

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF DHOLUO PROVERBS ON WOMEN

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**A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LINGUISTICS AND
LANGUAGES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

OCTOBER 2015

DECLARATION

This Project Report is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Barnabas Ogot Swaya and my late mother Mary Turphosa Atieno for giving me a chance to get education, which has brought me this far.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank the Almighty God for giving me the strength and endurance to accomplish this work. Secondly, my greatest gratitude goes to Professor Duncan Okoth Okombo for his supervisory role on my work. I thank him so much for his patience and guidance that has seen me finish this work. I am not forgetting my other supervisor Dr. James Orao for his guidance and advice. I would like to direct my gratitude also to Dr Helga Schroeder for her encouragement and advice. My special thanks go to all my lecturers who imparted to me the knowledge that I have used to do this work. In my list of thanks, I cannot forget my two colleagues Geoffrey Moseti and Daniel Nyang'acha for the encouragement they gave me during the time of writing my work. Finally, my greatest gratitude goes to my dad and my late mum who took the initiative to take me to school and my sisters and brothers, who have always supported me throughout the entire time of writing my work. I say may God bless them abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the pragmatics of Dholuo proverbs on women. It sought to answer three key questions, namely: What is the dominant community perception of women as reflected in the proverb? In what context are the proverbs used? How does relevance theory account for how the hearer understands the proverbs? Relevant research objectives and hypotheses were formulated to guide the research conducted within the theoretical perspectives of Relevance Theory. Using interactive data collection methods, fifty two proverbs were collected and classified into four categories, namely: the woman as a daughter; the woman as a wife; the woman as a female; the woman as a mother. These were finally subjected to a relevance-theoretic analysis. The results revealed that: There are stereotypical proverbs about women in the Luo society; the majority of the proverbs are demeaning to the woman; cultural context is the right cognitive environment needed to process the proverbs; relevance theory adequately accounts for how the hearer understands the proverb among the Luo speakers. Further research could be conducted to examine how men are portrayed in proverbs within the same society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introductory Remarks

This chapter introduces the project report by indicating the major research assumptions and procedures on which it is based. In particular, it comprises the following sub-sections: Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives, Hypotheses, Rationale, Scope and Limitations, Theoretical Framework, Terms in Relevance Theory, Literature Review, Methodology and the Conclusion (to the chapter).

1.1 Background to the Study

Culture is part and parcel of every community (cf. Malo 1999:2-3; Mboya 2004:vii, xiii). The culture of a community is reflected in its people's everyday discourse, where the people's beliefs are expressed through what they consider to be wise sayings, especially their proverbs. For that reason, it is useful that we look at what entails Luo culture before we look at their proverbs.

The Luo society is patriarchal. Leadership was strictly dominated by men. Women were not allowed even to participate in the process of selecting leaders, let alone being selected (Ayot 1990). The Luo community had customary laws that ensured women were not chosen as chiefs. Mboya (2004:4) states "The eldest son of the first wife was usually the person eligible to be a chief, 'ruoth'. Where the senior wife did not have a son, the son of a younger wife was chosen if he was of good character, age notwithstanding, and if the community so desired". We can infer from this statement that if there was a daughter in the first wife's house she would not be chosen as a chief because she was a female.

Another area of leadership from which women were excluded was military leadership. Men of valour were chosen to lead the warriors. Here too, women were not considered since they were believed to be cowards. Hence the proverb:

(1) **“Iluor ka dhako”**

You-fearful-be-like-women

‘you are as fearful as a woman’

Since they were believed to be cowards, women were to remain at home as others went to war. Their work was to welcome the warriors after war with ululations if they won and to collect the bodies of those who were killed in war if the warriors lost. It was part of the Luo custom that women and children were not to be killed in a war. Generally, women and children were regarded as weak people. Achieng (2004:23), states that, “In a home where a warrior had killed someone the wife and the mother and all other women in the home powdered themselves with ash.”

Third, homestead construction was initiated by a man. A widow could not construct a house or move to a new homestead without involving a man. She had to find a man to act as her husband, (i.e. ‘jater’ in Dholuo). The new man would do all rituals that goes with making of a new homestead. Note that, if one had only daughters for children, then, he could not construct his own homestead until a son was born. The important role of a male child in a family is generally expressed through the proverb:

(2) **Wuowi e siro**

Boy-be-pillar

A boy is a pillar.

A boy was held in high esteem as he was the one to carry the family's lineage (Miruka 2001:11). On the other hand, a girl was not considered as a treasure in a home but like a visitor who would one day go to another land. Thus the proverb:

(3) Nyako ogwang'

Girl wildcat

A girl is a wildcat.

Fourth, concerning marriage, women did not have a say on whom to marry. Marriage in the Luo community was not always based on love. It was intended for procreation and many other roles that pertain to a woman, including digging, cooking, fetching water and firewood among others. A woman was often not given a chance to decide on who would marry her. The older women were the ones to choose for her (Ayodo 1994:122). The style of picking the bride was through ambushing the girl when she went to grind flour, fetch water or firewood.

Even in the area of food, there were customs which spelt out what was eaten by men, women and children. According to Miruka, (2001:6), women were prohibited to eat the following foods: chicken, eggs, elephant and porcupine meat while men were not allowed to eat kidneys.

In conclusion, we can say that, the Luo community was patriarchal rather than matriarchal in nature. Men were regarded as more important than women as they were favoured in many ways including the area of food. This state of affair reflected in the proverbs, riddles, narratives and even in the songs they sang.

The proposed research is intended to look at how Dholuo proverbs reflect the negative stereotypes regarding women in the Luo society. The study intends to use relevance theory in the attempt to understand how the hearer make inferences so as to understand the meaning of the proverbs used either explicitly or implicitly. The dialect used for the proverbs throughout the research is the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Like most African languages, Dholuo has a pronoun system that does not distinguish males from females. For example, in the following sentences, the pronominal elements ‘o-‘ (3rd person sg subject) and ‘-e’ (3rd person singular object may represent both males and females:

(i) Obiro

3sg-come (said on a progressive tone)

‘He/She is coming.’

(ii) Wadware

1plS-want-3sgO (Progressive tone)

‘We want him/her.’

Grammatical elements of the kind shown in (i) and (ii) may lead one to the illusion that the language (Dholuo) provides no evidence of gender discrimination. However, as soon as one starts looking at the sayings (especially proverbs) that occur in the language, one begins to see the stereotypes that reflect the thinking of the speakers of Dholuo regarding females (referred to here generically as women). Such sayings include the following:

(iii)Nyako ochot.

girl prostitute

A girl is a prostitute.

(iv) Wuowi siro.

boy pillar

A boy is a pillar.

Questions arising from the existence of such expressions include:

- (1) In what context are the proverbs used?
- (2) What is the dominant community perception of women as reflected in the proverbs?
- (3) How can linguists account for the understanding of such proverbs by the speakers of Dholuo?

Recordings of such sayings in oral literature research (cf. Miruka, 2001; 1994) do not attempt to answer such questions since their research agenda are different. However, studies in linguistics which delve into the area of Dholuo metaphors (cf. Otieno, 2014 & Okothe, 2013) have attempted to provide general explanations based on the theory of cognitive semantics. Related studies using relevance theory (cf. Nyang'acha, 2013) do not address issues in Dholuo.

So far, no study has investigated the insight that one may get into such questions by looking at them through the theoretical glasses of pragmatics, especially relevance theory, whose principles particularly target how hearers understand what speakers say in naturally occurring utterances.

The absence of such a study leaves a research gap, which constitutes the problem addressed in this study.

1.3 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- (i) To identify the proverbs that reveal perceptions of women in the Luo society
- (ii) To analyse and categorize the proverbs from a linguistic perspective
- (iii) To find out in which contexts the proverbs are used
- (iv) To explain within the parameters of relevance theory, how the proverbs are understood by the hearer

1.4 Hypotheses

- (i) Dholuo proverbs about women tend to demean women in the society
- (ii) Dholuo proverbs about women are categorizable in terms of relational parameters that are pragmatically significant
- (iii) The understanding of Dholuo proverbs on women depends on identifiable culture-based contextual cues
- (iv) The principles of relevance theory have the necessary capacity to account for how Dholuo proverbs about women are understood by the hearers

1.5 Rationale

This research is on how proverbs have been used to degrade women. A phenomenon that has been passed from generation to generation. The study will first yield data and information to those people who are interested in Luo oral literature. Second, the study will shed light on these stereotype proverbs thus eradicating disrespect that has been shown to Luo women all along. Furthermore, it will show that literary work can be analysed from a linguistic point of view through the use of pragmatic theory.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

The research dealt with Dholuo proverbs that touched on women generally. The proverbs about men and other issues were not considered in the research.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The proponent of relevance theory is Dan Sperber. This theory is based on the idea “that intentional communication gives rise to expectations which help us to decide what the communicator intends to convey” (Clarke 2013:4). According to Sperber & Wilson (2002:3), Relevance emanates from a basic assumption about human cognition. “The assumption is that human cognition is relevance-oriented: that is potentially relevant to us.” Relevance theory enables the hearer to pick only what is relevant to the occasion and leave out the rest that is not relevant. In other words, according to relevance theory the brain acts as a filter that separates the potentially relevant information from the irrelevant ones. These information filtered could be either through perception, memory and inference.

Relevance theory constitutes two principles. They are: Cognitive principles which is the first principle and Communicative principle which is the second Principle. By looking at these principles in detail, we shall be able to see how the hearer picks on the relevant information that the speaker intends to convey.

1.7.1 Cognitive Principle of Relevance

This principle states that human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance. Maximising relevance is to produce the greatest amount of cognitive effects for the least amount

of processing effort. According to Clarke (2013:32), our minds are organized in such a way as to help us achieve the greatest amount of cognitive effects using the least processing effort. How do the brain pick out what is relevant being that there is a lot of information available; too many potential contexts available in which to process any given input; too many inferences? The Cognitive Principle of Relevance has the answer. Human cognitive system is made “in such a way that it automatically tends to allocate attention and processing resources to the most relevant inputs available and to process them in a way that tends to maximize their relevance (Sperber & Wilson 2002:9).

Therefore, we can say that human cognitive system, according to Sperber & Wilson (2002:9), tends to develop automatic procedures, which are also known as (heuristic, for allocating attention and processing resources to the inputs that are potentially most relevant to us, and to process them in the most relevance-enhancing way”.

1.7.2 Communicative Principle of Relevance

This is the second principle of Relevance theory. It states that “utterances (or other ostensive stimuli) create presumptions/expectations of relevance” (Sperber & Wilson 2002:3). In this case the communicator produces an ostensive stimulus (designed to attract an audience’s attention and focus it on the communicator’s meaning which provides evidence that she intends the audience to come to a certain conclusion. The communicator deliberately attracts the attention of the audience, who expects the communicator to be offering relevant information. The audience does not just look for relevant information but for optimal relevance which will help the hearer make inferences.

For optimal relevance to be reached, two conditions have to be met. First. The utterance should be at least relevant enough to be worth processing. Second, it should be the most relevant one compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences. Let's look at them in detail.

1.7.3 The Presumption of Optimal Relevance

The first one says that for the utterance to be worth processing, it should have at least enough cognitive effects at a low enough processing effort. To be relevant enough, the utterance must be more relevant than anything else the audience could have been attending to if no utterance had been produced.

1.7.4 The Second Presumption of Relevance

It states that, the utterance made should be the most relevant one compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences. The speaker in this case contributes a lot in making the hearer pick the most relevant information. The information should not go against the speaker's abilities and preferences. It is the speaker's duty to ensure that he offers the hearer enough cognitive effects with least processing effort. By doing this, the most relevant information will have been picked. Relevance theory explains how the most relevant information is picked through the process of comprehension procedure. It states that, the hearer should follow a path of least effort in deriving cognitive effects by considering interpretations, for example, reference assignments, contexts e.t.c., in order of accessibility. Then, the hearer should stop searching for relevance when his/her expectation of relevance is satisfied or abandoned. The procedure ensures the hearer uses his processing effort economically with enough cognitive effects. So, communicative

principle of relevance summarizes other principles, into one. It says: every utterance (or other ostensive stimulus) creates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

1.7.5 Relevance-theoretic-comprehension Procedure

For the hearer to reach the most relevant information that will justify the speaker's meaning, Sperber and Wilson (2002:1) gives the following steps to follow:

Follow a path of least effort in deriving cognitive effects:

- (a) consider interpretations in order of accessibility;
- (b) stop when your expectation of relevance is satisfied.

This comprehension procedure of relevance theory solves the hearer problems of bridging the gap between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning. For the speaker's meaning to be attained the hearer has to answer questions on explicit meaning, implicit meaning and context.

1.8 Terms in Relevance Theory

Cognitive effects constitutes of new information and context. It is realized when a new or newly presented information interacts with the context. They can either:

- (a) strengthen a contextual assumption
- (b) contradict and eliminate a contextual assumption
- (c) combine with a contextual assumption to yield contextual implication

The greater the cognitive effects , the greater the relevance and the least the processing effort

Processing effort is the mental effort the hearer puts into processing an utterance. The greater the cognitive effects the less the processing effort. There are some factors that affect the processing effort required for utterance comprehension. They are:

-Recency of use – Recently used information requires less processing effort.

-Frequency of use- The more often an information is used the more it requires less processing effort.

-Linguistic complexity- The more linguistically complex a word or phrase is, the more processing effort is required.

Logical complexity – Negative expressions such as not, impossible, doubt cause more processing difficulties than corresponding positive expressions (e.g. possible, believe).

The smaller the processing effort required to derive these effects, the greater the relevance.

Context is a psychological construct. It is the set of mentally – represented assumptions actually used in interpreting a given utterance.

Speaker's meaning is the intended meaning.

Sentence meaning is the grammatical meaning of words in a sentence.

1.9 Literature Review

1.9.1 Studies on Dholuo Grammar

Linguists have done much on Dholuo language by seeing to it that linguistic theories are applied to analyze the language. Most researches that have been done linguistically are: *A Functional Grammar of constituent-order phenomena* (Okombo, 1997). The author uses Functional Grammar theory (FG) to study Dholuo constituent-order phenomena. He starts by looking at the grammatical categories and functions performed by these categories. It is the categories and their functions that initiates the ordering of the constituents. Further investigation reveals that nuclearization helps in the explanation of certain generalities and intuitions about constituent patterns in Dholuo. Odhiambo (1981), in the thesis, *Dholuo phonology: A Study of the Major*

Vowel processes, looks at the major phonological processes involving vowels in Dholuo such as deletion, compensatory lengthening, assimilation, glide formation and vowel harmony. Okoth, (1982) in his book, *Dholuo Morphophonemics in A Generative Framework* looks at the major vowel changes but on a morphophonemic point of view. He applies a Generative Framework theory while Odhiambo (1981), applies Natural Generative Phonology. Oduol, (1990) in her thesis, *Dholuo Dialects: Synchronic State and Some Historical References*, looks at the dialect groupings of Dholuo by looking at the historical background of the Luos. She explains that phonological, lexical and grammatical features of Dholuo determines the two dialects. The two dialects are: Kisumu-South Nyanza and Boro-Ukwala dialect. She further states that, through reconstruction, some kind of affiliation exist between different Dholuo dialect groups and the related language groups of Acholi, Alur and Lango. Omondi (1982), in her book *The Major Syntactic structures of Dholuo*, investigates the major syntactic structures of Dholuo basing it on Generative Transformational grammar. First, she looks at Dholuo phonology, categories into which the formatives of the language may be divided, morphological realizations of the categories. Secondly, she applies the base rules and transformational rules to the main syntactic structures of Dholuo. Therefore, all the above studies done on Dholuo grammar shows that no studies have been done on Dholuo proverbs using relevance theory approach. In addition, the studies done above apply linguistic theory on Dholuo grammar while this research will apply linguistic theory on literary language.

1.9.2 Studies on Luo Oral Literature

Oral literature tells us much about communities' traditions and cultures as is suggested by Miruka (2001). His anthology basically, talks about samples of Luo oral literature in one

collection unlike his former book; *Encounter With Oral Literature* that has assorted genres of Luo oral literature. The book, *Oral Literature of the Luo*, starts by explaining the Luo migration and settlement. After which he talks about the Luo culture which is seen in different activities performed by them. For instance, the way of worship, the food they eat, the way they went to war, the economic activities of the Luo, how they built their homestead and the rituals that were carried out during burial e.t.c. In the following chapters he explains the four genres of Luo oral literature. They are: riddles, proverbs, poetry and narratives. The studies try to portray that Luo is a patrilineal community (Miruka 2001:11). In Miruka, (1994) he talks of the four genres of oral literature as a whole. He doesn't specifically concentrate on a tribe but deals with many tribes from which his examples are drawn. Achieng (2004), in her English version of Paul Mboya's book *Luo Kitgi Gi Timbegi* talks about Luo leadership, that is, from a traditional chief known as *ruoth* to the community elders known as *jodong gweng*. Different laws that instil discipline to young men, girls and even children are discussed. She touches on the various food eaten by Luos like: ugali, fish, meat, chicken, vegetables such as Magira, awinja e.t.c. Foods that were forbidden to be eaten by different calibre of people are also mentioned. For instance, Luo men were prohibited to eat kidneys while women were prohibited to eat chicken, eggs, elephant and porcupine meat. Marriage, war and death are also discussed in detail. The book delves in the Luo culture, customs and traditions relating to birth, rites of passage, farming, maturity, marriage and death. The book touches also on some Luo narratives and proverbs. Some proverbs will come in handy in this research. In the book *Luo Customs and Practices* by Malo, Achieng, (1999) also talks of the way of life of Luos. She mainly focuses on secrets of the Luo; conflict solving in the olden days; how marriage took place; social activities of the communities like paying debt, working, wrestling and many others. It continues to talk about

settlers and finally talks about death and its rituals. Onyango and Roscoe (1974), gives an account of how the Luo people migrated from down the Nile to the shores of Lake Victoria in Western Kenya. They further look at the Luo religious system where they give different names for God. For example, Juok, Tham, Were, Nyasaye, Ruoth, Jarit, Wuon Koth, Nyakalaga e.t.c. They also talk of ancestors and their spirits; the way of worship, witchcraft among others. Afterwhich, they intrigue us with a collection of Dholuo narratives that mainly upholds Luo culture. The stories are well narrated so that through them the young learn their culture and at the same time teach them the benefits of good behavior.

Ayanga (1996), through Oral Literature depicts about Violence against women. She uses some assorted African proverbs to verify her statement. She talks of how these proverbs demean the woman. She also touches on proverbs that touch on menstruation, a situation that men see as dirty. Ayanga's work fits well under Dholuo oral literature because she derives some of her proverbs from Dholuo. For instance, she brings out the idea that, discrimination of girls began from birth when they were young as is shown by the following proverbs:

(4) wuoyi siro nyako to ogwang

boy pole girl is wildcat

a boy is a pole but a girl is a wildcat

Note that she has combined two proverbs. Normally, the proverbs should be as below:

(5) wuoyi siro

boy pole

a boy is a pole

© nyako ogwang'

girl wildcat

a girl is wildcat

She explains that, a boy is depicted as permanent and useful and a girl is seen as a rogue member of the society. Dholuo oral literature will form a foundation from which our arguments will be based. It will also provide us with data needed for this research.

1.9.3 Studies on Women

Ayot (1990), concurs with the idea that women have been given space unlike earlier times. He uses Jok' Onyango as reference. This community, he says, involved women in choosing of occupation. She points out the roles played by women. For example, procreation, cultivation and harvesting among others. In other words, Ayot upholds women by trying to show how they would do what the society thought they wouldn't like going to war, politics e.t.c. She further gives an account of how the emergence of colonial rule had effect on women. Gordon (1998), looks at Luo political and social structure. Politically, the Luo had a centralized leadership where the head was 'Ruoth'. Besides politics he looks at marriage laws and customs in details. In addition, he discusses the different forms of marriages in the Luo community. Kayongo & Onyango (1993) highlights on the modern roles played by family members. They note that, the roles played by husbands and wives in the community are changing. They talk of how culture is still upheld where the man is seen as the head of the family irrespective of what job he does. The woman is depicted as playing a big role in catering for the family than men. Studies on women especially, Luo women, will help as see how the society demeaned women which brought about the stereotype proverbs on women. Knowing how women were treated in the Luo society will provide the context from which the hearer can make inferences.

1.9.4 Studies on theoretical approaches to Luo oral literature

There are some Dholuo studies based on modern theoretical approaches to language description. They have used different theories in linguistics to analyse the folklores in Dholuo. Some of these studies are: Oduol (1989), who has analysed Dholuo proverbs on a linguist point of view. Otieno (2014) has looked at Dholuo metonymy by using Cognitive Semantic theory. Okoth (2013), has tackled Dholuo metaphors using conceptual metaphor theory, a concept in Cognitive Semantics. Nyang'acha (2013), has touched on figurative language used by Okot 'P' Bitek. Despite the fact that, he has not tackled anything on Dholuo language, he has used relevance theory to analyze the figures of speech in the book *Song of Lawino*, a theory which will be used to analyze the data. These studies show that Relevance theory has not been used to analyze proverbs in Dholuo.

1.10 Methodology

1.10.1 Data Collection

The researcher used purposive sampling to choose the respondents. Six men and two females were interviewed. The men formed the majority of those in the sample size because women shied away from the questions. Fourteen proverbs were obtained from this group of eight people. The data was collected through interviews, tape recording and note taking. The interviewer visited the interviewees in their homes to collect data. Three focused groups were also interviewed. Two groups consisted of motorcycle riders, all of whom were men, and one group consisted of women in the market place. Six proverbs were collected from the motorcycle riders since they were in a hurry to transport their passengers and so could not give the researcher ample time. Women, on the other hand, were not co-operative as they denied knowing the

proverbs about themselves. All in all, the men showed a lot of interest and were so much cooperative.

Thirty two proverbs were collected through secondary means, where books in the library were consulted especially those about Oral Literature of the Luo by Miruka (2001) and those about Luo proverbs and sayings by Odaga (1995) and another book by Paul Mboya, translated into English by Achieng (2004). These books were of help as they enriched the data with proverbs that the researcher could not otherwise get in the field, especially those with obscene words about women.

1.10.2 Data Analysis

The data collected was grouped into four groups depending on what role a woman played in the society. A woman was a daughter to somebody; a wife, a mother and generally a female. The proverbs were sorted out and grouped as follows:

- (i) The woman as a daughter
- (ii) The woman as a wife
- (iii) The woman as a female
- (iv) The woman as a mother

The reason for grouping them as above was because there were some proverbs that would touch on wife and not a daughter and vice versa. This was to help the hearer process the proverb in the relevant context. Relevance theory with its two tenets was used to analyze the data. The aim of the theory, was to explain how the hearer subconsciously, used the Relevance-theoretic

Comprehension Procedure, to reach at the relevant meaning that satisfies the expectation of relevance. The hearer followed the steps as in (c.f. 1.7.5) to arrive at the speaker's meaning.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with background to the study which gives us an insight of the Luo culture, norms and beliefs. It has also introduced the statement of the problem, objectives and hypotheses which form the basis of the study. Literature review tells of the various studies on Dholuo grammar, Luo oral literature, studies about women in the Luo society and the theoretical approaches to Luo oral literature. The theory to be used in the study has been discussed as well. In addition, the rationale, scope and limitation of the study has been touched too. Lastly, the methodology has shown us how data was collected, sorted, presented and analysed.

CHAPTER TWO

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF DHOLUO PROVERBS ON WOMEN

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a descriptive account of Dholuo proverbs on women. The proverbs are classified according to the themes based on different societal perspectives of the woman in the Luo society. A woman can be looked at differently depending on the context of the proverb used. She can be a daughter to her parents; a wife to her husband; a mother to her children and generally a female due to her sex. The chapter therefore classifies the Luo woman in four categories as follows:

2.1 The woman as a daughter

From our data, we can identify the following nine proverbs which apply to the woman as a daughter.

1. Nyako ochot

girl be prostitute

A girl is a prostitute

It is said of girls who are not yet married. It is believed that any girl has a potential of attracting many suitors thus the word prostitute. The Luo speakers, refer to unmarried girls as prostitutes to emphasize the fact that they will one day leave their homes of birth and go to other places just as prostitutes disappear and go to towns. A related proverb is seen in item 3.

2. Wuowi siro

boy be pillar

A boy is a pillar that supports the house

In the Luo culture, boys are seen as pillars in the sense that they remain behind in the homestead as the girls get married. They are seen as people who remain firmly grounded in the family unlike girls. Just as a pillar supports a house it's the same way that the boys are seen to support the homestead by ensuring life continues even after the parents are gone. That is the reason why when a boy dies at his parents' homestead he is buried near his parents' house yet when a girl dies, if not married, she is buried outside the homestead or if she is married, she is taken back to her husband for burial. The boys are seen to provide for the parents unlike girls who are seen to benefit the family in which they are married.

3. Nyako ogwang'

girl be wild cat

A girl is a wild cat

A wild cat is a small wild animal that resembles a cat which lives in the bushes and forests. It's known for killing chickens. Whenever it roams near the homestead it's chased away furiously. In the Luo culture, girls are seen as people who are meant to go away through marriage. It is believed that their home is in another place not their ancestral home. Whenever a girl is born, the parents know that she will one day live home for good to settle in her new home just as a wild cat leaves for the bush.

4. Nyako bende mana nyathi

girl be also child

Even a baby girl is a child

In the Luo Society, boys were valued more than the girls. When a woman gave birth to a baby boy, there was much joy in the home. A woman who had given birth to a baby boy stayed indoors for four days while for a baby girl she stayed indoors for three days (Achieng 2001:88).

The differences in the number of days show how important the boy child was in the Luo Society. Women who gave birth to girls only, were despised. This proverb was used to try and tell the world that even a girl child is as important as a baby boy and so should be treated equally.

5. Nyako dher chak

girl be cow milk

A girl is a dairy cow

Bride wealth has to be paid to the bride's parents as a sign of gratitude. Among these wealth are cows. These cows if well taken care of can give birth to more cows and thus provide milk. The milk can then help in the family. It can act as food or can be turned into money through sale. A girl is seen as a person who brings wealth into the family through marriage and even keeps on giving hand outs to her parents irrespective of her marriage. A girl is seen as a property to be sold to anybody for wealth.

6. Wuowi ok tow

boy not rot

A boy does not rot. He lasts for long as compared to girls

A girl is seen as a commodity that can rot or get damaged if not taken care of. On the other hand, a boy is depicted as a strong fort which can never get damaged. Thus girls are taken as fragile commodities. This proverb is also used to show that, men's productivity takes a longer span than for women. A woman's productivity declines with age while a man's does not.

7. Obarogo nyar Wasare mane dhi e liend guok to we mar dhano

non-conformist daughter of Wasare who went to the funeral dog yet left a human being's.

A non-conformist, the girl of Wasare who went to a dog's funeral instead of going to that of a human being.

This proverb talks about a girl who does things differently. She doesn't do it normally and thus raises a question on her sanity.

8. Oher oher nyar Mitamblaa kidhi kucha ka nong'eyi

love love daughter Mitamblaa you go away if he/she knows you

The loved one, Mitamblaa's daughter go away, you will be known

The phrase refers to a spoilt person or child who is spoilt by always being favoured or shown preferential treatment. They grow up expecting this throughout their life. When such a child is being difficult to other people, they would be chided with this phrase.

9. Nyako opong' kiliel wuon

girl mature does not shave father

A mature girl does not shave her father

There is no stage in a girl's life when she can shave her father. The proverb means that when a girl attains a certain age or stage, she should move out of the father's 'circle of privacy' like the bedroom and even sharing a plate of food with him.

2.3 The woman as a wife

The following are twenty proverbs which apply to the woman as wife.

10. Jaber puothe tin

a beautiful woman garden hers small

The garden of a beautiful woman is small

This is said of a woman who is physically attractive yet lazy. She distates any work that involves a lot of energy like digging, fetching water e.t.c. The only thing she wants is to adorn herself.

11. Dhako nanga ywach

Woman be dress casual

A woman is a casual dress

Casual clothes are not formal. They are normally worn in ones free time or for casual occasions (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). A casual dress is not well taken care of. At times it is not even ironed because it is not valued. When it is torn, it is not sewn at times because it is not valued like the official dress. Likewise, a man will not work hard to please his wife as he would another woman outside. The girlfriend can be treated well both financially and physically but not with his wife because he has already married her and is used to her. Thus the man will not value her wife the way he values his girlfriend.

12. Jadhako achiel nyawang'e otho

a man with one wife one eye dead

A man with one wife has a blind eye

A man who has married one wife is likened to a person with one eye. In case his wife dies, he acts foolishly and angrily because he knows there is no other woman to take care of him. On the contrary, a polygamous man is normally calm even when one of his wives die because there are always some remaining to take care of him.

13. Dhok gin dho mon ka gin e dala

cows be cows women when at homestead

Livestock belong to women when they are in the homestead

After men had brought the livestock home, it was the work of the women to milk the cows, tie the calves, ferment excess milk and make ghee. A man could not do anything concerning the livestock before asking the woman's view on such an issue.

14. Dhako marach jamocho tung'

woman ugly dries (grains, clothes) on the last space of the mat.

An ugly woman dries her (grains, clothes) at the last space of the mat.

An ugly woman avoids to be the focus of attention hence does her chores last after everybody has finished. She fears embarrassment due to her looks. In case of a polygamous family, her house is visited last by her husband. The proverb can then mean that an unfriendly person can lack friends amidst a crowd.

15. Dhako wat angiewa

woman relative bought

A woman is a relative that is bought

A woman becomes a relative through marriage. The bride price is likened to buying of a wife.

The relationship between a woman should not be all that strong than for blood relationship.

Told to a person who sides with the woman even when she is wrong.

16. Dhako en diga makiyiengo marach to ng'ato nyalo kawo

woman be bicycle lean badly a person can take

A woman is a bicycle if she is badly taken care of another person can easily snatch her from you.

A bicycle that is carelessly parked can easily be stolen. This is likened to a woman who is not well taken care of by her husband. She will always fall a prey to men who can then re-marry her. This proverb is a caution to men to take care of their wives or else somebody else will.

17. Dhako bade boyo

Woman arms long

A woman has so many supporters. She can get help from many corners.

18. Dhako ema kelo mwandu

woman is bring riches

It is a wife who creates wealth

A hard working woman brings riches to her family. This hard work is provoked by the fact that she has children to feed.

19. Dhako chok odiere ma libamba gweno

woman bone centre which kinsmen gnaw

A wife is the centre bone which kinsmen gnaw

A married woman becomes a wife not to her husband alone but also to the community too.

When her husband dies she is inherited. She cannot remain single after her husband's death.

20. Dhako puodho ma ok ipur itieki

wife garden which you don't dig complete

A wife is a garden you cannot completely cultivate alone.

A woman is only your wife when in the house. Outside the house she can be someone else's wife.

21. Mulo ding' miaha

touch cheeks bride

To touch a bride's cheek

There are places that must be respected like the bride's cheeks.

22. Ng'wen ne ogalo dhako mane dhi por

edible be distracted woman who was escaping from an abusive husband

Edible flying ants distracted a woman who was escaping from an abusive husband and she was found busy feeding on the ants and was taken back

23. Nindo notero jater ka pod ok otero

sleep overtook wife inheritor before cleansing the widow

sleep overtook the wife inheritor before he had cleansed the widow

There is no guarantee in life that nothing won't interfere with what one has set to do.

24. Wendo ma pod ok owendo ok igone dhako

visitor who has not arrived does not lead to beating woman

Do not beat your wife over a visitor who hasn't arrived

The woman is the one who may be punished if things go wrong that is, even if a visitor doesn't arrive.

25. Nyar lando ber to ojoga gi duogo otieno

a girl light skinned good but I am tired coming back late in the night

A light skinned woman is good but I am tired of her coming home late in the night.

This is told of a light skinned woman who feels that she is attractive thus stays out late with men.

The husband is lamenting on her behavior.

26. Opuk owuonda ago chiega, nyar kajulu atho kodi

tortoise lied me beat wife , girl Kajulu die you

The tortoise has lied to me to beat my wife daughter of Kajulu I am dying with you

It is supposed to be what the dove says when it coos. Note the idea that the wife is supposed to be beaten (even on flimsy grounds). So, when the tortoise tells you to do it, you go ahead and do it. It implies that you find it challenging, but you have to do it to prove your manhood.

27. Wang'i tek ka wang' nyar por

Your eyes are 'hard' (disrespectful) like the eyes of a girl who daughter elope

Your eyes are 'hard' (disrespectful) like the eyes of a girl who has eloped

Eloping was considered to be a despicable act. A girl who eloped was seen as a wayward child. She brought shame to the family. Such a girl was considered daring because no girl would dare to get married unceremoniously in the olden days. Hence, a person who displays lack of regard for others disrespect and arrogance of a woman high degree is rebuked and compared to a who eloped.

28. In janyiego ka dhako

you be jealous as woman

You are as jealous as a woman

Told to men who don't want to see others prospering.

29. Agolonu ogwang'e ei pacho

I removed wildcat from homestead

I have removed the wild cat from your homestead

This is said to the mother-in-law and father-in-law by the son-in-law. In the Luo society, it was a shame for a girl who had attained the age of marriage to still be at her parents home. By them being married, it gave relief to the parents thus the saying by the son-in-law.

2.4 The woman as a female

The following are thirteen proverbs which apply to the woman as a female.

30. Awuor, Awuor nyar dichwo

Awuor Awuor daughter of man

Awuor daughter of a man

A girl who is tough headed whose actions resemble those of a man.

31. Iyom yom ka dhako

weak as woman

You are as weak as a woman

This is told to a man who doesn't show his manhood but instead acts in a womanish way.

32. In ralep ka dhako

you be quarrelsome as a woman

You are as quarrelsome as a woman

Told to a man who is talkative to an extent that he talks about things that do not concern him.

Basically, it is women who are known to be talkative.

33. Rabote dhako ki leng'

throw woman never misses

A woman's throw never misses its target.

When a woman makes a pass at a man, she will always win.

34. Orudo nyar ojuok

uncivilized daughter euphorbia

The uncivilized daughter of euphorbia

'Ojuok' is the euphorbia used in fencing the homestead. Euphorbia represents the traditional life. This is told of a woman who behaves in a traditional way. A woman who doesn't embrace civilization.

35. Nyako mokee ka chieth olich

girl unattractive like faeces 'olich'

A girl who is unattractive like Olich's faeces.

This is said to an unattractive ugly woman whose features resembles a man's.

36. Jaber jahula

a beautiful woman be person of flaws or vices

A beautiful woman has flaws or vices

The proverb is analogous to the English proverb that says “ All that glitters is not gold”. A beautiful woman as she may look, have some weaknesses that are hidden. She may look attractive from the surface but character-wise she is wanting or she may have some ugly scars hidden beneath her clothes.

37. Otucho ni ngeny nyar kawuono

The-one-that-arrives as suddenly as the girl of today

‘As easy as the arrival (into marriage) of a modern girl’

The girl of today (modern girl) is the one who is seen to have the courage to get into marriage without elaborate arrangements. She lacks convention, meaning that, she doesn’t follow the protocol of doing things.

38. Nyar rachiero ogoyo bul otucho

girl with cataract beats drum hole

The girl with cataract in the eye beats and makes a hole in a drum

Someone who is not fully skilled or someone who doesn’t have the full truth about something may cause destruction by sending a wrong message that he or she knows whatever task he is given fully.

39. Oketo kore chi nyang’onye otuo

One-who-puts-chest wife-of one-whose-vagina be-dry

‘Try to be like everyone or copy everyone like the wife of the dry vagina’

This has to do with the girl who acts like men, that is acts tough and as a result gets no man to marry her, hence the dry vagina. It is worth noting that there are interpretations in which this proverb applies to all imposters, including male ones. That is, anyone who lacks self identity and esteem or who always strives to do what others are doing or wants to have something just because someone else has it, i.e a copy cat. However, even in that broader meaning, it is noteworthy that the proverb uses a vocabulary that refers to women and their sexuality.

40. Otiktiri yiech min Munde

The ancient one the age mate of Munde's mother

Otiktiri is a word that describes a person who has seen many days, and lived long. The phrase as a whole is used for the purpose of praising somebody and at the same time can be malicious. It can be a rude comment said to hurt or make the person feel that the achievement is nothing commendable for one of that age. When two people or children fight, the other one though he might not look it might be older and people would warn the younger person not to fight with otiktiri where otiktiri would be the older one.

41. Nyako ma mach marewa

girl who fire burns

A girl who is (like) hot fire

This is a girl who breaks families through rumour mongering.

42. Nyako ber gi ka wang'e to piere owang'

girl beautiful on her face but her buttocks are burnt

A girl has a beautiful face, but her buttocks are burnt

The outward appearance of a girl can be so appealing. A virtue that hides her inner character. This proverb is analogous to, “All that glitters is not gold” and “Do not judge a book by its cover”

2.5 The woman as a mother

Below are ten proverbs that apply to the woman as a mother.

43. Wange tek ka wang’ dhako malur

eye hard as woman barren

she is as rude as a barren woman.

Barren women are seen as people who never care about their bad behaviours because they have no children to emulate their behaviours. This proverb is told to a person whose behavior lacks respect in it.

44. Ich lach nonego min Okal Tako

stomach big killed Okal Tako

Greed killed the of Okal Tako

Too much uncontrolled desire/ greed may prove fatal.

45. Maro oketho ugunja

mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

The mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

‘Maro’ is a mother-in-law while ‘ugunja’ in this case is marriage. It is said of a mother-in-law who misbehaved with his son-in-law after getting drunk. This proverb cautions the mother-in-law against getting drunk while at their son-in-law’s home lest they fall into temptation.

46. Meru en meru

mother is mother

Your mother is your mother

You cannot exchange your mother with somebody else. One should always appreciate her/his mother irrespective of how she looks.

47. Ng'ama oloyi onyono kwesi meru

a person defeats you steps on smoking pipe mother

He/She who is powerful than you or better placed than you, steps on your mother's smoking pipe

A situation/condition may render you unable to protect those closest to you.

48. Ok inyal puonjo dani madho kwesi

you cannot teach grandmother smoke pipe

You cannot teach your grandmother how to smoke a pipe.

Certain experiences come with age, so a grandchild cannot be wiser than his/her grandmother.

Age brings wisdom and knowledge through experience.

49. Tama tindo ka mama oduogo oa thurgi

unable thrift when mother returned from her birth place.

I am unable to be thrift when my mother has just returned from visiting her birth place.

We tend to be wasteful when our resources seem to be limitless.

50. Tar ka min ojow biye

dirty as mother of termites

As dirty as the mother of the termite gatherer/collector

'jowo biye' is to scoop termites from the trap (usually a hole in the garden). 'Ojowo biye' is a mythical being associated with termite scooping – notice that this 'tar' from touching soil is

attributed to the mother. The mother is the one who does the scooping which makes her to be dirty.

51. Oowo wach ka maro

exaggerates issues like a mother in-law

He exaggerates issues like an in-law

Mothers-in-law are reputed for exaggerating matters, fabricating and sometimes even telling lies. This happens when her daughter is getting married or when she has come from visiting her daughter where she is married. She exaggerates when necessary about how her daughter got married in a good home, the wealth there and how well she was welcomed. Anyone who displays outrageous characteristics of telling lies and fabricating stories is compared to mother in-law.

52. In pok inyuol (ka inyuolo nyiri lilo)

you have not give birth

You have not given birth (If you have only given birth to girls)

In the Luo society, boys were seen as pillars of the homes while girls were seen as outsiders who would one day get married and go away. The birth of a boy brought joy to the family and of girls brought sadness to the woman because she could be chided for giving birth to girls. The proverb was used by men or other members of the society to demean a woman who only gave birth to girls only. In this case, girls were seen as valueless.

2.6 Conclusion

From the above examples of proverbs, we conclude that the Luo society has different attitudes toward women. The attitudes they have depend on whether the woman is a daughter, wife, mother or female. Furthermore, the proverbs and meanings provide the context which help us account for how relevance theory contributes to the understanding of the proverb by the hearer. This we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

A RELEVANCE-THEORETIC ACCOUNT OF DHOLUO PROVERBS ON WOMEN

3.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses Dholuo proverbs on women using the Relevance theory. The theory delves into the human mind so as to find out how human cognition picks on what is relevant and discards the irrelevant. The theory is used here to explain how the hearer subconsciously arrives at the speaker's meaning within a particular context.

As explained in detail in 1.7, relevance theory is based on the idea that intentional communication creates high expectation on the hearer thus making him (the hearer) to infer what the communicator intends to convey (Clarke 2013:5). Relevance is defined as “property of inputs to cognitive processes” (Sperber & Wilson 2012:1). These inputs can be in the form of external stimuli or internal representations. An input becomes relevant to an individual when it connects with the available contextual assumptions to yield positive cognitive effects. An assumption can either be strengthened, eliminated or connected with the context to yield a new contextual implication. There are two tenets in Relevance theory which explains how the hearer chooses and finally arrives at an inference which satisfies the hearer's expectation.

One is the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, which states that “Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance” (Clarke 2013:21). Maximisation of relevance is realized when an utterance produces the greatest amount of cognitive effects for the least amount of processing effort and this can only be achieved when there is enough context against which the information is processed. This principle plays a major role in explaining how contextual cues

guide the hearer in interpreting and predicting the ostensive stimulus of the speaker and thus arrive at a conclusion which satisfies the expectation created. In the application of the principle, context plays a crucial role in ensuring that maximization of relevance is achievable. Thus context acts as a foundation from which processing begins.

The second principle, the Communicative Principle of Relevance, states that “every utterance conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance” (Clarke 2013:33). When an utterance is made, it creates the expectation that will be worth processing and that it is the most relevant one that the speaker intended to convey. Since, there are usually many inputs competing for the hearer’s attention, an utterance should be more relevant than other inputs competing for the hearer’s attention at the time and the input to be chosen as relevant should be one that requires less processing effort for greater positive cognitive effects. This happens when an utterance is accompanied by cues to the hearer who in turn makes inferences that are relevant. The prediction is that, so many interpretations will come to the hearer’s mind yet he/she is able to pick on the right interpretation by following a path that requires the least processing effort for the production of the greatest cognitive effects. This is done in order of accessibility. The first interpretation to mind is put to test whether its processing requires least effort. If it proves that it requires more to be processed, then it is discarded and so the next option is considered. The procedure continues until the most relevant interpretation is reached.

In the analysis, a number of relevance-theoretic concepts are used, including the following: **Context** is the situational factor that the interlocutors have in the mind during conversation. The more the context available to process an utterance, the less the processing effort, the more the cognitive effects, the more the relevance hence more benefits to the hearer.

Cognitive environment is the cognitive background that forms part of the situational context. The background entails cultural knowledge, education, norms and values of the society, experience and belief. In this case Dholuo proverbs will be processed against the Luo culture, beliefs, norms and values of the society.

Speaker's meaning is the intended meaning that the hearer is supposed to infer. It contains both explicit content and implicit content. It is arrived at when the hearer's expectation of relevance is satisfied.

Processing effort is the mental effort the hearer puts into processing an utterance (cf. Sperber & Wilson 2002:2). The speaker and the hearer are guided by the search for optimal relevance. The above information can be illustrated as follows:

Less processing effort → **the greater the cognitive effects** → **the greater the relevance** →
the greater the benefits

OR

The more the processing effort → **the lesser the cognitive effects** → **the lesser the
relevance** → **the lesser the benefits**

3.1 The Analysis of Dholuo Proverbs on Women

The proverbs handled in this analysis are interpreted against the cognitive environment of Dholuo culture, norms, customs and beliefs. The interlocutors base their understanding on circumstances under which the proverbs are uttered. As explained above, according to the Relevance-theoretic Comprehension Procedure, the hearer will reach the intended interpretation of a proverb by:

- (i) Following a path that provides the least effort in deriving the greatest cognitive effect.

The interpretation is done in order of accessibility,

- (ii) Stopping when his/her expectation of relevance is satisfied.

Following the work in chapter two, the proverbs are divided into four categories, namely:

- (a) proverbs on the woman as a daughter
- (b) proverbs on the woman as a wife
- (c) proverbs on the woman as a female
- (d) proverbs on the woman as a mother

3.1.1 The woman as a daughter

In this section, we analyse proverbs used by Luos to make comments on women seen as daughters.

1. Nyako ochot

girl be prostitute

A girl is a prostitute

This is a negative proverb. It is figurative as the meaning cannot be accessed directly. Thus the word 'prostitute' triggers a lot of interpretations. This is done in the encyclopaedic entry in the brain where the concept PROSTITUTE is stored as a label. When it is retrieved, PROSTITUTE comes with several meanings, including the following,

- (a) Has sex for money
- (b) Leaves home for greener pastures
- (c) Doesn't stick to one man
- (d) Attracts men through her adornment

With the above assumptions in the hearer's mind, a path of least effort for greater cognitive effects will be followed in order of accessibility. Depending on the context, the following contextual implications will be derived.

- (e) A girl who has sex for money.
- (f) A girl who leaves home for greener pasture.
- (g) A girl who doesn't stick to one man
- (h) A girl who attracts men through her adornment

With the help of comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on the second option (1f) which will bring forth the contextual implication that a girl is a person who has to leave her ancestral home one day, to go to another place as per the Luo culture.

2. Wuowi siro

boy be pillar

A boy is a pillar

The concept PILLAR will trigger the encyclopaedic entry which will bring forth several meanings in the hearer's mind. A PILLAR

- (a) Is strong
- (b) Stands straight
- (c) Firmly rooted

The above contextual assumptions will yield the following contextual implications.

- (d) A boy is strong.
- (e) A boy stands straight.
- (f) A boy is firmly rooted

With the above interpretations in the mind, the hearer will settle on an interpretation that uses the least effort to derive cognitive effects. The interpretation that the hearer settles on is (2f). Thus the hearer will understand the proverb as meaning a boy is firmly rooted in a homestead as he is entitled to his ancestral land unlike girls.

3. Dhako nanga ywach

woman be dress casual

A woman is a casual dress.

The encyclopaedic entry is triggered to provide the following possible meanings for the concept CASUAL DRESS.

(a) Worn in ones free time

(b) Not well taken care off

(c) Is not important

The following contextual implication will be yielded.

(d) A woman is worn in ones free time.

(e) A woman is not well taken care of

(f) A woman is not important

From the above interpretations, the hearer will settle on (3f) having followed the path of least effort in computing cognitive effects and having considered the interpretations in order of accessibility. This is because (3f) satisfies the expectation of relevance to mean a girl is not important and so cannot be included in important missions.

4. Nyako dher chak

Girl be cow

A girl is a dairy cow.

The concept DAIRY COW will trigger the encyclopaedic entry which will bring forth the following meanings in the hearers mind. A DAIRY COW

- (a) Gives milk
- (b) Can bring wealth
- (c) It is taken care of well

The above contextual assumptions will yield the following contextual implications.

- (d) A girl gives milk
- (e) A girl can bring wealth.
- (f) A girl is taken care of well

Following the comprehension procedure, the hearer will settle on (4e) as the appropriate interpretation of the proverb. The interpretation that will satisfy the interlocutors is, a girl can bring wealth. The girl in this case is seen as a wealth bringer through bride price.

3.1.2 The woman as a wife

There are other proverbs that touch on women as wives in the society. They are normally channeled to married women. Below are a few examples and how the comprehension heuristic procedure explains how the hearer understands them.

5. Jaber puothe tin

A beautiful woman garden hers small

The garden of a beautiful woman is small.

The concept BEAUTIFUL WOMAN triggers the following assumptions. A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

- (a) Is attractive

- (b) Is lazy
- (c) Fears strenuous work
- (d) Is proud
- (e) Is boisterous

The contextual implications brought forth are:

- (f) A beautiful woman is attractive.
- (g) A beautiful woman is lazy.
- (h) A beautiful woman fears strenuous work
- (i) A beautiful woman is proud
- (j) A beautiful woman is boisterous

The hearer will pick on an interpretation that will take less effort to process thus yield great cognitive effects. He will consider the interpretations in order of accessibility that is the way they are arranged in mind. Then, when the hearer realizes that his expectation of relevance is satisfied, then he stops. In this case, the hearer will stop at (5g) “A beautiful woman is lazy because she spends most of her time maintaining her looks instead of digging.

6. Jadhako achiel nyawange otho

a man with one wife one eye dead

A man with one wife has a blind eye.

The concept BLIND will trigger the encyclopaedic entry which will produce the following assumptions:

- (a) One who cannot see.
- (b) Depends on the others for support.
- (c) Has to be treated with care.

(d) One feels uncomfortable.

(e) Seeming to be out of control.

The contextual implications that will be yielded are:

(f) A man with one wife cannot see.

(g) A man with one wife depends on the others for support.

(h) A man with one wife has to be treated with care.

(i) A man with one wife feels uncomfortable.

(j) A man with one wife seems to be out of control.

Following the comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on (6j) “A man with one wife seems to be out of control.” This brings us to the conclusion that a monogamous man lacks control of his anger when his wife dies because there’s no other wife that remains to console him.

7. Dhako marach jamocho tung

woman ugly dries grains (cloths) on the last space of the mat

An ugly woman dries her grains (cloths) at the last space of the mat.

The concept UGLY WOMAN triggers the encyclopaedic entry which in turn yields the following assumptions. AN UGLY WOMAN

(a) Is unattractive.

(b) Is shy.

(c) Avoids crowded places.

(d) Not confident of herself.

(e) Is unfriendly.

The contextual implication yielded are:

- (f) An ugly woman is unattractive.
- (g) An ugly woman is shy.
- (h) An ugly woman avoids crowded places.
- (i) An ugly woman is not confident of herself.
- (j) An ugly woman is unfriendly.

The hearer will follow a path that will ensure least effort is used in deriving greater cognitive effects and this will be done in order of accessibility. The contextual implication the hearer will stop at is (7j) because it is the implication that seems to satisfy his expectation of relevance. Thus, “An ugly woman is unfriendly” yields the conclusion that an unfriendly person can lack friends amidst a crowd.

8. Dhako wat angiewa

woman relative bought

A woman is a relative that is bought.

The concept RELATIVE triggers the encyclopaedic entry which produces the following assumptions. A RELATIVE

- (a) Is a person you can turn to for help.
- (b) Can share your deepest feelings with.
- (c) Can turn to in times of crisis.
- (d) Cannot be trusted to keep secrets.

The contextual implication deduced from the above assumptions are:

- (e) A relative is a person you can turn to for help.
- (f) A relative is a person you can share your deepest feelings with.
- (g) A relative is a person you can turn to in times of crisis.

(h)A relative cannot be trusted to keep secrets.

Following the Relevance-guided comprehension heuristic, the implication that will satisfy the expectation of relevance is (8h) “A relative cannot be trusted to keep secrets.” Thus bringing the conclusion” A husband should not put his trust in her wife too much that he distrusts his blood relatives thus the saying, blood is thicker than water.

3.1.3 The woman as a female

There are proverbs which are told by the virtue that one is a female. Below are such proverbs.

9. Orudo nyar ojuok

Uncivilized daughter euphorbia

The uncivilized daughter of euphorbia.

The encyclopaedic entry will activated by two concepts – UNCIVILIZED and EUPHORBIA.

The concept UNCIVILIZED will yield the following assumptions:

- (a) A person who is ill mannered.
- (b) A person who is uncultured.

The concept EUPHORBIA will yield the following assumptions:

- (c) It is a plant.
- (d) It grows naturally.
- (e) It’s traditional.

The contextual implication to be yielded are:

- (f) A woman is ill-mannered.
- (g) A woman is uncultured.

The concept EUPHORBIA will yield the following contextual implications.

- (h) It is a plant.
- (i) It grows naturally.
- (j) It's traditional.

The contextual implications to be yielded are:

- (k) A woman is a plant.
- (l) A woman grows naturally.
- (m) A woman is traditional.

Following the path of least effort according to accessibility, the hearer stops at (9i) and (9m) respectively. These satisfy their expectation of relevance. The inference made is that "An uncivilized woman is uncultured and embraces traditions.

10 **Rabote dhako kileng'**

throw woman never missed its target

A woman's throw never misses its target.

The concept THROW triggers the following contextual assumptions.

- (a) Is a weapon
- (b) Aimed at animals
- (c) Used by hunters
- (d) Thrown in a way that it hits the animal in pursuit.

The following contextual implications will be derived from the contextual assumptions above

- (e) A woman uses a weapon.
- (f) A woman aims at animals.
- (g) A woman is a hunter.
- (h) A woman throws it in a way that it hits the animal in pursuit.

Following the path of least effort according to accessibility, the hearer stops at (10h) which satisfies the hearer expectation of relevance. The inference made is that, when a woman makes a pass at a man she will hardly fail.

11. **Jadhako achiel nyawang'e otho**

a man with one wife one eye

A man with one wife has a blind eye.

The presence of 'blind' helps to activate implications about a man that make the utterance relevant in the expected way. This is done by mutually adjusting explicit content and implicatures, the explicit content is construed as containing an ad hoc concept BLIND that contextually carries these implications.

- (a) One who cannot see.
- (b) One who depends on others for support.
- (c) One who seems to be out of control.

These assumptions yield the following contextual implications about the concept BLIND.

- (d) A man who cannot see.
- (e) A man who depends on others for support.
- (f) A man who seems to be out of control.

Using the comprehension heuristic procedure (11f) satisfies the expectation of relevance and thus yields the meaning that "A man with one wife seems to be out of control."

12. **Awuor nyar dichwo**

Awuor daughter of man

A girl who is tough headed.

The concept MAN activates the encyclopaedic entry which brings forth the following assumptions in the hearer's mind. A MAN

- (a) One who is a male.
- (b) One who has some qualities of a male.
- (c) Is a husband
- (d) Is a boyfriend

The above contextual assumptions will yield the following contextual implications.

- (e) Awuor is a male.
- (f) Awuor has some qualities of a male.
- (g) Awuor is a male servant.
- (h) Awuor is a husband.
- (i) Awuor is a boyfriend.

The hearer follows a path that provides least effort in deriving the greatest cognitive effects following the order of accessibility. He/She stops at (12f) when his/her expectation of relevance is satisfied. (12f) gives the meaning that "Awuor has some qualities of a male.

13. Iyom iyom ka dhako

weak as woman

You are as weak as a woman.

The encyclopaedic entry is activated by the ad hoc concept WOMAN which yields the following assumptions about a woman.

- (a) One who is an adult female.
- (b) One who has qualities typical of a female.
- (c) A female worker.

(d) A wife

The hearer follows a path of least effort to process the assumptions. The following contextual implications are produced.

(e) A man is an adult female.

(f) A man has qualities typical of a female.

(g) A man is a female worker.

(h) A man is a wife.

Following the comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on the option (13f) which produces the interpretation that the proverb is said to a man who shows quality typical of a female.

3.1.4 The woman as a mother

Below are some proverbs that depict a woman as a mother. Anybody saying or hearing them, sees a woman as somebody's mother in the society.

14. Maro oketho ugunja

mother-in-law has spoiled ugunja

The mother-in-law spoiled ugunja.

The concept MOTHER-IN-LAW activates the encyclopaedic entry which yields the following assumptions about MOTHER-IN-LAW.

(a) She is the mother of your husband or wife.

(b) She is given a lot of respect by the son-in-law.

(c) Should not misbehave with the son-in-law.

(d) Should not dine with her son-in-law.

(e) Should distance herself from her son-in-law in terms of socialization.

The other concept that activates the encyclopaedic entry is the concept UGUNJA. The following assumptions are produced.

(f) It is a name of a place.

(g) It is associated with promiscuity.

(h) It is associated with chaos.

The above contextual assumptions will yield the following contextual implications for the concept MOTHER-IN-LAW and UGUNJA respectively.

(i) A mother-in-law is the mother of your husband or wife.

(j) A mother-in-law is given a lot of respect by the son-in-law.

(k) A mother-in-law should not misbehave with the son-in-law.

(l) A mother-in-law should not dine with her son-in-law.

(m) A mother-in-law should not socialize with the son-in-law.

The concept UGUNJA yields the following:

(n) Ugunja is a name of a place.

(o) Ugunja is associated with promiscuity.

(p) Ugunja is associated with chaos.

Following the comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on (14k and 14o) as they are the ones which seem to satisfy the hearer's expectation of relevance. The contextual implication chosen will be "A mother-in-law who practiced promiscuity with the son-in-law.

15. Tar ka min ojow biye

dirty as mother of termites

As dirty as the mother of the termite gatherer

The concept TERMITE GATHERER activates the encyclopaedic entry to yield the following contextual assumptions about A TERMITE GATHERER.

- (a) person who gathers termites.
- (b) Looks dirty

The following contextual implications is yielded

- (c) A termite gatherer is a person who gathers termites.
- (d) A termite gatherer looks dirty.

With the above interpretations in the mind, the hearer will settle on an interpretation that uses the least effort to derive greater cognitive effects. This is done on the basis of accessibility. The hearer settles on (15d) which yields contextual conclusion that “A dirty person is associated to a woman who gathers termite because she is always dirty because of the kind of job she does.

16. Ok inyal puonjo dani madho kwesi

you cannot teach grandmother smoke pipe

You cannot teach your grandmother how to smoke a pipe.

The word grandmother activates the hearer’s encyclopaedic entry about the concept GRANDMOTHER which gives the following contextual assumptions.

- (a) She is a mother to your father or mother.
- (b) Has lived longer on earth.
- (c) Associated with knowledge and wisdom due to experience.
- (d) A grandmother should be respected.

Below are the contextual implications yielded:

- (e) A grandmother is a mother to your father or mother.
- (f) A grandmother has lived longer on earth.

- (g) A grandmother is associated with knowledge and wisdom due to experience.
- (h) A grandmother should be respected.

Following a path of least effort in deriving the greatest cognitive effect, the hearer settles on (16g) after considering accessibility. The interpretation yielded is: You cannot teach a person who is adept in his work how to do it better since experience contributes to ones perfection. Thus a child cannot teach her parents or a grandchild cannot teach her grandparents.

17. Ich lach nonego Okal Tako

stomach big killed Okal Tako

Greed killed Okal Tako.

The concept GREED activates the encyclopaedic entry to yield the following assumptions.

- (a) A strong desire for more wealth, possessions, power than a person needs.
- (b) A strong desire for more food or drink when you are no longer hungry or thirsty.
- (c) Associated with uncontrolled desire.

The above assumptions yield the following contextual implications

- (d) Okal Tako has a strong desire for more wealth, possessions, power than he needs.
- (e) Okal Tako has a strong desire for more food or drink even when he's no longer hungry or thirsty.
- (f) Okal Tako is associated with uncontrolled desire.

Following the comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer settles on choice (17f). This is achieved after following a path of least effort in deriving the greatest cognitive effect in order of accessibility. The hearer stops when his/her expectations of relevance is satisfied. The contextual implication derived is “ Okal Tako has uncontrolled desire for things.”

3.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have used Relevance theory to explain how the speaker and hearer both play a major role in the use of Dholuo proverbs on women. The speaker gives cues to the hearer who uses them (cues) to make inferences. For the right inference to be reached, the hearer subconsciously, follow the Relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic procedure to arrive at the right interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research based on the work done in chapters two and three. In particular, it attempts to identify what the study reveals regarding our research problem and the research objectives, with special attention to the following questions:

- (i) What is the dominant community perception of women as reflected in the proverb?
- (ii) In what context are the proverbs used?
- (iii) How does relevance theory account for how the hearer understands the proverbs?

4.2 The vocabulary/expressions used in stereotypical proverbs on women

From the analysis of the proverbs, we have found out that most proverbs about women are demeaning. This is seen through the way the proverbs are framed. For instance, there is a large use of vulgar words to describe women. The following examples (numbered as in chapter 2), illustrate this point (with thematic areas indicated in brackets):

1. **Nyako ochot** (The woman as a daughter)
girl be prostitute
A girl is a prostitute
3. **Nyako ogwang'** (The woman as a daughter)
girl be wild cat
A girl is wild cat
11. **Dhako nanga ywach** (The woman as a wife)
girl be dress casual

A girl is a casual dress

The negativity of the descriptions is fairly obvious if we consider the fact that the names used are not appealing to the woman. They are names that lack respect for the woman. Even though the words: prostitute, wild cat and casual dress are metaphorically used, their presence in the proverb lowers the woman's dignity in the society. no. 11 'nanga ywach' is as casual dress which means that it is a dress that is not formal; a dress that is worn in ones free time. Casual dresses are not taken care of well as the official dresses. The casual dress at times is not even ironed. It is not even sewed when it's torn. It's not washed carefully as an official dress. In short, it's a dress that is not considered important. Likewise, a woman is also not considered important.

The vocabulary and expressions used show how the society derogates women. They are not all that important as compared to men. Other vocabularies in the proverbs are callous and obnoxious. This is to show the strong negative feelings of the speaker about women. If the society was not harsh to women, then they could have used euphemisms in some proverbs like the ones below (from chapter 2), whose negativity is quiet obvious.

42. **Nyako ber gi ka wang'e to piere owang'** (The woman as a female)

girl beautiful on her face but her buttocks are burnt

A girl has a beautiful face, but her buttocks are burnt

39. **Oketo kore ka chi nyang'onve otuo**

put chest wife vagina dry

Try to be like everyone or copy everyone like the wife of the dry vagina

35. **Nyako mokee ka chieth olich**

girl unattractive like faeces' olich

A girl who is unattractive like olich's faeces

The underlined words are clearly obscene. They are words that make one to feel embarrassed when they are mentioned in a social setting. The woman also feels embarrassed when the proverbs are directed to them. So, the vocabulary of most proverbs on women in the Luo society carry vulgar and obscene words which shows how low the woman is placed in the society.

4.3 The interpretation of stereotypical proverbs on women

Apart from the vulgar and obscene words used in the proverbs on women, the interpretations of many of these proverbs showed derogation as seen below.

16. Dhako en ndiga makiyengo marach to ng'ato nyalo kawo (The woman as a wife)

Woman be bicycle lean badly a person can take

A woman is a bicycle if she is badly taken care of, another person can easily snatch her from you

5. Nyako dher chak (The woman as a daughter)

girl be cow milk

A girl is a dairy cow

The above proverbs show how women are treated as commodities. In proverb no.16, a woman is likened to a bicycle that can easily be stolen if carelessly parked. A bicycle doesn't require a big space for parking. It is small as compared to a car and thus can easily disappear without anybody's knowledge. Third, it doesn't require a big road to pass. It can easily pass through paths and thickets. The above qualities make the bicycle prone to stealing as compared to a car. Besides, the bicycle doesn't require sophisticated skills to ride. As long as one can step on the

pedal that's it. A woman is therefore likened to a bicycle, a commodity that can easily be stolen because of the qualities named above. The implication being, a woman is easier to steal if the owner is not caring enough. If a woman gets a man who can meet her basic needs well, then she can disappear in thin air just like a bicycle that is carelessly parked. This proverb is a warning to men who don't care what their wives eat, wear or do not satisfy their wives sexually. From the above explanation, the man is the rider of the bicycle while the bicycle itself is a woman. The man should be cautious about how he parks his bicycle.

In proverb no. 5, a girl is likened to a dairy cow. First a dairy cow is treasured for its milk. The milk can be sold for money and thus bring wealth. In this case, a girl is seen as a commodity that can bring wealth to the family. This proverb is one of the exceptional proverbs that talk about the positive side of women. They are seen as sources of wealth though in other communities it is wrongly used as small girls are married off to older men for wealth (cattle) etc. The proverb is used by parents to justify their evil action of marrying off their daughters at a tender age with an obsession that they will be wealthy. When the proverb is used to justify such acts, then it is negatively applied but when it is talking about a girl who has finished her education and is ready for marriage, then it applies positively.

The proverbs also revealed that males are preferred to females. The fathers and mothers all preferred a baby boy to a baby girl because of the special treatment that males are given in the society. Among the proverbs collected, the two talk well of girls. They are:

4. Nyako bende mana nyathi (The woman as a daughter)

girl be also child

Even a baby girl is a child

5. Nyako dher chak (The woman as a daughter)

girl be cow milk

A girl is a dairy cow

On the other hand, we have proverbs that upholds the importance of a male in the society. They are directly quoted.

2. **Wuowi siro** (The woman as a daughter)

boy be pillar

A boy is pillar (that supports the house)

This proverb is directly telling us how males in a society are pillars in the sense that the boys remain behind to take care of the home and to keep the lineage going as the girls go away to start new homes elsewhere.

6. **Wuowi ok tow**

boy not rot

A boy does not rot

The proverb tells us about the importance of a male (a boy child). The proverb compares boys to girls in terms of longevity. The society believes that girls are fragile as compared to boys. They are fragile in the sense that they can get pregnant at an early age. The situation of pregnancy terminates the education of majority of girls while on the other hand, a boy who might have impregnated the girl continues with his education. In addition, when one compares a girl and a boy of the same age, the girl looks more mature than the boy of the same age. Besides, men's productivity lasts for a longer span than those for women thus the saying above.

1. **Nyako ochot** (The woman as a daughter)

girl be prostitute

A girl is a prostitute

This proverb indirectly upholds boys in the society. Girls are likened to the character of a prostitute who moves around searching for men. A prostitute doesn't stick to one man and thus can leave at any time when the deal becomes sour. In the same way a girl is meant to move away from her ancestral home to other places yet a boy is meant to remain at home to support the parents and protect the home. Proverb no.1, supports the other proverb that say that 'wuowi siro' a boy is a pillar.

3. Nyako ogwang' (The woman as a daughter)

girl be wild cat

A girl is a wild cat

The character of a girl is compared to that of a wild cat which roams in the bush or forest. It kills and feeds on chickens after which it rushes to the forest to hide. Likewise, girls are meant to run away from their homes to other places literally or indirectly through marriage. Many parents in the previous years could not educate the girls because they had the assumption that girls were to benefit another homestead and not her parents. They never saw the need of educating them, instead they educated the boys because the boys were believed to benefit the parents after education as they are the ones who would remain in the homestead as the girls get married. So, parents who never educated their girls, used the proverb above to justify their selfish acts. However, in this contemporary society, there have been campaigns to help the girl-child to acquire equal rights as boys. The girls have proved that they can as well be pillars of the home irrespective of whether they are married or not.

Some proverbs paint women as agents of indiscipline in the society. Women are said to be blamed for all the ills and evil in the society. For example,

41. Nyako ma mach marewa (The woman as a female)

girl who fire burns

A girl who is (like) hot fire

Some women are seen to be good at spreading rumours. This character is majorly found in women as compared to men. With this act of spreading rumours, they end up breaking people's homes. Thus the saying above (41)

45. Maro oketho ugunja (The woman as a mother)

Mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

The mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

The proverb above paints a woman as promiscuous since she is the one to blame for all the ills in the society. The male who is the son-in-law goes free because the society favours males. The two vices are associated with women. Schipper (1992), supports this by quoting that women are source of all evil.

The community perceives women as people who cannot be trusted to keep secrets. For instance, look at proverb no. 15,

15. Dhako wat angiewa

woman relative bought

A woman is a relative that is bought

This proverb is told to a man who doesn't treasure blood relationship but instead treasures the wife so much. It is told to remind married men that the relationship that exists between a married man and a married woman is not eternal, it can break up at any time. So, men are warned not to put so much trust in women as they can go anytime.

Majority of proverbs in chapter 2, show how the Luo community viewed women in a negative way. They were mostly viewed as worthless creatures in the society. The woman as explained above could be a daughter, wife, female or mother.

4.4 The role of context

From the analysis of the proverbs, we found out that context plays a major role in helping the hearer pick on the right interpretation that will satisfy the expectation of relevance. In general, the context that was chosen was based on the speaker's and hearer's cognitive environment shaped by the Luo culture and conventions. In the Luo culture, all females are considered to be like prostitutes, wild cats etc. because figuratively, it is believed that one day they have to leave their ancestral home and settle somewhere else. Just as a prostitute, a woman is not committed to one place. The hearer is reminded of this through the implicatures brought about by the utterance of the relevant proverbs (chapter 2; no. 1 & 3).

1.Nyako ochot

girl be prostitute

A girl is a prostitute

3.Nyako ogwang

girl be wild cat

A girl is a wild cat

The following proverbs are synonyms to proverb no. 1 & 3 as they are expressing the same idea in different words. For instance,

2.Wuowi siro

boy be pillar

A boy is a pillar

Proverb no.2 tells us about how as a pillar a boy is firmly rooted in his ancestral land. He remains there (home) to support and continue the lineage. As the girls are believed to leave their homes and go to other places for settlement, the boy is believed to stick to his parents and ancestral land. The proverbs no. 1, 3 and 2, are processed against the context of belief about girls and boys in the Luo community.

There are some actions that the Luo society believes to be a taboo. In the Luo society, a mother-in-law is someone who is respected by the son-in-law. For that respect to be maintained, the Luos believe that, the son-in-law and mother-in-law should not dine on one table; should not share a vehicle not even a seat; should not mingle with each other in whatever circumstances. In short, a son-in-law should stay away from the mother-in-law like a plague. It was a taboo or something unheard of to hear a son-in-law who had sex with his mother-in-law. Such crimes were not allowed but in case it happened it was a taboo hence the proverb:

45. Maro oketho ugunja

mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

The mother-in-law has spoilt ugunja

The proverb is processed on the context that it is a taboo to have sex with your mother-in-law.

Wife inheritance is another culture that is valued and practiced even to date in the Luo society.

The Luo believed that no woman could survive without a man. The reason being that, they believed in procreation. A woman whose husband died was to be inherited so as procreation would continue. Proverbs such as:

23. Nindo notero jater ka pod ok otero

sleep overtook wife inheritor before cleansing the widow

Sleep overtook the wife inheritor before he had cleansed the widow

Cleansing the widow was a mandatory job that an inheritor would not let slip away. Unfortunately, sleep proved to be too strong that it overtook the wife inheritor before he performed the cleansing ritual on the widow. Such a man was deemed to be worthless in the society and would be despised by other fellow men. The interpretation is that there is no guarantee in life that everything will go on as planned. There are other forces in life that will interfere with what was planned.

The above proverb (23) has almost similar connotations as the proverb below:

19. Dhako chok odiere ma libamba gweno.

woman bone centre which kinsmen gnaw

A wife is the centre bone which kinsmen gnaw

The proverb tells us of how a woman can be shared by other kinsmen. This happens through wife inheritance. A woman whose husband has died can be inherited with as many men as she wants thus the saying above. Such proverbs above would be processed against the context of the culture of wife inheritance.

The Luo community believes in polygamy. In fact, having many wives was prestigious as compared to having one wife. The many wives a man had, the richer he was termed to be. Those men who only had one wife were despised by their fellow men who were polygamous. Monogamous men were not chosen as leaders neither were they appointed to any office of leadership. Besides, when a wife of a polygamous man died, he did not mourn so much as a monogamous man. A monogamous man was likened to a person with one eye as the proverb goes:

12. **Jadhako achiel nyawang'e otho**

a man with one wife one eye dead

A man with one wife has a blind eye

If for instance, the wife of a monogamous man dies, then he had none left to console him unlike a polygamous man. Due to anger he acted foolishly because of putting hopes only in one wife.

It was a taboo for a mature girl to mingle with the father or even to sweep the parents' bedroom.

This was to promote respect and avoid such vices as incest in the family. Hence the proverb:

9. **Nyako opong' kiliel wuon**

girl mature does not shave father

A mature girl does not shave her father

The proverb is processed in the context that it was a taboo for a mature girl to shave the father.

The interpretation it implied was that a mature girl was not to be too close to the father and therefore places like the bedroom or the father's hut was to be avoided. This was to avoid such vices as incest to happen and was also to nurture respect between the father and the daughter.

Due to this, in the Luo community when a girl or boy matured, they were expected to sleep in the 'simba' a small traditional hut that was meant to be for the mature boys though mature girls were allowed to sleep there too.

Women, in the Luo community were seen as weaker vessels. Any man who showed any trait of cowardice was compared to a woman thus the proverb:

31. **Iyom yom ka dhako** (The woman as a female)

weak as woman

You are as weak as a woman

A man who shows traits like laziness, cowardice, fear, lack of strength was seen to be weak as such traits were associated with women.

From the above examples of context, we conclude that proverbs are best understood in context and especially cultural context. Schipper (1992:3-4), affirms the statement by saying the following:

“as part of a people’s cultural heritage, proverbs are embedded in the context in which they function. By their very nature, they confirm societal norms and values...Proverbs are not isolated sayings: they function in a complex social and cultural context.”

4.5 Insights from Relevance theory

We found out that Relevance theory played a major role in explaining how the speaker’s meaning is achieved, particularly, through the use of Relevance theoretic comprehension heuristic procedure whereby the hearer follows the path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. In the cases considered, the interpretations were processed in order of accessibility, stopping at an interpretation that satisfied the expectations of relevance. For example, the interpretation of item (1) above proceeded as follows using the comprehension heuristic procedure.

1. Nyako ochot

a girl be prostitute

A girl is a prostitute

The word ‘prostitute’ activates the encyclopedic entry to yield the concept PROSTITUTE which comes with the following contextual assumptions (implicated premises)

- (a) Has sex for money
- (b) Leave home for greener pastures

(c) Doesn't stick to one man

(d) Attracts men through her adornment

With the above assumptions in the hearer's mind, a path of least effort for greater cognitive effects will be followed in order of accessibility. Depending on the context, the following contextual implications (conclusions) will be derived.

(e) A girl who has sex for money.

(f) A girl who leaves home for greener pastures.

(g) A girl who doesn't stick to one man.

With the help of Comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on the second option (1f) which will bring forth the contextual implication that a girl is a person who has to leave her ancestral home one day, to go to another place as per the Luo culture. She is not to stick to her ancestral home like the boy.

(41) **Nyako ma mach marewa** (The woman as a female)

girl who fire hot burns

A girl who is (like) hot fire

The word 'fire' activates the encyclopaedic entry to the yield the concept FIRE which yield the following assumptions:

(a) flames that produces light and heat

(b) flames that destroy buildings, trees , people etc.

©A pile of burning fuel

(d) very strong emotions especially of anger or enthusiasm

The hearer follows the path of least effort which provides greater cognitive effects and this is done in order of accessibility. Depending on context, the following contextual implications(conclusions) are derived:

- (f) A girl produces light and heat.
- (g) A girl destroys buildings, trees, people etc
- (h) A girl is a pile of burning fuel.
- (i) A girl has strong emotions especially of anger.

Using the Comprehension heuristic procedure, the hearer will settle on (41g) which yields the contextual implication, a girl who destroys buildings, trees and people and therefore the inference made is a girl who destroys people's marriages and homes through rumour mongering.

4.6 Conclusion

Despite the fact that majority of the proverbs despise women, good news is that, in the contemporary society women are not despised anymore though we still have some men with the traditional notion of despising women. Instead both men and women are fighting for the rights of a girl child. This is because the society has come to realize that even women be it a daughter, wife, mother or female can do the work that is pertained to men or boys. Many proverbs have therefore become obsolete and thus need to be rephrased. Women are no longer useless as the men took them to be since they (women) have decided to be aggressive and not become submissive as of old.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key findings and major conclusions of the study in relation to the research hypotheses. It further offers recommendations for more research to be done.

5.1 Summary

The study examined the pragmatics of proverbs about women in the Luo community. Most of the proverbs collected, showed how negatively women were perceived in the traditional Luo society at large. Women were treated as unimportant persons. Besides, they were considered to be a weaker sex both morally and physically. Vices such as promiscuity, rumour mongering and gossiping were attributed to women (c.f chapter 2). Due to the above mentioned assumed qualities of women, they were despised by men in the community. This could also be seen in the vocabulary or expressions used in the proverbs. They are callous and obnoxious thus making the woman look worthless and despicable.

In this study, the proverbs were categorized into four groups, namely:

- (a) The woman as a daughter
- (b) The woman as a wife
- (c) The woman as a female
- (d) The woman as a mother

The categorization of the proverbs helped in the analysis as one would tell under which context the proverb was processed.

Further investigation revealed that Relevance theory with its two tenets played a significant role in explaining how the hearer arrived at the relevant meaning of the proverb when uttered in a given context. The Cognitive Principle of relevance explained how the brain picked on the implicated premise that required less processing effort for a greater cognitive effect. The Communicative Principle on the other hand, explained how the speaker produced ostensive stimulus which helped the hearer to come to a certain conclusion. The conclusion was reached through the process of Relevance-theoretic Comprehension heuristic procedure (c.f 1.7.5).

The other study observation was that context plays a major part in ensuring that the hearer infers the relevant information. The general context used in the study was based on the Luo culture and conventions without which one could not arrive at the right inference.

5.2 Conclusion

We therefore, come to the conclusion that:

- (i) There are stereotypical proverbs about women in the Luo society.
- (ii) The majority of the proverbs are demeaning to the woman.
- (iii) Cultural context is the right cognitive environment needed to process the proverbs.
- (iv) Relevance theory accounts for how the hearer understands the proverb among the Luo speakers.

Secondly, we have established that in chapter three Relevance theory is the suitable theory for analyzing the stereotypical proverbs on women in the Luo society. The theory explained the steps that the hearer goes through in order to reach at the speaker's meaning, the meaning the speaker intended to convey on that particular occasion.

Thirdly, the study has shown that users of these proverbs rely on Luo culture (beliefs and norms) that hearers use to meet the expectations of relevance.

5.3 Recommendations

The study was based on proverbs that touched on gender stereotypes especially women in the Luo society. A similar research on relevance theory can be carried out targeting men in the Luo society. This can give us some insight into how men are perceived in the society.

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