

ABSTRACT

Language plays a fundamental role in HIV and AIDS communication. In Kenya, English and Kiswahili are used as the languages of communication in HIV and AIDS related issues although only 17% of the population use English effectively while, 65% speak and understand Kiswahili. Therefore, the use of indigenous languages is encouraged in HIV and AIDS communication. EkeGusii like any other African languages does not have specific terms for defining scientific concepts like HIV and AIDS. Numerous expressions used in HIV and AIDS results from the speakers' creativity and their different embodied experiences with their environments over the scourge. Some of these expressions in EkeGusii are metaphorical. However, the use of metaphor may give rise to difficulties in comprehension because of the multiple interpretations that may be accorded to it and its comparison may introduce properties that are not part of the addressee's mental representation of the topic. Consequently, expressions of HIV and AIDS may be represented and interpreted differently by EkeGusii speakers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the metaphorical conceptualization of EkeGusii HIV and AIDS discourse and their representation and interpretation. The objectives were to: identify and explain the metaphorical conceptualization of EkeGusii HIV and AIDS expressions and analyse properties of their cross domain mappings and, explain how EkeGusii speakers represent and interpret HIV and AIDS metaphors. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor propounded by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) was used to analyze data. Ubiquity, domains, cognitive models, unidirectionality, necessity and focusing tenets of the theory were used in this study. The analytical research design was employed in this study. Purposive and chain sampling techniques were used in this study. The unit of analysis was EkeGusii linguistic expressions used in HIV and AIDS discourse which also formed the population of this study. A total of 54 linguistic expressions and 17 transcripts were used in the analysis. Data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews and it was analysed qualitatively using content analysis within the tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor. This data was assigned into different cross domain mappings and their properties and interpretations discussed. The findings indicated that EkeGusii speakers conceptualize HIV and AIDS using a number of mappings, for instance, A SEROPOSITIVE IS ON A JOURNEY and CONTRACTING HIV IS DEATH. However, some of these mappings carry negative connotations for example, CONTRACTING HIV IS DEATH and HIV IS A BIG BEAST among others. This study may be useful to HIV and AIDS communicative campaigners as they may design communicative activities using and acceptable terminologies. The study recommends that EkeGusii speakers should avoid using linguistic expressions that perpetuate stigma and discrimination in HIV and AIDS discourse.