this category, idioms assume the following structural form:

1. *khu-sikal-aku-mu-rwe*
INF-remain. FV CL3-head
Literal: to be left as the head
Idiomatic: be left the leader
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

2. Khu-saab-aki-mi-khono
INF-wash.FV CL4-CL4-hand
Literal: To wash hands

Idiomatic: To distance oneself from a matter.

Syntactic structure: (V + N)
Idioms one and two, *khu-sikal-a ku-mu-rwe* and *khu-saab-a ki-mi-khono* respectively, are classic examples of the V+ N structure, where the infinitive verbs *khu-sikal-a* 'remain' and *khu-saab-a*'wash', respectively, take a noun, which is the anatomical body part, as a direct object. This is the same structure in idioms 5 and 6, where the to-infinitive verbs *khu-kisa* 'hide' and khu-tiila' hold', respectively, take the nouns *ku-mu-khono* 'hand' and *ku-moyo* 'heart' as direct objects of the verbs; hence the structure V+ N. A similar situation occurs in idiom eight, where the V+N structure is a result of the to-infinitive verb *khu-khup-a* 'to yap' taking the locative nominal element *e-mu-nwa* 'mouth'.

3. *Khu-ba e-moniy-a o-mu-ndu*
INF-be 9-eye 9-GEN 1-person [A1.1]
Literal: To be someone's eye
Idiomatic: to watch over something on behalf of someone else or be someone'skeeper
Syntactic structure: (V + N +P + N)

4. *khu-ba ku-mu-oyo ku-a o-mu-ndu*
INF-be LOC17-3-heart LOC17-GEN 1-person
Literal: to be someone's heart
Idiomatic: to be beloved and treasured
Syntactic structure: (V + N +P + N)

The structure V + N +P + N in idioms 3 and 4 is a result of the to-infinitive verbs *khu-ba* 'to be' taking the noun objects *emoni* 'eye' and *ku-mu-oyo* 'heart', respectively, which are modified by associative phrases *ya omundu* and *ku-a o-mu-ndu* 'someone's', respectively, literally indicating possession.

5. *Khu-kisa ku-mu-khono*
INF-hide CL4-CL4-hand
Literal: to hide a hand
Idiomatic: to work lazily
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

6. *Khu-tiila ku-moyo*
INF-hold CL3-heart
Literal: to hold one's heart
Idiomatic: exercise restraint
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

7. *khu-rus-i-a e-moni e-n-dafu*
INF-produce FV CL3-eye CL3-bitter
Literal: to produce a bitter eye
Idiomatic: be disappointed and resentful.
Syntactic structure: (V + N +Adj)

In the structure V + N +Adj as seen in idiom 7, the causative to-infinitive verb *khu-rus-i-a* 'produce' takes the noun- nominal body part *e-moni* 'eye' that is modified by an adjectival modifier *e-n-dafu* 'bitter'.

8. *Khu-khup-a e-mu-nwa*
INF-yap FV CL3-CL3-mouth
Literal: to yap the mouth
Idiomatic: talk casually and endlessly
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

The Lubukusu sentence, though sometimes it may be in agglutination compared to the English one, which has well-defined syntactic elements, has a subject and a predicate. Sometimes, it may have some other syntactic elements such as the object and complements, among others. In a sentence, for instance,
Maayi a-le-ny-a-nga khu-li-a
Literal: Mum wants to eat.

The sentence has a subject, *Maayi* 'Mum', a linking verb, *a-le-nya-nga* 'wants', that precedes the to-infinitive form of the main verb, *khu-li-a* 'to eat'. When element substitution is done on the sentence, say, replacing the main verb form in the sentence with another verb like *khu-koon-a* 'to sleep', the element fits in the slot, identifying it as the verb position in the sentence. Thus,
Maayi a-le-nya-nga khu-koon-a.
Literal: Mum wants to sleep.

Upon doing an element substitution test with the to-infinitive forms of the idioms in the verb position in the sentence, it was observed that the sentence could still make sense. Thus,

1. *Maayi a-le-nya-nga* ***khu-sikal-a ku-murwe.***

Literal: Mum wants **to remain the head.**
Meaning: Mum wants to remain the head.

1. Maayi alenyanga ***khu-tiil-a ku-moyo.***

Literal: Mum wants to **hold her heart.**
Idiomatic: Mum wants to exercise restraint.

Syntactically, the idiom is categorised in the verbal category due to the position it takes in the structure of a Lubukusu sentence and the function it would play as a predicate. The virtue of the idioms suitably functioning in the Lubukusu Sentence verb slot categorically makes them appropriately categorised as verbal idioms.

On the other hand, **bare-infinitive verbal idioms** have a bare infinitive verb form occurring together with one more nominal element, which is a name(s) of body part. Such idioms may have other elements such as prepositions, adverbials and determiners, though the head word is the bare infinitive verb form. Idioms in this class include the ones below.

9. *Tiil-a ku-mu-oyo mu-khono*
hold-FV LOC17-3-heart LOC18-3-hand
Literal: hold the heart in the hands
Idiomatic: be cowardly.
Syntactic structure: (V + N+N)

This idiom exemplifies a bare infinitive verb *til-a* 'hold' that takes two nouns, *ku-mu-oyo* 'heart' and the class 18 locative noun *mu-khono* 'hand' in apposition. The two nouns are not considered direct objects.

10. *Yiim-a khu bi-kele bi-ombi*
PT. -FV stand Prep-on CL4-legs CL8.Aug-both
Literal: 'stand on both feet'
Idiomatic: be firm
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

The Verb *yiim-a* 'stand' takes the Noun *bi-kele* 'legs' with. These two syntactic elements are joined by a locative marker*khu* 'on'while the Nominal element is modified by the adjective (modifier) indicating number: *biombi* 'both'. This structure may be technically considered as V + LOC-N + Adj.

11. *ko-mil-e chi-mbafu*
SM-PST-FV -dried CL8-ribs
Literal: 'has dried ribs'
Idiomatic: passed away
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

12. *O-le-le-si-a ku-moyo*
SM- PT- APL- FV- sooth CL3-heart
Literal: 'Sooth the heart'
Idiomatic: make comfortable/comfort
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

13. *Yi-khal-ila ka-maru*
PT-VR-APL sit CL6-ears
Literal: 'sit on ears'
Idiomatic: perceive nothing or listen to nothing
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

14. *Lol-e-le-si-a lu-limi*
VR-PT-APL-FV check CL11-tongue
Literal: 'check the tongue'
Idiomatic: being watchful with what to say
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

15. *Balaa-isi-a e-munwa*
VR-INF-FV -widen CL9-mouth
Literal: 'widen the mouth'
Idiomatic: conceal nothing; keep no secret.
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

16. *Funikh-ilil-a bu-kesi*
IMP.VR-APL-FV. cover CL14-brains
Literal: 'cover the brains
Idiomatic: be unreasonable.
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

Idioms 12 to 16 have the Verb- Noun structure, with a transitive verb taking an object. However, all the verbs have an applicative element attached to the root of the verb. This is as indicated in Table 4. Below.

Table 4. The Verb Root and Its Attached Applicative Form

Verb root	Applicative form
O-le-l-	*-e-si-a*
Yi-khal-	*-ila*
Lol-	*-e-le-si-a*
Balaa-	*-isi-a*
Funikh-	*-ilil-a*

17. *Chenj-a li-ra-ngo*
Change-FV CL5-thigh
Literal: 'change the thigh'
Idiomatic: change a sexual partner.
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

18. *fw-a ku-mu-oyo*
Die-FV CL3-heart
Literal: die the heart
Idiomatic: become disillusioned; give up.
Syntactic structure: (V + N)

Idioms 17 and 18 equally have the V+ N structure, where the Noun occurs after the Verb. The verb *Chenj-a* 'change'and *fw-a* 'die' consecutively takes the objects *li-ra-ngo* 'thigh' and *ku-mu-oyo* 'heart' respectively.

19. *Kumb-a-kho e-mu-nwa*
Close -FV- LOC17 3-mouth
Literal: 'close the mouth'
Idiomatic: saying little; being secretive
Syntactic structure: (V + N)
The Verb kumb-a-kho 'close' occurs with a noun e-mu-nwa 'mouth'. The verb uses the root kumb-a and the polite marker -kho. In this case, the verb is a locative extension showing where closing happens: e-mu-nwa, a body part and locative direct object.

20. *Ba-akh-o nende ku-mu-oyo*
VR- CL. FV -have Prep CL3-heart.
Literal: 'have a heart'
Idiomatic: be considerate; sympathetic; merciful.
Syntactic structure: (V *nende* N)

In this idiom, the verb *ba-akh-o* 'have' is a result of the root verb *ba-* and the Lubukusu politeness marker *-kho,* which is appended to the root as a suffix. In Lubukusu, the verb is usually followed by a possessive marker, *nende,* which also functions as a comitative linker for 'with' before taking a noun complement of the verb, *ku-mu-oyo* 'heart'. This is the case in idiom 21, where the verb *lola* is linked to the noun complement of the verb with the linker *nende.* In the case of idiom 21, the noun complement of the verb is modified by a quantifier *chi-biili.*

21. *lol-a nende chi-moni chi-bili*
IMP. VR- watch Prep-with CL10-eyes SM-CL10-two
Literal: 'look with two eyes'
Idiomatic: being careful and cautious
Syntactic structure: (V+ *nende* N+ Det)

Sikuku (2011: 11) argues that "because of the rich agreement system sometimes the subject/object positions are syntactically null, but the content can always be understood from the linguistic context mainly by means of agreement". This paper observes that Lubukusu, in the S-V agreement system, has the null subject marker (SM) embedded on the idiom. It has also to be noted that the morpheme (Ko) attached to the verb in the structure of the idiom also doubles up as a perfective aspect marker (PAM).

Therefore, the null subject in the phrase structure of the idiom above is indicated by the subject marker (*ko-*) on the verb form *ko-mile.* The same morpheme also doubles up as a perfective aspect marker 'has'. In addition to this, a sentential context would equally justify this. In a sentence like;
Wafukho kenda.
Literal: Wafukho walk.

The two sentences could see the bare verbal element kenda 'walk' being replaced with idiomatic expressions. Thus,

9. *Wafukho ko-mile chi-mbafu.*
Literal: Wafukho has dried ribs. (Wafukho has passed away).

11. *Wafukhoyiima khu bi-kele bi-ombi.*
Literal: Wafukho stand on both feet. (Wafukho is to be firm)

14. *Wafukho lol-e-le-si-a lu-limi.*
Literal: Wafukho check the tongue. (Wafukho is to be careful with what you say)

16. *Wafukho kumba-kho e-mu-nwa.*
Literal: Wafukho close the mouth. (Wafukho is to say little/ be secretive)

20. *Wafukho ba-akho nende ku-moyo.*

Literal: Wafukho have a heart. (Wafukho is to be considerate; sympathetic and merciful)

Another category involves the **Adjectival idioms.** They are idioms whose form consists of an adjectival element combined with the nominal element. The adjective functions in giving the meaningful attributes of the nominal part of the idiom. Examples of such items would include;

22. *Lu-limi lu-alafu*
CL11-tongue CL11.Aug-rough
Literal: 'Rough tongue'
Idiomatic: harsh and violent speech
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

23. *Ku-mu-khono ku-mu-lei*
CL3-CL3-hand CL3. Aug.-long
Literal: 'a long hand'
Idiomatic: characterised by theft
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

24. *Ku-moyo ku-mu-reng-u*
CL4-heart CL4.Aug-CL3. Pref.-faint
Literal: A faint heart
Idiomatic: cowardly
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

25. *Ku-mu-rwe ku-mu-lume*
CL3-CL3-head CL3.Aug- Adj.ConCL3-hard
Literal: 'hard-headed
Idiomatic: difficulty to learn
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

26. *E-nda em-bofu*
CL9-stomach CL9.Aug-big
Literal: Big/large stomach
Idiomatic: greedy/never getting satisfied.
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

27. *Ku-moyo ku-mu-mil-i-yu*
CL3-heart CL3Aug-CL3Adj.Con- VR-INF-Adj.Ext-clean
Literal: 'A clean heart'
Idiomatic: pure and honest
Syntactic structure: (Adj + N)

In idioms 22 to 27, the idiom structure is made of an anatomical, also Nominal body part element and a verbal element. The adjectives describe the nouns in each idiom, giving their qualities or attributes. This syntactic order yields an Adj+ N structure in adjectival idioms.

28. *Ku-moyo kwa-e-simba*
CL3-heart CL3.Prep-of CL9-lion
Literal: the heart of the lion
Idiomatic: courageous, ferocious and merciless
Syntactic structure: (N + N) Possessive

The idiom's structure (N + N) Possessive is a result of a Class 3 Nominal element *ku-moyo* 'heart'occurring in agreement with another Class 9 Nominal element *e-simba* 'lion', *joined* by an attributive or possessive *marker kwa-* 'of'

Functionally, in the Lubukusu sentence, the idiom occupies the adjective slot and functions as a subject modifier, modifying the nominal or pronoun function, hence the N+ Adj syntactic structure. In a sentence like: *Wafukho o-mu-laayi, Literal:* Wafukho is good; the Noun(subject) Wafukho is the subject of the sentence, whose attribute is given predicatively by the predicative adjective *o-mu-laayi* 'good'. The element *o-mu-laayi* can be substituted with the idioms identified above, and they would still give the attributes of Wafukho predicatively. Thus,

23. *Wafukho ku-mu-khono ku-mu-lei.*
Literal: Wafukho is a long hand.
Idiomatic: Wafukho is a thief.

[25.] *Wafukho ku-mu-rwe ku-mu-lume.*
Literal: Wafukho is hard-headed.
Idiomatic: Wafukho is difficult to learn.

[27.] *Ku-moyo ku-mu-mil-i-yu.*
Literal: Wafukho is a clean heart.
Idiomatic: Wafukho is honest.

The idioms in the sentences above play an adjectival function, giving more information about Wafukho, the Noun and subject of the sentence.

The **prepositional category of idioms** includes human body-part idioms having a prepositional element. The prepositional element in this case may either occur at the idiom's initial position or medial position. Still, in some instances, the idiom occurs as a single word, with the prepositional marker attached to the nominal element. Such idioms include;
29. *khu-khwam-a mu-moyo*
INF-come. from- FV LOC18-heart
Literal: 'from the heart'
Idiomatic: very much, sincerely and deeply, especially expressing emotions.
Syntactic structure: (P + N)

30. *Mu-mu-oyo*
LOC18-3-heart
Literal: 'inside the heart'
Idiomatic: deep level of honesty, feeling, information
Syntactic structure: (N) Locative

31. *Mu-ma-kesi*
LOC18-CL3-mind
Literal: in the mind
Idiomatic: a planned idea or thought about something.
Syntactic structure: (N) Locative

Idioms 30 and 31 have an N locative structure. The Nouns *mu-oyo* 'heart' and *ma-kesi* 'mind' are attached to the CL18 locative markers, hence the structure.

32. *Khu-londe-kha-na ne ku-moyo*
CL15.INF-according -R Prep-with CL3-heart
Literal: In accordance with the heart.
Idiomatic: in compliance with one's wishes, desires, emotions, willingness
Syntactic structure: (P + N)

Idiom 32 is observed to have a P+N with a Possessive as an extension of P+N. The structure is marked by the Prepositional element (V*khu-*+P-*londe-kha-na*) *khu-londe-kha-na* 'in accordance' followed by an associative/possessive marker *ne* 'with' and the Nominal *ku-moyo* 'heart'.

33. Khu-*bu-kesi bwe e-muna*
Pos. Con-onCL14-brain Pos. Con-of CL9.Aug-squirrel
Literal: on the brain of the squirrel
Idiomatic: cunningly witty
Syntactic structure: (P + N + N) Possessive

34. Mu-*bu-kesi bwe ku-mwi-si-uuba*
Pos. C-through CL14-brain Pos. Con-of CL3-INFLswing
Literal: through the swing-like brain
Idiomatic: unstable and unpredictable reasoning.
Syntactic structure: (P + N +P + N) Possessive

Functionally, the idiom serves the prepositional function, indicating the relationship between elements in a sentence. For instance, idioms 28, 29 and 30 indicate the relation in terms of place, while 31 and 34 indicate manner (how). Thus,

A-lo-mil-e [28.]khu-kwa-ma mu-kari mwe ku-moyo.
Literal: He/She said from the inside of the heart. (saying very sincerely and deeply)
A-lo-mil-e [31.] khu-londe-kha-na ne ku-moyo.
Literal: she said in accordance with the heart (in compliance with one's wishes, desires, emotions, willingness)

Nominative clausal idioms include idioms whose structure typically consists of a complete clause, with at least a subject and a predicate. They are also referred to as sentence idioms, as they take the complete grammatical form of a full clause. The following Lubukusu human body-part idioms were identified under this category. It is to be noted that in the event such categories of idioms in Lubukusu are not uttered in a sentential context, then they bear a non-overt (zero) NP which functions as a null subject of the clause. Therefore, the structure of the idiom is marked by a predicate and other element. Thus,

35. *bu-kul-a li-laka mu-mi-khono*
2SG.IMP-take-FV 5-law LOC18-4-hands
Literal: take the law in the hands

Idiomatic: administering punishment irrespective of the law
Syntactic structure: (V + N + N) Locative

In idiom 35, the transitive verb *bu-kul-a* 'take' (core action) takes two noun complements after it: the object *li-lak-a* 'law' (what is taken) and the locative/indirect object *mu-mi-khono* 'hands' (where it is taken), marked by the locative *mu-* 'in', a class locative prefix (Cl18).

36. *U-liil-a bu-raafu bu-bwool-a khu-siini.*
2nd P. Sing.SM -feel CL14-pain C14.Aug-reaches CL17-liver
Literal: feel the pain that reaches the liver.
Idiomatic: very much/ intense pain.
Syntactic structure: (V+ N + V + N) Locative

Idiom 36 has the structure of two juxtaposed VP structures. The idiom is marked by a verb *u-liila* 'feel' followed by the first noun N_1 *bu-raafu* 'pain' followed by another verb, *bu-bwool-a* 'which reaches' (may also function as an adjectival) followed by another noun, N_2 *khu-siini* 'liver' marked by the locative *khu-* 'on'.
In some cases, the idioms had an overt subject in their clausal structure. This is seen in idioms 37,38 and 39.

37. *E-mbwa e-nge-nda-ni ya-mu-khomba mu-bi-khandak-ilo.*
CL9-dog CL9-Hab.-roamSM. Con. OM-leaked CL18-CL8-feet
Literal: the roaming dog licked him/her on the feet.
Idiomatic: habitual wandering/ roaming aimlessly
Syntactic structure: (N + Adj +V + N)

The structure of the idiom 37 is made up of a nominal element *e-mbwa* 'dog' that is modified by the adjective *e-nge-nda-ni* 'roaming', a verb in the simple past tense that, in its agglutinative nature, occurs with the person marker *ya-mu-khomba* 'licked', and another nominal element that carries the locative morpheme *mu-* and the nominal body part *mu-bi-khandak-ilo* 'feet'.

38. *E-nyuni ye mu-mu-khono*
CL9-bird CL9 ss. Con-of CL18-CL18-hand CL9
Literal: a bird in hand
Idiomatic: something that you have in the hand
Syntactic structure: (N+ N) Possessive

39. *W-i-ya-kala niyo ku-mu-khono kwo-ola.*
2nd P. Sing.SM-Refl.-scratch Rel.Loc-where CL3-CL3-hand CL3 S Con.-reaches
Literal: you scratch where the hand reaches
Idiomatic: you do something based on your own ability.
Syntactic structure: (V+ *niyo* +N + V)

In the idiom, the verb *wi-ya-kala* 'you scratch'is followed by a relative locative marker niyo 'where', followed by the nominal element *ku-mu-khono* 'hand' and the verb *kwo-ola* 'reaches'

This category of idioms is made up of a statement that is idiomatic in nature. The statement has a subject and a predicate and, in some cases, it has other syntactic and structural elements as well. They derive a complete sense semantically, though the sense derived is basically idiomatic. Examples include the idioms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This study analysed 39 Lubukusu body idioms containing 12 organs (Brain, ear, eye, hand, head, heart, leg, thigh, feet, liver, mouth, ribs, stomach and tongue) and found four syntactic categorisations: Verbal, Adjectival, Prepositional and Nominative clausal categories. The highest-yielding category is the verbal category, with 21 body idioms. The study also finds that, in terms of the syntactic structure of the idioms, the V+N structure, made up of the Verb and the Nominal anatomical body part, is dominant, with 15 idioms (38.5%), followed by the N+ Adj structure, with 6 idioms (15.4%).

Recommendations: Idioms vitality in a language and their categorisation cannot be overlooked. Their classification into syntactic categories provides valuable insights into their nature and usage. Lubukusu idioms, especially human body part idioms, are a wide area that calls for a lot of scholarly studies to be conducted. For instance, this study focuses on a structural approach to categorising human body-part idioms. It therefore calls for other studies to consider the categorisation of Lubukusu human body part idioms from the Structural-Syntactical, Semantic and Functional approaches.

The study of this nature not only underscores the importance of categorisation of idioms but also the linguistic theory and practice, opening insights into further scholarly studies.

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