

**A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF GIKŪYŪ NOUNS USING THE SEMANTIC  
FIELD THEORY**

**BY**

**GITAU HANNAH NYOKABI**

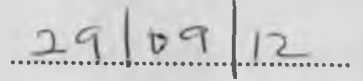
**A dissertation submitted to the Department of Linguistics and Languages,  
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Master of Arts,**

**University of Nairobi.**

**SEPTEMBER, 2012**

## DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other University.

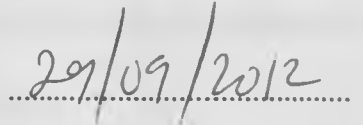
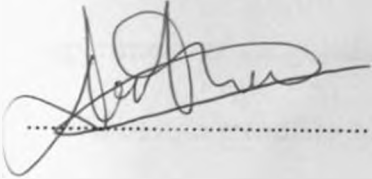


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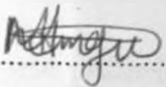
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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband George Gitau Kinuthia, my daughter Prudence Wanjiku Gitau and my young cousin Benson, who tirelessly supported me both morally and financially. God bless.

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## ABSTRACT

This study has demonstrated that Gikūyū nouns are viable for semantic analysis by use of the Semantic Field Theory. As proved by many Linguistic Scholars, nouns make a major part of speech in any language, thus making it imperative for analysis. The data collection has been done by use of ethnographic (case study) methodology. The researcher's intuitive knowledge as a native speaker of the language has come in handy. Other native speakers of the language have also been engaged through face to face interviews, so as to avert any personal influence. This has been done practically through speaking and eliciting information from the respondents. The analysis of the data has been done by use of SFT, to analyze how the concepts denoted by nouns in the same field are strongly connected to each other in meaning. Componential Analysis has been applied to offer a systematic framework for analyzing the nouns in given domains. Library research has also been done. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the already existing linguistic scholarship and assist future linguists who may have interest in analyzing words semantically in any natural language.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 General Background to the study of Language

Gikūyū language is spoken in the Central Region of Kenya and belongs to the Bantu Language family (Mugane, 1997). It is classified as a *Thagichu* sub- group of the Bantu Languages which stretches from Kenya to Tanzania. Leakey (1959) asserts that Gikūyū is probably one of the most archaic of the Bantu languages. This essentially means that Gikūyū language resembles the descendants of the Bantu language (pro-Bantu).

The language is majorly spoken in Central Province. Efforts to preserve Gikūyū language have been done by the great African writers, such as Professor Ngūgi wa Thiongo (1986), who stated in his book "Decolonizing The Mind" that in addition to English, he would write his subsequent works in Gikūyū. We also have some unpublished sources, where Gikūyū information is documented and stored, such as at the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

According to the 1999 and 2009 Kenyan National census the Gikūyū speakers are the most populous ethnic group estimated to a total of 5 million and 6.5 million respectively.

The Gĩkũyũ language has lexical similarities with the Embu, Kamba, Mbeere and Meru languages spoken by people who also live in parts of Central and Eastern Kenya. The Gĩkũyũ speakers predominantly occupy most parts of the Central Kenya, such as Mũrang'a, Embu, Kĩrĩnyaga, Kĩambu, Meru, Nyandarũa and Nyeri.

Gĩkũyũ has five main mutually intelligible dialects. The Central Province Counties are divided along the traditional boundaries of these dialects. Karega (1983) classifies the Gĩkũyũ dialects as follows:

- i. *Kĩ-Gĩchũgũ* dialect (Northern Kĩrĩnyaga)
- ii. *Kĩ-Ndia* dialect (southern Kĩrĩnyaga)
- iii. *Kĩ-Mathĩra* dialect (Karatina -Nyeri)
- iv. Northern Dialect (Mũranga)
- v. Southern dialect (Kiambu)

The language variations (dialects) which include the accent, grammar and vocabulary are attributed to the geographical placement of people. The Mũrang'a County is considered by many as the cradle of the Gĩkũyũ Speakers. Figure 1 shows the different dialects that make up the Gĩkũyũ language.

has been done in regard to Gĩkũyũ nouns. A few of the scholars who have dealt with the Gikuyu nouns include Leakey (1959), and Karega (1977), who classified them into ten and seventeen classes respectively. Others are Gecaga(1994), Mwihaki (2005),among others. No study has been done so far in reference to the analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns semantically, thus justifying the study.

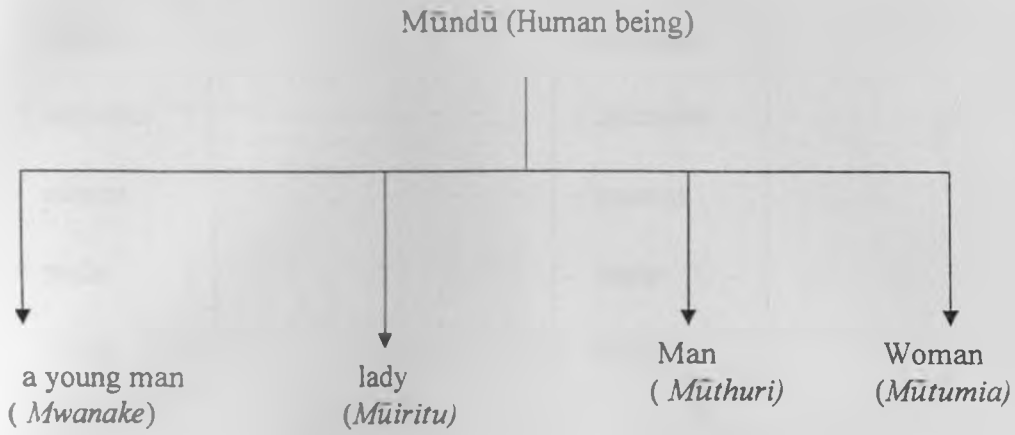
Additionally, the analysis of the Gikuyu nouns using the Semantic Field Theory has not been done so far. However, similar studies have been done in English by scholars using the Semantic Field Theory, such as Weinreich (1966), Lehre (1974), Lyons (1977), among others.

The other rationale for this study is borne out of the pivotal role played by nouns as part of grammar of any language. Nouns are parts of speech, which define persons, animals, places, things, and abstract ideas. Nouns also serve as heads or main words in noun phrases. There has been no attempt done so far in regard to semantic analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns. As a result, a gap has been left and has been to be filled by the analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns semantically, which is the purpose of this study. This will enormously contribute to Linguistic Scholarship.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study shall have practical benefits in the following ways:

i) Common Componential Approach



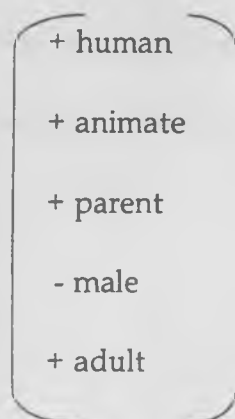
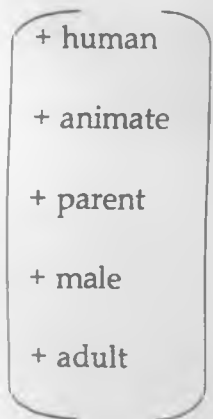
According to the example given above of common componential analysis, *mūndū-rūme* (man), *kahī* (a boy), *mūndū-mūka* (woman), and *kairītu* (a girl), all make up the human being domain, whereby they are all related semantically.

The idea is shared by the SFT.

ii) Diagnostic Componential Approach.

*Mūndū -rūme* (male)

*mūndū - mūka* (female)



*Kahī* (male)

- + human
- + animate
- parent
- + male
- adult

*Kairītu* (female)

- + human
- + animate
- parent
- male
- adult

The above diagnostic componential Analysis has been used to show the decomposition or distinctive components of some of the nouns making up different domains in Gikuyu and how they relate semantically.

The assembling of the nouns that belong to given domains conclusively confirmed the presence of semantic elements in Gikuyu nouns based on their sense relations. Although different scholars have analyzed many parts of speech in Gikuyu from different perspectives none has focused on nouns semantically using the Semantic Field Theory, which makes the core of the current study. This study affirmed the suitability of the Semantic Field Theory in the analysis of nouns in natural languages, and particularly in Gikuyu.



### 1.3 Objectives

The purpose of this study was to analyze Gikūyū nouns semantically using the Semantic Field Theory. The main objectives of the study are as follows:-

- i) To establish whether the morphological changes in Gikūyū noun classes exhibit semantic differences.
- ii) To establish the relationship that exists among Gikūyū nouns in specific noun domains.
- iii) To test the efficacy of the Semantic Field Theory in the analysis of nouns semantically in Gikūyū Language.

### 1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- (i) Do morphological changes in Gikūyū noun classes have semantic effects?
- (ii) How do nouns that constitute specific Semantic Domains relate semantically by use of SFT?
- (iii) Is the Semantic Field Theory suitable to analyze nouns semantically, in Gikūyū language?

### 1.5 Rationale/Justification

The main aim of the current study was to provide a detailed and comprehensive semantic analysis of Gikūyū nouns using the Semantic Field Theory. Not much

has been done in regard to Gĩkũyũ nouns. A few of the scholars who have dealt with the Gikuyu nouns include Leakey (1959), and Karega (1977), who classified them into ten and seventeen classes respectively. Others are Gecaga(1994), Mwihaki (2005),among others. No study has been done so far in reference to the analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns semantically, thus justifying the study.

Additionally, the analysis of the Gikuyu nouns using the Semantic Field Theory has not been done so far. However, similar studies have been done in English by scholars using the Semantic Field Theory, such as Weinreich (1966), Lehre (1974), Lyons (1977), among others.

The other rationale for this study is borne out of the pivotal role played by nouns as part of grammar of any language. Nouns are parts of speech, which define persons, animals, places, things, and abstract ideas. Nouns also serve as heads or main words in noun phrases. There has been no attempt done so far in regard to semantic analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns. As a result, a gap has been left and has been to be filled by the analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns semantically, which is the purpose of this study. This will enormously contribute to Linguistic Scholarship.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study shall have practical benefits in the following ways:

- i) It shall be useful to the language teachers as they impart information on how the words meaning can be generated in natural languages as exemplified in the analysis Gīkūyū noun classifications and Semantic Domains in this study.
- ii) Linguists, such as the lexicologists will stand to benefit, as they study words, their nature, word equivalents, and relations between words, and the whole lexicon.

The study contributes to the advancement of knowledge not only in Gīkūyū as a language, but to the whole spectrum of Natural Languages. It will substantially enrich the existing knowledge in Linguistics Scholarship by presenting how possible it is to analyze Gīkūyū nouns semantically using the SFT.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitation**

In any language, a word is the smallest meaningful unit that may be uttered in isolation. (Bloomfield, 1926).The current study focused on the lexical semantics, which is concerned with the meaning of words and the meaning of relations among words. Semantic properties, which are the components of the meaning of words such as nouns will be dealt with, through the Componential Analysis. Other parts of speech will be excluded, unless it's deemed inevitable.

In essence, the study focused on the Semantic Analysis of Gikūyū nouns. The study incorporated the Gikūyū noun classifications as affirmed by (Mugane, 1997), to exemplify the semantic elements caused by their morphological changes. The Semantic Field Theory has been used to analyze how the nouns that make specific Gikūyū noun domains are related semantically.

## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

### 1.8.1 The Semantic Field Theory

The current study used the Semantic Field Theory as proposed by various scholars such as Trier Jost (1931), Ohman (1953), Lyons (1977), Lehre (1974), Wenreich (1980), Wu (1988), and Stubbs (2001), among others. Trier (1934) is credited as one of the main proponents of the Semantic Field Theory. His version of the theory is seen as a new phase in the history of semantics. According to the basic tenets of the Semantic Field Theory, the words of a language are inter-related via underlying conceptual complexes and receive their meanings in relation to these background structures. The SFT states that, words that belong to the same semantic domain are semantically related. It is worth noting that Trier (1931) himself, did not use the term “Semantic Field”, but rather the term “Linguistic Field.” He listed four basic tenets of Semantic Field Theory. These include:

- i) That the meaning of a word is dependent on the meaning of other words that denote phenomena in the same domain.

- ii) The words of a semantic field cover a whole spectrum of phenomena termed as a domain or structural paradigm.
- iii) Trier also claimed that different semantic fields can be composed to ever large fields, thus comprising of a complete range of things of a particular type of human experience.
- iv) Changes in the meaning of one word in a Semantic Field  
Involve changes in the meaning of other words in the field.

Semantic Field Theory uses feature to identify the relationship of lexical items within a field, with the goal of discovering how terms within the field or domain are similar to each other. A word acquires its meaning by its opposition to its neighbouring words in the pattern (Ohman 1953). Words grouped into a semantic field share a common aspect of meaning.

Lyons (1968) gives a considerable importance to the notion of context. He asserted that “a lexicologist” need not analyze an isolated word to account for all possible meanings and uses in all possible linguistic and non linguistic contexts; rather the analysis is restricted to the meaning and use of a word (and related ones) with narrow domains. The analysis of a lexical field includes the relationship of words that contrast paradigmatically (all belonging to one part of speech) and those of other parts of speech that are related morphologically and

semantically. For example the relationship among the nouns such as father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, among others, make up the “family domain.”

Lyons suggests several primitive semantic relationships – synonyms, incompatibility, class inclusion, antonymy, complementary and converseness. These relationships apply principally to paradigmatic contrasts of words which are all nouns, adjectives or verbs. The words in a semantic field, though not synonymous, are all used to explain about the same general phenomenon, and there is a meaning “inclusion” relation between the items in the field and the field category itself. Common examples of semantic field include:

- Colour terms (red-*mūtune*, black-*mūiru*, white-*mwerū* etc)
- Kinship terms (mother-*maitū*, father-*baba*, aunt-*tata*, etc)

The notion of a semantic field can be extended intuitively to any set of terms with a close relation in meaning, all of which can be subsumed under the same general label. The Semantic Field Theory derives very largely from the De Saussure’s notion of value. He pointed out that a knight on a chessboard is a knight, not because of any inherent quality (shape, size etc), but because of what it can do in relation to other pieces on the board. He stressed this relational aspect of language, saying that there were ‘only differences and no positive terms’. For instance he argued that “sheep” in English has a different value from “mouton” in French because English has also the word “mutton.”

Since the semantic properties and relations of an expression are determined by its meaning which is given by semantic representations, it follows that the definitions of semantic properties and relations must be stated in terms of formal features of semantic presentations. This shows how the meaning of one expression makes it synonymous with another, analytical, semantic ambiguous, semantic analogous, and so on. It is clear what features of its meaning determine that the expression has a particular semantic property or relation, because these features worked on the basis, on which the definition of the particular property or relation applied (Katz, 1972).

Lehre (1974) indicated that a semantic field is a set of related concepts, typically lexicalized concepts in paradigmatic relation to one another. A paradigmatic lexical relation is a culturally determined pattern of association between lexical units that share one or more core semantic components. So we can say that "promise" and 'complain" belong to the semantic field of speech act "verbs". Semantic field can also refer to a theoretical representation of a set of related vocabulary. Semantic or Lexical Field Theory concerns the relation of a conceptual semantic field to language's vocabulary, and ways in which these constrains affect each other. The Semantic Field Theory provides a good model for deciding what to look for and what to describe when dealing with sets of words that are obviously closely related.

Lyons (1977) attributed considerable importance to the concept of context, stating the presence of paradigmatic relationships within the Semantic Field Theory.

In this theory, the meaning of a word is considered within a given universal view of the word. A word is dependent on its relations to other words in the same Semantic Field. The theory assumes that the lexicon is structured into semantic fields according to a set of primitive features. The word meaning is established by a position within the field, and the relationship it has with other words in its field.

He further declared his primary research intention as "to develop and reformulate what seems to be a basic principle of the theory of semantic fields in terms of sense relations, without postulating and underlying conceptual or perceptual substance. From his pure linguistic perspective, the word meaning is taken to be the set of relations which holds between the items in question and other items in the lexical systems. The goal of the Semantic Theory is to show how the words that belong to a specific semantic domain are semantically related.

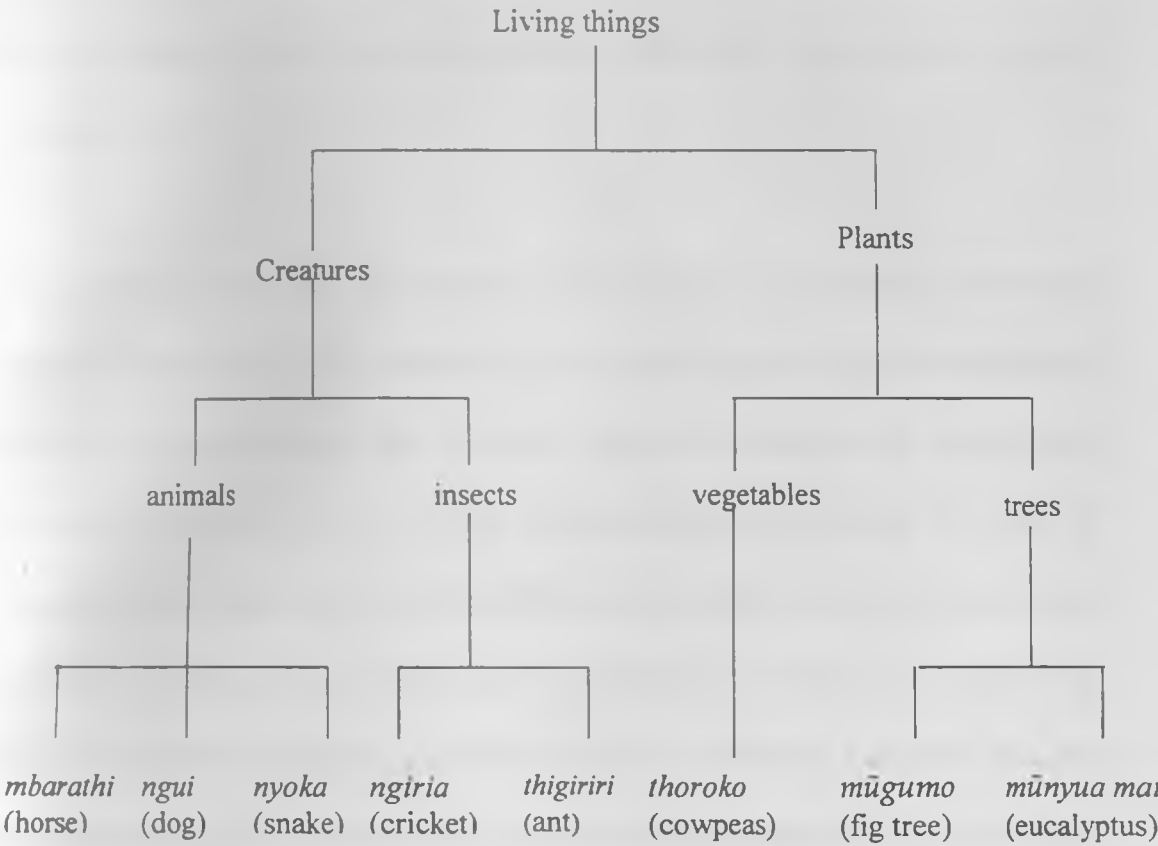
Weinreich (1980) indicated that the meaning of most words is concerned with the presence of other words whose semantic functions are related in one or more ways. The terms "semantic field," "lexical fields" and "word fields" are often used by scholars as synonymous expressions (Robins, 1980). The unifying basic



ideal signifying all three versions is that the recognition of a lexicon as a holistic structural entity is composed of the fields of the lexical items articulating certain domains of knowledge. Each lexical item derives its meaning from the position it occupies in the field.

Wu (1988) summarized Trier's Semantic Theory by asserting that the vocabulary in a language system is semantically related and builds up a complete lexical items system. Since the vocabulary of a language is semantically related, words should not be studied in isolation but as an integrated system. He added that since lexemes are interrelated in sense, we can only determine the connotation of a word by analyzing and comparing its semantic relationships with other words. A word is meaningful only in its semantic field. Trier's Semantic Field theory is generally considered paradigmatic. For example, one can represent the relationships between a set of words such as animal, dog, carrot, flower among others, hierarchically as in *figure 2*. (overleaf).

Figure 2: Hierarchical diagram of noun relationships



From the diagram, we can say that "horse" is a hyponym of "animal" or that "ant" is a hyponym of "insect". It is also true that two or more terms which share the same superordinate (higher-up) term are co-hyponyms. So horse and dog are co-hyponyms, and the superordinate term in "animal," (Yule,1996). Similar ideal is expressed in SFT, whereby the horse, dog, and snakes fall under the domain of animals.

The term 'lexical' is used in a broad sense to include not only words, but also bound morphemes and fixed phrases. In many languages, there are primitives that are expressed by bound morpheme, rather than by separate words. (Goddard, 1998).

Stubbs (2001) asserts that the Semantic Field Theory suggests that the lexical content of a language is best treated not as a mere aggregation of independent words or an unstructured list of words, but as a collection of interrelating networks of relations between words. Anthropologists have found the study of semantic fields useful in investigating the nature of belief systems, and reasoning in different cultural groups, (Akmajhan A, Demers R., Farmmer A.,Harnish R. 2001). Much of the vocabulary is linked by such systems of inclusion, and the resulting semantic networks form the hierarchical taxonomies such as those used in this study (Saeed, 2003).

Semantic fields organize words into a system which shows their relationship within one another. In semantics, lexical relations, refers to a relation of inclusion whereby the extension of one term is a proper subset of the extension of another (Lynne and Koskela, 2010). Conclusively then, words which are semantically related, whether syntagmatically or paradigmatically, are said to belong to the same semantic field or a domain according to SFT.

## 1.8.2 Componential Analysis and its Relation to Semantic Field Theory

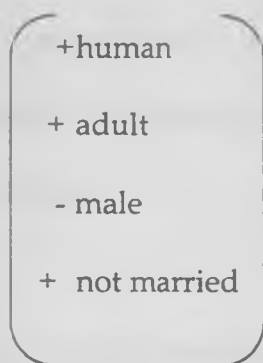
Componential Analysis is the analysis of the meaning of an expression by looking at all its semantic components. It is an attempt to describe the meaning of words in terms of a universal inventory of semantic components and their possible combinations.

Central to Semantic Field Theory is the Componential Analysis. It is considered as a device in semantic classification, which is the cornerstone of any study in semantics. The meaning of a word is determined by the contrasts in which it stands. It helps to recognize the semantic relatedness between words that belong to the same semantic set (field). Componential analysis is a technique for the economical statement of certain semantic relations between lexical items. In Componential Analysis (CA), the meanings of words are analyzed not as unitary concepts but as complexes made up of components of meaning which are semantic primitives.

Nida, E.A. (1975) gave two approaches of the Componential Analysis, namely: Common Componential Approach and Diagnostic Componential Approach. Nouns such as boy, spinster, father and mother make a "family". This kind of a relationship is referred to as the "common componential approach". One of those nouns, such as "*mūirītu* (girl)" can be further analyzed as a semantic complex made up of components or markers.

To describe the presence and absence of a feature, binary rules are used. The symbol (+) means the feature is present, while (-) means the feature is absent. This is termed as “diagnostic approach,” as illustrated below:

Mūirītu (spinster)



CA is often seen as process of breaking down the sense of a word into its minimal distinctive features. It deals with the inter-relationships between words in terms of more primitive semantic components. Kempson (1977) defined Componential Analysis as a process in which concept like 'irio' (food) in Gikūyū, could be decomposed into components such as 'ngima'(ugali), 'mūcere'(rice), and 'ngwaci' (sweet potatoes), among others.

CA offers a systematic and easy way of describing similarity and differences in meaning. It consists of breaking down the meaning of a word into what is known as Semantic Components of Features. Further it shows semantic relatedness between words. Words belong to the same semantic set when they share some

semantic features. An alternative term in componential analysis is “lexical decomposition” (Lyons, 1995).

In Linguistics, Componential Analysis refers to the analysis of a set of related linguistic items, especially word meaning. It deals with combinations of features which make up specific nouns found in given fields or domains. The componential analysis provides an inventory of the semantic features encoded in lexical forms (Widdowson, 1996).

One way of formalizing or making absolutely precise the sense relations that hold among lexemes is by means of Componential Analysis. It involves the analysis of the sense of a lexeme into its component parts. The following is a summarized table of Componential Analysis of some nouns.

**Table 1: Semantic features**

	cow	girl	woman	boy	man
Animate	+	+	+	+	+
Human	-	+	+	+	+
Male	-	-	-	+	+
Adult	-	-	+	-	+

From the diagram of feature analysis, above, we learn that at least part of the basic meaning of the word 'boy' in English involves the components {+human, +male, - adult}. These features can be treated as the basic features involved in differentiating the meanings of each word in the language from every other word (Yule, 1996). The same information has been used in the current study to analyze the Gīkūyū nouns semantically.

In the current study, Componential Analysis has not been used as a theory per se, but as an "instrument", to give proper description of the Gīkūyū nouns semantically. It provides a more precise description through components making up. The employment of the componential analysis in the study provides the required "tools" for analyzing words in the semantic field. It is on this basis then, that this current researcher used the Semantic Field Theory alongside Componential Analysis to analyze Gīkūyū nouns semantically, the latter being used as an "instrument" of semantic domain analysis.

## **1.9 Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This section highlights important contributions that have been made by other scholars, in relation to the language of study and examines their relevance to the present study. Literature review used in this study emanates from various studies and works of other researchers on account of the most relevant, scholarly

work in the topic area. The review will broadly be divided into literature review on language of study, and theoretical literature.

### 1.9.1 Review of Literature on the language of Study

The current study focused on the analysis of Gikūyū nouns semantically using the Semantic Field Theory. A paper presented by Creider (1975) dealt with the semantic system of noun classes in proto-Bantu. He postulated that noun classes in proto-Bantu possess semantic contents. They can be systematically organized on a semantic basis. He claimed that the Proto-Bantu's noun prefixes realized a semantic system where each prefix was in general, associated with particular characteristic meaning. The current study has been enhanced by the study as it proved that noun classes in Proto-Bantu languages have semantic content. However, no analysis of these nouns has been done semantically, particularly in Gikūyū language. This is the focus of the current study.

Burton and Lorraine (1976) presented a comprehensive paper on the semantic reality of Bantu noun classes in Gikūyū. They primarily dealt with the nature and extent of the semantic reality of a syntactic category in Bantu languages. They used Psycholinguistic Theory whereby they allowed Gikūyū respondents themselves to judge whether the members of different noun classes are semantically distinct. They used "Triad Test" to prove that the Gikūyū nouns



possess semantic properties. The current study has gained much, as it has discussed how nouns, making up semantic domains are related semantically.

Karega (1977) discussed noun classification and class marking in Gikūyū. He asserted that most noun classes are classified on the basis of concord, that is, the way in which words are used together correctly, according to the rules of grammar. He says that if a new noun is borrowed from other languages, it may belong to different classes in different dialects. The classification has been used along with their morphological changes in Gikuyu nouns, which results to semantic effects.

Gecaga (1994) also researched on Gikūyū noun classification including their morphological changes. He asserted that there are eleven different classes of Gikūyū nouns and that each class has its own special singular and plural noun prefix. His study proved to be very helpful to the current one, as the information has been used to show the semantic effects caused by morphological changes in Gikuyu nouns.

Along with the verbs, nouns are a dominant part of speech, and that the semantic content of sentences is borne mostly by nouns. Algeo (1995) pointed out that nouns play a pivotal role in languages. This study has provided a basis for the current study as it expounded on how these nouns can be analyzed semantically.

Atoh (2001) discussed the semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns which included the classification of nouns, noun structures, semantic domains, among others, using the Semantic Field Theory. Though the work was beneficial to the current one, linguistic areas such as stems and bases in nouns, physical features domain, headedness principle in noun formation, the open-endedness of the lexicon and productivity and its constraints, have not been dealt with. Additionally, his work had syntactical and phonological information as he endeavored to include sentences and some word transcriptions, all of which the current study never delved into. However, his work provided information on how possible it is to analyze nouns in any natural language semantically using the Semantic Field Theory.

Mwĩhaki (2005) is yet another scholar whose main strategy was on morphological nominalization in Gĩkũyũ. She noted that Gĩkũyũ as a language, uses the class markers termed as affixes, to achieve nominalization structure of the language. The current study has made use of her nominalization ideas in the analysis of the language nouns.

Our work has greatly been enriched by these previous studies. However none of them has dealt with the semantic analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns using the SFT, which the current study delves into.

## 1.9.2 Theoretical Literature

The development of the Semantic Field Theory has its roots in the research carried out by American Anthropologists and German Linguists at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Those scholars were primarily influenced by Humboldt, whose doctrine of inner speech forms of language, reflected the individual perception of the world and has provided a basis for all major theories of the field. Among these scholars was Trier (1934), who claimed that individual words in a language do not stand alone, but are arranged into meaningful groups. This does not refer to an etymological group, but rather to a group in which the conceptual contents of its members are all interrelated.

This connection is ordered such that, the whole group marks out a semantic field, which is internally structured. Trier is generally regarded as the main proponent of the theory. The Semantic Field Theory claims that words that belong to the same domain are essentially, semantically related.

The meaning of a word depends on the area of a field it covers and on relations it has with its neighbours. For example the words father, mother, aunt and grandfather are all related as they make up the semantic field of a "family".

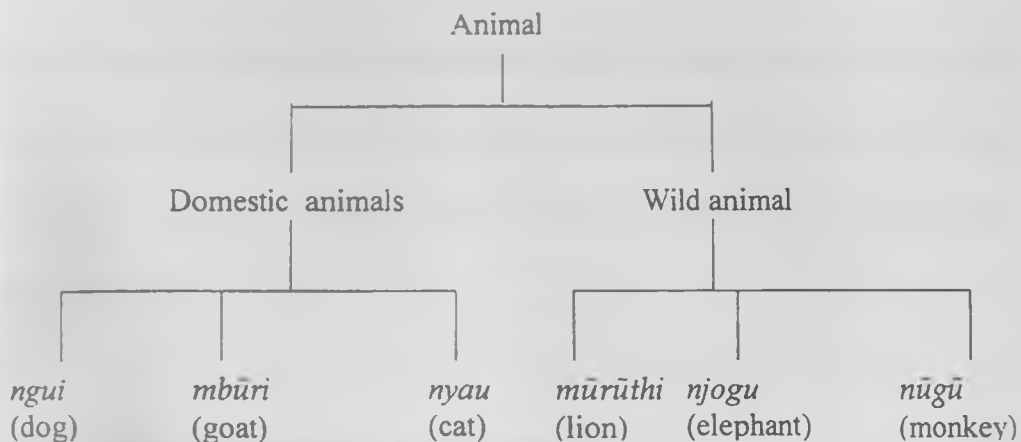
Word and other units that are semantically related within a given language system, can be said to belong to, or to be members of the same semantic field,

and a field whose members are lexemes of a lexical field. According to (Lyons, 1977), words semantically related in any sense are said to belong to the same semantic field.

Briton (2000) defines semantic fields or semantic domains, and relates the linguistic concept to hyponymy. He asserts that these two concepts share the notion of designation of members of a class. For instance, dog, cat, goat, elephant, lion, etc are hyponyms of 'animal,' which is a semantic field or a semantic domain. A semantic field or a hyponym denotes a segment of a reality symbolized by a set of related words.

Semantic properties or meaning properties are those aspects of a linguistic unit, such as morpheme, word or a sentence, that contribute to the meaning of that unit. The work was greatly useful to the current study, as the relatedness of nouns in selected semantic domains in some Gikūyū have been dealt with. This has been illustrated in fig.3.

Figure 3 Animal Domain



Conclusively then, it is evident that the Semantic Field Theory (SFT) proves to be suitable to analyze nouns in Gikūyū language.

## 1.10 Research Methodology

### 1.10.1 Introduction

This section described the procedures and methods used in conducting the study. It dealt with the research design, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

### 1.10.2 Research Design

The most appropriate research design for the study was the case study (ethnography), whereby a close examination of the data within a specific context was done. The case study is an in-depth study of just one person, group or event.

Yin (1984) defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The researcher used observational design (a part of the case study), which is exploratory and does not require structured instruments for the collection of data. The use of the case study in this work was meant to help explore or describe the data on the analysis of nouns semantically.

### **1.10.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define a sample as a smaller group obtained from accessible population to represent the whole subject. A sample is a sub-set of a particular population. The sampling was done by use of convenient sampling which is a form of a non-probability type of sampling. In this case, the study involved the researcher's knowledge of the language, along with open discussions (informal conversation) with other native speakers of the language. This was meant to provide further insight on the issues focused on, and to avert any personal influences or biasness in the outcome of the study.

### **1.10.4 Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher employed the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA). This has been done through making observations, writing field notes and tape recording. Consequently, the researcher used her intuitive knowledge (introspection) of the language, along with the use of the English-Kikuyu dictionary (A.Ruffell Barlow,

1975) for verification of the information. Library research was equally useful for the purpose of data collection and subsequent analysis. This enabled the researcher to collect reliable and accurate information in regard to the analysis of nouns in Gikūyū.

#### **1.10.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

After the data collection the researcher used the principles of the Semantic Field Theory to show how nouns that belong to the same domain are semantically related. Some of these nouns were analyzed to their finest stages by use of both common and diagnostic approaches of the Componential Analysis. Hierarchical diagrams and tables were also used to concretize the information, which ultimately provided required data to justify the suitability and appropriateness of SFT in the analysis of Gikūyū nouns semantically.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SEMANTICS OF GIKŪYŪ NOUNS

#### 2.0 Introduction

Bantu Languages are most commonly associated with noun class systems. In this very large group, there is a substantial amount of homogeneity in the noun class systems and in their grammatical functions. In any Bantu language, a very large number of noun forms can readily be analyzed as consisting of a "prefix" and a "stem." (Werner,1973).

Generally, the affixing of words makes a major part of morphology. Morphology is the study of word formation. As words change form they convey different meanings such as a certain verb tense, person, or noun case. It is therefore apparent that morphological aspects, specifically affixes, carry meanings of given words. In every language, there are rules that relate to the formation of words. Such morphological rules determine how morphemes combine to form new words (Fromkin, 1988). Gikūyū is a highly inflectional language with complex word structure and phonemics. It has seventeen noun classes. It has a concord system formed around the noun classes. The membership of a noun class is determined by the concord system which it enforces on the other parts of speech in a sentence.



The Gĩkũyũ nouns have been morphologically classified according to their meaning in the current study. This showed the relationship between morphology and semantics particularly in the analysis of Gĩkũyũ nouns.

This chapter discussed the Gĩkũyũ noun structures in regard to Gĩkũyũ noun classification and the formation of nouns from other parts of speech, like the verbs and the adjectives. The diminutive (smallness) and the augmentative (bigness), Gĩkũyũ loan nouns, clipped nouns and compound nouns were dealt with. The noun classification according to Mugane (1997) was used.

### **2.1. Semantics of Gĩkũyũ Noun Classes**

According to Mcgregory (1905) Gĩkũyũ nouns have two numbers, singular and plural. They are distinguished generally by initial syllables (prefixes). The formation of adjectives, verbs, and nouns governing or governed by them depends upon the formation of nouns. All nouns in Bantu languages, Gĩkũyũ included, are distinguished morphologically by characteristic prefixes that are affixed to the noun stem. Meinhof (1932) Guthrie (1970), concurs with Mugane, (1997), that Gĩkũyũ language has seventeen noun classes. In most of these classes, the plural is formed by substituting for the singular sign a plural prefix. In general, a class of nouns is made up of those words that have similar prefixes, which in turn form part of a set of concord elements operating a distinct pattern of agreement.

Prefixes mostly used in languages do not generally alter the word class of the base (a part of the word remaining after every affix has been removed (Greebaums, 1973). Some of the examples of such nouns in Gikūyū include:

<b>Noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<b>singular</b>		<b>plural</b>	
<i>Kī-ndū</i>	a thing	<i>i-ndo</i>	things
<i>Mū-ndū</i>	person	<i>a-ndū</i>	people, etc.

According to Mugane (1997) the grouping of referential entities into noun classes has clear semantic criteria. A class of nouns is made up of words that have similar prefixes, which in turn form part of a set of concord elements operating a distinct pattern of agreement. The term ‘prefix’ can be used in Bantu language studies to refer exclusively to concord elements in nouns and verbs. The current study used the seventeen Gikūyū noun classification according to (Mugane, 1997).

### 2.1.1 Class One and Two Gikūyū Nouns

This class is made up of the singular and the plural of human names. This includes kinship and professional terms as follows:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Mūruḡi</i>	<i>Aruḡi</i>	cooks
<i>Mūrutani</i>	<i>Arutani</i>	teachers
<i>Mūka</i>	<i>Aka</i>	Wives
<i>Mūirītu</i>	<i>Airītu</i>	Girls
<i>Mūndū</i>	<i>Andū</i>	People
<i>Mūtumia</i>	<i>Atumia</i>	Women
<i>Mūrīmi</i>	<i>Arīmi</i>	Farmers
<i>Mūḡūri</i>	<i>Agūri</i>	Buyers
<i>Mūthuri</i>	<i>Athuri</i>	Married men
<i>Mūrutwo</i>	<i>Arutwo</i>	Learners

Therefore in analyzing this class semantically, the prefix *mū-* means the singular of the noun word, while the prefix *a-*, means its plural in Gikūyū nouns.

### 2.1.2 Class Three and Four Gikūyū Nouns

Class 3 and its counterpart class 4 include names of some parts of the body and names of plants and trees. The prefixes in this class are similar to those of class one singular, in structure, which is *mū-* but its plural prefix is *mī-*. Examples of nouns which belong to these classes include:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Mūtwe</i>	<i>mītwe</i>	heads
<i>Mūembe</i>	<i>mīembe</i>	mango trees
<i>Mūtī</i>	<i>mītī</i>	trees
<i>Mūgumo</i>	<i>mīgumo</i>	fig tree
<i>Mūkonyo</i>	<i>mīkonyo</i>	navel

Semantically, the prefix *mū-* means the singular of the noun, while its counterpart *mī-* means it's plural.

### 2.1.3 Class Five and Six Gīkūyū Nouns

This class includes singular and plural of names of plants, parts of a plant, inanimate things, such as working tools, and implements, parts of the body and names of occasions, for example:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Irigū</i>	<i>marigū</i>	bananas
<i>Ithangū</i>	<i>mathangū</i>	leave(s)
<i>Iyembe</i>	<i>maembe</i>	mango fruit(s)
<i>Icembe</i>	<i>maceembe</i>	hoe(s)
<i>Itimū</i>	<i>matimū</i>	spear(s)
<i>Iniūrū</i>	<i>maniūrū</i>	nose(s)
<i>Igongona</i>	<i>magongona</i>	ceremonies / occasions

In Gīkūyū the difference in the meaning of words is marked morphologically.

For example, the nouns in this class take the prefix *i-* for the singular and *ma-* for the plural.

#### 2.1.4 Class Seven and Eight Gīkūyū Nouns

The nouns in this class are generally impersonal. They include names of languages, anatomic terms (physical structure of an animal or plant), and names of utensils. Examples include:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Kiara</i>	<i>ciara</i>	finger(s)
<i>Giciko</i>	<i>iciko</i>	spoon(s)
<i>Kiongo</i>	<i>ciongo</i>	head(s)
<i>Kūga</i>	<i>cūga</i>	body part(s)
<i>Gikombe</i>	<i>ikombe</i>	cup(s)

They have different affixes which include *kī-*, *gī-*, *i-*, and *ci-*. As seen in the data, the nouns take varied prefixes dictated by the impersonal nouns that belong to these classes. The prefixes *kī-*, and *gī-*, mean the singular of the word while the *ci-* and *i-* mean the plural of those particular words resulting in different meanings of these words.

### 2.1.5 Class Nine and Ten Gikūyū Nouns

The nouns in this class carry the same prefixes in both singular and plural. These nouns are largely objects or things and some names of animals. They also consist of words borrowed from other languages. Some examples of nouns that belong to this class include:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Ndege</i>	<i>ndege</i>	airplane (s)
<i>Ngaari</i>	<i>ngaari</i>	car(s)
<i>Nyūmba</i>	<i>nyūmba</i>	house(s)
<i>Nyamū</i>	<i>nyamū</i>	animal(s)
<i>Ndaahi</i>	<i>ndaahi</i>	locust(s)

According to this class in Gikūyū, both the singular and the plural of the word prefixes do not change morphologically, but they do semantically. One means the singular of the noun word, while the other means it's plural.

### 2.1.6 Class Eleven Gikūyū Nouns

The nouns in this class consist of names of objects and some parts of the body.

Examples of nouns found in this class are:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>ūthiū</i>	<i>mothiū</i>	face(s)
<i>rūcwīrī</i>	<i>njuīrī</i>	hair(s)

<i>rūrigi</i>	<i>ndigi</i>	strings
<i>rūara</i>	<i>ndwara</i>	nails

The nouns in this class have varied prefixes in both singular and plural. As indicated, the prefixes *ū-* and *rū-* mean the singular form of the word, while the prefixes *mo-* and *n-* mean plural forms of these noun words.

### 2.1.7 Class Twelve and Thirteen Gīkūyū Nouns

The nouns in this class denote diminutiveness. The nouns in class twelve are usually in singular while those in thirteen show their plural. These are also the classes that denote endearment (loving words). Thus the term “gakaari” may also refer to “a car” that is seen to be endearing. Examples include:-

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Gakaari</i>	<i>tūkaari</i>	small car(s)
<i>Gatimū</i>	<i>tūtimū</i>	small spears
<i>Kanyūmba</i>	<i>tūnyūmba</i>	small houses
<i>Kahuti</i>	<i>tūhuti</i>	small leaves
<i>Karūī</i>	<i>tūrūī</i>	small rivers
<i>Kairītu</i>	<i>tūirītu</i>	small girls

The data above indicate that the prefixes *ga-* and *ka-* mean that the noun is in singular, while *tū-* prefix means the plural of the same words and indicates smallness of the same word.

### 2.1.8 Class Fourteen Gīkūyū Nouns

This is the class of abstract concepts. The plural in these abstract concepts as well as tangible ones that can be pluralized is found in class 6. Examples

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>ūūgī</i>	<i>maūūgī</i>	many types of knowledge
<i>ūrīmi</i>	<i>maūrīmi/morīmi</i>	many types of farming
<i>ūtugi</i>	<i>maūtugi / motugi</i>	various types of generosity
Uthamaki	<i>mauthamaki/mothamaki</i>	various types of leadership

As seen in the data the nouns take the prefix *u-* which means the singular of the word, while its prefix takes *ma-* which means the plural of those particular words. However, some of the vowels in the plural nouns in this class are coalesced in pronunciation. This refers to the adjustments done which takes place when two or more vowels are juxtaposed into a single syllable. For example *au* can be coalesced to become *o* as in the word *utugi* which becomes *motugi*.



### 2.1.9 Class Fifteen Gikūyū Nouns

The nouns in this class consist of infinitive nouns and gerunds .It also deals with names of various body parts. The body parts in this class derive plurals from class 6, for example:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
<i>Kūruga</i>	<i>maorugi</i>	many types of cooking
<i>Gūtū</i>	<i>matū</i>	ear(s)
<i>Kūgūrū</i>	<i>magūrū</i>	leg(s)

The prefixes *gū-* and *kū-* mean the singular of the word, while *ma-* prefix mean the plural of the words.

### 2.1.10 Class Sixteen and Seventeen Gikūyū Nouns

The nouns in these classes refer to the location of things. Class 16 makes reference of the specific place and class 17 the general place. The nouns used include “*handū*” and “*kūndū*”, in relation to “*haha*” and “*gūkū*” respectively.

Examples include:

Singular/Plural	Gloss
<i>Haha (handū)</i>	here (specific place)
<i>Gūkū (kūndū)</i>	here (general place)

The data indicate that the classes prefix *ha-* which means “here” or a specific near place; while the *kū-* prefix means “here” or generally any place. This means that the class is locative in concept. The stem *-ndū* means a thing. Therefore a thing in locative class is a place.

From the information given, Gikūyū has proved to have an elaborate system of noun classification. The classes are distinguished by the occurrence of certain associated sets of concordial affixes that go with the noun in an utterance. This means the way in which these nouns are used together correctly, according to the rules of grammar. However, the noun classification can be semantically analyzed as it has been done in this study. The following is a summary table of Gikūyū noun classes.

Table 2: Gikūyū Nominal Concordial System

Class	Prefix	Example	Gloss	Description
1	mū-	<i>mūrīmi</i>	a farmer	Singular of 2
2	a-	<i>arīmi</i>	farmers	Plural of 1
3	mū	<i>mūrango</i>	door	Singular of 4
4	mī	<i>mīrango</i>	doors	Plural of 3 and occasionally of 14
5	i-	<i>ihūa</i>	flower	Singular of 6
6	ma-	<i>mahua</i>	flowers	Plural of 5, and 14
7	kī/ gi	<i>kīondo</i>	basket	Singular of 8
8.	ci/i	<i>ciondo</i>	baskets	Plural of 7
9.	n-	<i>nyoka</i>	snake	Singular of 10.
10	n-	<i>nyoka</i>	snakes	Plural of 9
11	rū-	<i>rūūi</i>	river	Singular of 10
11	njū-	<i>njūi</i>	rivers	Plural of 11
12	ka	<i>kairītu</i>	small girl	diminitive, singular of 13
13	tū-	<i>tūiritu</i>	small girls	diminitive plural of 12
14	ū-	<i>ūrimū</i>	foolishness	No change in singular and plural
14	ū	<i>ūrimū</i>	foolishness	
15	kū	<i>kūgūrū</i> <i>magūrū</i>	leg legs	Singular Plural of class 15
16	ha	<i>haha</i>	here	Locative – specific place
17	kū	<i>gūkū</i>	here	Locative – general place

(Adopted from Mugane 1997)

## 2.2 Nouns Formation in Gikūyū

Word formation refers to the creation of new lexemes in a given language. (Bauer L, 1983). Words are the basic unit of grammar. Grammarians classify words

according to their parts of speech. In language, a word is the smallest element that may be uttered in isolation with semantic or pragmatic content. In every language, there are a limited number of types of lexical items, traditionally termed as 'parts of speech' or "word class." Words are classified into word classes, partly on the basis of their morphological forms. The study of how meaning is encoded in a language is the core of semantics, and it is generally assumed that its main concern is with the meanings of words as lexical items. The lexical items or words come in the form of single words and larger clusters of words as well. (Widdowson, 1996).

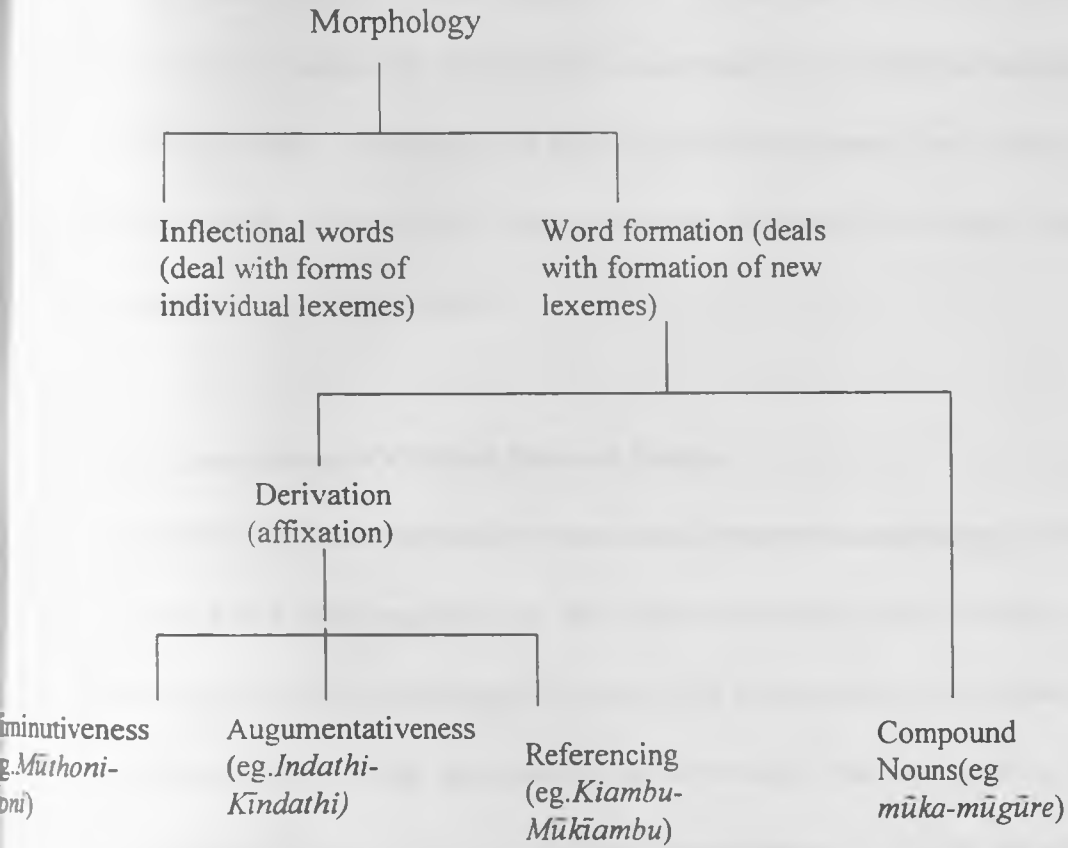
The formation of new words brings about new meanings. This therefore means that since these new words in Gīkūyū are morphologically formed, it is difficult to separate the two areas e.g. a change of prefixes causes change in meaning as expressed hereafter.

- *Indathi* (an average sized bun )
- *Kandathi* (a small bun)
- *Kīndathi* (a big bun)

This shows that any effect on the morphological make up of a word causes difference in meaning.

Conclusively then, there is a relationship between morphology and semantics in the analysis of Gikūyū nouns as expounded in fig. 4

Figure 4: Morphology versus Semantics



Adopted from Katamba (1993)

The function of the morphological component is to assemble words, in the sense of stating how roots and affixes combine to form a particular word. Thus the morphological component is responsible for combining a noun root such as *mū+ndū* (*mūndū*) or *a+ndū* (*andū*) to form a "person" and "people" respectively.

In semantics, a meaning with a particular complex of sound is capable of having a particular grammatical employment (Lyons, 1968).

The semantic structure in word grammar is autonomous in relation to the words that express it, in the sense that the only requirement of a semantic structure is that it should reflect the information conveyed by the string of words concerned (Hudson, 1984). Gikūyū, just like any other language, has a way of forming noun words. This can be done through derivation, affixing, clipping, and compounding, among others.

### 2.2.1 Semantics of Gikūyū Derived Nouns

Katamba (1993) asserts that the connection between morphology and the lexicon on one hand with meaning on the other is obvious, since a major role of the lexicon is to list the meanings of words. This is because normally the relationship between a word and its meaning is arbitrary. An analysis of words into morphemes begins with the isolation of morphemes. A morph is a physical form of representing some morphemes in a language.

An affix is a morpheme which only occurs when attached to some other morpheme or morphemes such as a root or stem or base. A base is any limit whatsoever to which affixes of any kind can be added. Some of the examples of derived nouns found in the Gikūyū language are:

Gikūyū base noun	Gloss
<i>Ka-huti</i>	A small leaf
<i>Tū-huti</i>	Many small leaves
<i>Ma-huti</i>	Many leaves

Affixes in Bantu languages, operate as inflectional and derivational morphemes. Gikūyū nouns are morphologically complex. Gikūyū has a typical Bantu Class System where noun classes are signaled by a pair of prefixes attached to the nominal stem, one for singular, and the other for plural. Gikūyū as a language, is highly agglutinative whereby most words are formed by joining morphemes together. Affixes in Gikūyū nouns typically represent one unit of meaning such as “diminutiveness,” “augmentativeness” or “nominalization” as it has been proved in this study.

Mugane (1997) asserts that a noun is one of the most fascinating elements in Gikūyū grammar. The language has non-derived nouns such as *kahii*(boy) or *guka* (grandfather); as well as derived nouns such as *mu-thomi* (a learner) which is derived from the verb *-thom-*(learn/study). Among the Gikūyū derived nouns, are those with prefixes and others derived from verbs as expounded in the study. Noun prefixes reflect noun-classes in Bantu languages (Wafula, 2005). Nouns generally refer to “things” in the broadest sense. Abstract things can also be regarded as concrete, in a process known as ‘Reification’ (Jackson, 1980).

## 2.2.2 Semantics of Nominalization of nouns from verbs

Derived nouns can be formed through nominalization of verbs which is also termed as agentive nominalization. In this process, the verb will drop its prefix and its root takes the prefix of the newly formed noun. These nouns have the meanings, which perform the action of the verb (Saeed, 2002). According to Barlow (1951) a large proportion of Gikūyū nouns consist of those derived from verbs by means of the nominal prefixes and terminal vowels (suffixes). These terminal vowels in Gikūyū mostly change to *i*, *o*, or *u*. Examples include:

Verb	noun	Gloss
<i>Rīra</i>	<i>mūrīri</i>	one who cries
<i>Rīma</i>	<i>mūrīmi</i>	farmer
<i>Gūthoma</i>	<i>mūthomi</i>	one who reads
<i>Tura</i>	<i>mūturi</i>	blacksmith
<i>anika</i>	<i>mwanīki</i>	one who dries hides
<i>ruga</i>	<i>mūrūgi</i>	one who cooks
<i>rūthia</i>	<i>mūrūthi</i>	one who herds
<i>ūka</i>	<i>mūūki</i>	one who comes
<i>rīma</i>	<i>mūrīmi</i>	one who digs the land.
<i>aka</i>	<i>mwaki</i>	one who builds
<i>tūma</i>	<i>mātūmi</i>	one who sends someone



According to the data, nominalization can be done to virtually any verb in Gikūyū language. Most of the nominalized verbs tend to be names of persons in Gikūyū.

The termination of the sound (o), in nominalization is common in Gikūyū and occurs mostly in abstract nouns. The following are examples to exemplify the use of sound (o), at the final position of the noun.

Verb	Noun	Gloss
<i>gūkena</i>	<i>gīkeno</i>	happiness
<i>ītīa</i>	<i>mwītīo</i>	conceit
<i>gamba</i>	<i>mūgambo</i>	voice (sound)
<i>gaatha</i>	<i>ngatho</i>	commendation, praise
<i>thaaka</i>	<i>ithako</i>	play
<i>rīra</i>	<i>kīrīro</i>	a cry

Termination of sound [u], signifies state or person. For examples *kīga* is a state of being foolish, while *mukīgu* refers to a foolish person.

Verb	noun	Gloss
<i>Nora</i>	<i>ūnoru</i>	fat
<i>Kīga</i>	<i>mūkīgu</i>	fool
<i>agana</i>	<i>waganu</i>	wickedness
<i>hīnja</i>	<i>ūhīnju</i>	slimness

In Gĩkũyũ, the change of word from a verb to a noun brings out difference in meaning.

### 2.2.3 Semantics of nominalization by referencing

In Gĩkũyũ, we have personal referencing whereby one is “nicknamed” depending on where he /she comes from. In this class the prefix {*mũ-*} is used to show a person from a certain location. The nouns derived are therefore locative.

Examples are:

Place Noun	Personal reference	Gloss
<i>Kĩambu</i>	<i>Mũkĩambu</i>	person from Kĩambu
<i>Embu</i>	<i>Mũembu</i>	person from Embu
<i>Nyĩrĩ</i>	<i>Mũnyĩrĩ</i>	person from Nyeri
<i>Kabete</i>	<i>Mũkabete</i>	person from Kabete
<i>Mũrang'a</i>	<i>Mũmũrang'a</i>	person from Mũrang'a

In addition we have some names given to people in regard to their physical appearance. For example

Word	Gloss
<i>Nyakairũ</i>	A very dark person
<i>Nyakerũ</i>	A very light skinned person

### 2.2.4 Semantics of nominalization of nouns from adjectives

Nouns in Gikūyū can also be derived from adjectives. Nominalization is the process by which a noun can be formed using a combination of two different parts of speech such as an adjective and a noun as exemplified below.

Adjective	Derived noun word	Gloss
( <i>nguo</i> ) <i>Ndaihu</i>	<i>Ūrai</i> <i>hu</i>	Length
( <i>mūndū</i> ) <i>Mwerū</i>	<i>Werū</i>	light skinned
( <i>mūndū</i> ) <i>Mūtungu</i>	<i>Ūtungu</i>	big bodied
( <i>Kiratū</i> ) <i>kīnene</i>	<i>Ūnene</i>	being big

According to the data given the nouns are derived from the adjectives in Gikūyū language.

### 2.2.5 Semantics of Gikūyū Noun Diminutiveness

The term “diminutiveness” refers to a formation of a word to convey words that express smallness. In many languages, formation of diminutiveness is formed in a regular way by adding affixes to nouns. The prefix *ka-* or *ga-*, which are allomorphs, mark diminutiveness in Gikūyū nouns. Examples include:

Noun	Diminutive	Gloss
<i>Mūirītu</i>	<i>kairītu</i>	a young girl
<i>Mūthuri</i>	<i>gathuri</i>	a small elderly man
<i>Mūtumia</i>	<i>gatumia</i>	a small elderly woman

<i>Mūti</i>	<i>kamūti</i>	a small stick
<i>Kiondo</i>	<i>kondo</i>	a small basket
<i>Nyūmba</i>	<i>kanyūmba</i>	a small house
<i>Thaa</i>	<i>gathaa</i>	a small watch
<i>Ngari</i>	<i>gakari</i>	a small car
<i>Mūtwe</i>	<i>Kamūtwe</i>	a small head

### 2.2.6 Semantics of Gīkūyū Noun Augmentativeness

In linguistics, the term augmentative denotes an affix that may be added to the base words to convey the meaning of largeness or greatness. It indicates an increase in size, force or intensity of the meaning of the word. In Gīkūyū, the term is usually used in a derogatory manner as it expresses low opinion on something or somebody. Examples of augmented nouns in Gīkūyū are:

<b>Noun word</b>	<b>Noun augmentation</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Indathi</i>	<i>kīndathi</i>	a big bun
<i>Mūndū</i>	<i>kīmūndū</i>	a big man
<i>Mūiritu</i>	<i>kīiritu</i>	a big manner-less girl
<i>Ibuku</i>	<i>kībuku</i>	a big book
<i>Nyūmba</i>	<i>kīnyūmba</i>	a big house

As seen in the data, the derogatory bigness is marked by *kī* in Gīkūyū language

## 2.2.7 Semantics of Gīkūyū loan Nouns

Borrowed words, also termed as loan words, make a major part of word formation in any language. These are words adopted by the speakers of a language from a different language. The terms “loan” and “borrowing” are of course metaphors, because there is no literal lending process. There is absolutely no transfer of words from one language to another, and no “returning” words to the source language. The words simply come to be used by a speech community that speaks a different language from the ones these words originate. Katamba (1994) remarks that there is no pure linguistic reason for borrowing. He asserts that no limit exists to the number of words that can be generated in any language. One reason for borrowing is the need to find a term for an unfamiliar thing, animal, or cultural device.

Another reason would be the question of identity. This is especially the case with bilingual speakers who, by using a foreign element in their speech, make a statement about their own self perception.

The actual process of borrowing is complex. Conventionalization is commonly used, which is a gradual process in which a word progressively influences a larger speech community, becoming part of people’s linguistic repertoire. Like many other African languages, Gīkūyū has enlarged its vocabulary to describe adequately all aspects of modern day life and culture. The two principle sources

of lexical innovations are borrowing from other languages and coming up of new words from existing resources within the language. Examples of Gĩkũyũ nouns borrowed from English are as follows:

<b>Gĩkũyũ loanword</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Thikabu</i>	scarf
<i>Ibuku</i>	book
<i>Tegithi</i>	taxi
<i>Mbaathi</i>	bus
<i>Herikobuta</i>	helicopter
<i>Namba</i>	number
<i>Ndereba</i>	driver
<i>Mbicobu</i>	bishop
<i>Mbagiti</i>	packet

Example of Gĩkũyũ nouns borrowed from Kiswahili are:-

<b>Borrowed words</b>	<b>Kiswahili</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Bĩngũ</i>	<i>pingu</i>	handcuffs
<i>Caai</i>	<i>chai</i>	tea
<i>Karamu</i>	<i>kalamu</i>	pen
<i>Iratathi</i>	<i>karatasi</i>	paper
<i>Mũkebe</i>	<i>mkebe</i>	tin
<i>Kĩbiriti</i>	<i>kiberiti</i>	matchbox

In essence, borrowed words from either English or Kiswahili or from any other language do not form a noun class of their own when used in Gĩkũyũ. They identify themselves with the already existing classes. For example the English word 'driver' borrowed into Gĩkũyũ is 'ndereba' fits in noun class one using the syntactic classification. In Gĩkũyũ, the borrowed word 'ndoo' from 'ndoo' in Kiswahili goes into the ninth and tenth classification of nouns which do not change in either singular or plural.

### 2.3 Semantics of Gĩkũyũ affixation

This is the method in which an affix is attached to a root. Affixes in Gĩkũyũ nouns include prefix, and suffix, fixed at the initial and final positions of the root word respectively. Affixes are classified according to whether they are attached before or after the form to which they are added. Examples of Gĩkũyũ prefixed nouns are:

Word	Prefixed word	Gloss
<i>Metha</i>	<i>ka-metha</i>	a small table
<i>Nyũmba</i>	<i>ka - nyũmba</i>	small house (diminutive)
<i>Ngari</i>	<i>ga-kaari</i>	a small car
<i>Ibuku</i>	<i>kĩ-buku</i>	big book (augmentative)
<i>Ihũa</i>	<i>Ka-hũa</i>	a small flower
<i>Mũtĩ</i>	<i>ka-mũtĩ</i>	a small stick

<i>Mūdū</i>	<i>ka-mūdū</i>	a small person
<i>mwanake</i>	<i>ka-mwanake</i>	a small young man

Other affixes in Gikūyū language uses locative suffix (-inī) which changes the meaning from one referential entity to a location. Examples of such words are:-

Referential entity	Location	Gloss
<i>Mwaki</i>	<i>mwaki-inī</i>	in the fire
<i>Kiondo</i>	<i>kiondo -inī</i>	in the basket
<i>Metha</i>	<i>metha-inī</i>	on the table
<i>Nyūmba</i>	<i>nyūmba-inī</i>	in the house
<i>Kiugū</i>	<i>Kiugū-inī</i>	in the cowshed
<i>Ngari</i>	<i>Ngari-ini</i>	in the car etc.

### 2.3.1 Semantics of Gikūyū Clipped Nouns

This is the reduction or shortening of words thus bringing out a different meaning. In Gikūyū language they are commonly used in proper nouns especially in the names of people. The clipped words usually indicate "smallness" or belittling the person referred to.

Examples of shortened words in Gikūyū are:



Word	Clipped nouns	Gloss
<i>Mūthori</i>	<i>Noni</i>	<i>name of a small girl called Muthori</i>
<i>Wangarī</i>	<i>Karī</i>	<i>name of a small girl called wangari</i>
<i>Kamau</i>	<i>Mau</i>	<i>name of a small boy called Kamau</i>
<i>Wangūi</i>	<i>Kūi</i>	<i>name of a small girl called Wangui</i>
<i>Wanjikū</i>	<i>Cikū</i>	<i>name of a small girl called Wanjiku</i>
<i>Wambūi</i>	<i>Būi</i>	<i>name of a small girl called Wambui</i>
<i>Wanjirū</i>	<i>Cirū</i>	<i>name of a small girl called wanjiru</i>
<i>Wairimū</i>	<i>Nimū</i>	<i>name of a small girl called Wairimu</i>

### 2.3.2 Semantics of Gikūyū Compound Nouns

A compound noun is one that is made up of two or more words. Compound words are built of two or more independent words and have (at least in their original form) a meaning that involves those of their components. Languages vary in the kind of compound patterns they employ (Anderson, 1992). This may be a combination of nouns, verbs, or adjectives. This is the most productive type of formation process in languages. A compound word is one that consists of two elements, the first of which is either a root, a word or a phrase. Most compound words are interpreted in such a way that one element which is the head, is modified by others. The compound words inherit most of its semantic and syntactic information from its head. Some compound words in Gikūyū are

formed through a combination of a noun and an adjective. Examples of such Gikūyū compounds include:-

Noun word		Adjective	Compound noun	Gloss
<i>Mbūri</i>	+	<i>Njirū</i>	<i>mbūri Njirū</i>	black goat
<i>Mwana</i>	+	<i>Mwega</i>	<i>mwana mwega</i>	good child
<i>Nguo</i>	+	<i>Njerū</i>	<i>nguo njerū</i>	new dress
<i>Marigū</i>	+	<i>meru</i>	<i>marigū meru</i>	ripe bananas
<i>Thuuti</i>	+	<i>njerū</i>	<i>thuuti njerū</i>	white suit
<i>Mūndū</i>	+	<i>mūgo</i>	<i>mūndū mūgo</i>	medicine man

We also have compound words in Gikūyū created from a combination of a noun and another noun. Examples include:

Noun	Noun	Compound	Gloss
Word	word	noun	
<i>Mūndū</i>	<i>mūka</i>	<i>mūndū mūka</i>	a woman
<i>Mūndū</i>	<i>mūrūme</i>	<i>mūndū mūrūme</i>	a man
<i>Mūka</i>	<i>mūgūre</i>	<i>mūka mūgūre</i>	a legal wife
<i>mwendia</i>	<i>nduka</i>	<i>mwendia nduka</i>	shopkeeper
<i>mūkūnga</i>	<i>mbura</i>	<i>mūkūnga mbura</i>	rainbow
<i>mūhūri</i>	<i>biacara</i>	<i>mūhūri biacara</i>	businessperson

As seen in the above examples Gikūyū nouns can be formed by use of combination of a noun and an adjective or a noun and another noun.

Compound words usually form their plural, by pluralizing the fundamental word of the compound. In Gikūyū for instance, both parts are mostly pluralized.

Examples would be:

Nouns	Adjective	Plural	Gloss
<i>Mūka</i>	<i>Mūgūre</i>	<i>aka- agūre</i>	married women
<i>mūndū</i>	<i>mūirū</i>	<i>andū -airū</i>	black people
<i>Mūtwe</i>	<i>Mūnene</i>	<i>mītwe-mīnene</i>	big heads
<i>Mūirītu</i>	<i>mūkuhi</i>	<i>airitu -akuhi</i>	short ladies
<i>Irigū</i>	<i>rīru</i>	<i>marigū-meru</i>	ripe bananas

In general this chapter has dealt with structures of nouns in Gikūyū language.

Some of the issues discussed includes: nominalization of nouns from verbs, nominalization by referencing, Gikūyū language diminutiveness, Gikūyū loanwords, and their meanings. Eventually we have proved that Gikūyū nouns get affected by deriving, affixing, nominalization, referencing, diminutive and augmentative processes resulting in new meanings.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GĪKŪYŪ SEMANTIC DOMAINS

#### 3.0 Introduction

“Semantic” is a term that refers to the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of meanings, changes in these meanings, and the principles that govern the relationship between sentences or words and their meanings. There is division within a semantic field which divides the semantic fields into conceptual spheres.

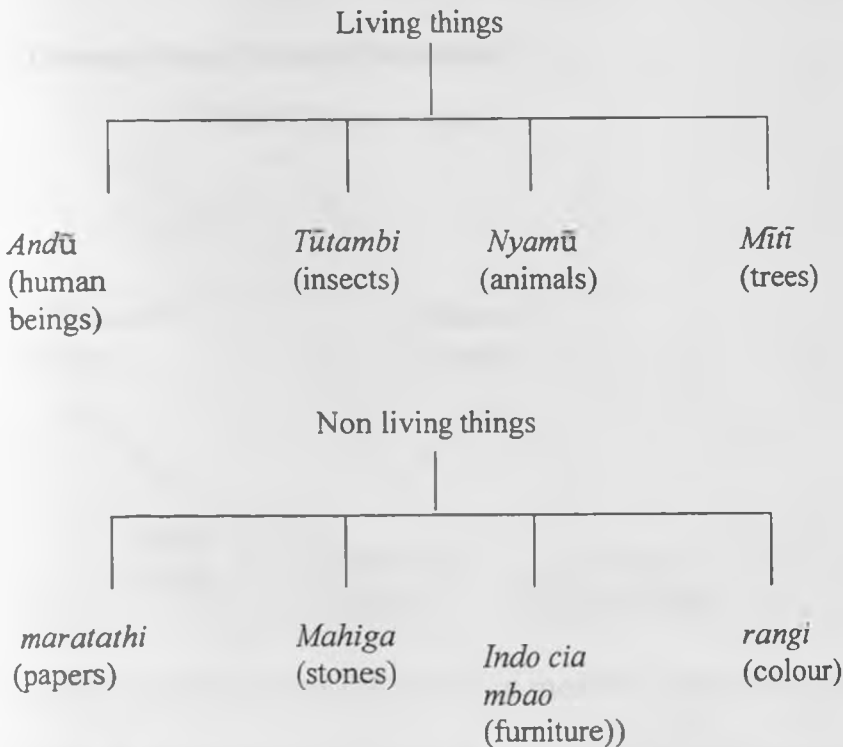
The domains to be discussed in this chapter include: Human beings domain, kinship domain, plant domain, animal domain, and finally the colour domain.

According to Creider (1975) the term “semantic domain” refers to the areas of the natural and social aspects, mental world, among others, in which we live in. The tendency of lexical items to relate within the Semantic Domain and across domains characterizes all existing human languages (Atoh 2005). Ottenheimer (2006) defines a Semantic Domain as a “special area of cultural emphasis”. A Semantic Domain is a specific place that shares a set of meanings, or a language that holds its meaning within the given text of the place. Lexical semantic domains are used to describe the paradigmatic relationship between one lexical item and other items that belong to the same (sub) category.

Semantic Domains are fields characterized by lexical coherent words. The concepts denoted by words in the same field are strongly connected to each other, while words belonging to different fields denote basically unrelated concepts. They are basically multilingual and can be used to relate terms in different languages. The notion of SD is inspired by the theory of Semantic Fields which is a structural model in lexical semantics as stated by Trier (1931).

A scientific living and non- living thing classifications structure could be used to show different domains as illustrated in fig. 5

**Figure 5: Living and Non living things classification**



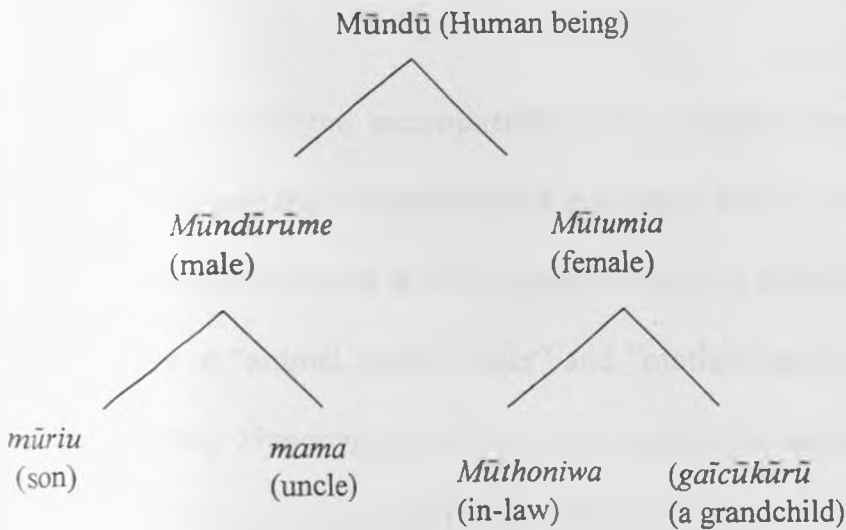
Different domains can be inferred from fig. 5 as follows:

### 3.1 Human Being Domain

According to Chomsky (2006) language defines what it means to be human and the study of language is a way into the study of human mind. Human language describes the distinctive qualities of the mind that are unique to mankind.

Human beings domain belongs to the classification of living things. Sense relations such as hyponymy and antonym have been used to analyze the human being domain in Gikūyū. Here, sense relations such as hyponymy and antonymy in Gikūyū nouns have been discussed in regard to human beings domain.

Figure 6: Human Being Domain Structure



Ullmann (1957) indicated that the theory of meaning such as the Semantic Field Theory used in this research, aims to account for all aspects of semantic functioning. The sense of a word (e.g. nouns), reveals itself through the relations

of meaning which the word contracts with other words in the language, for instance cockroaches, flies, mosquitoes, bees, among others, are related in the sense that they are all 'insects', which is a semantic domain. All of the hyponymy and antonymy sense relations are closely related to the Semantic Field Theory.

### 3.1.1 Hyponymy

Hyponymy is regarded as fundamentally structured relations in the lexicon. Hyponymy and incompatibility are the most fundamental paradigmatic relations of sense in terms of which the vocabulary is structured. It has been recognized as one of the constitutive principles in the organization of the vocabulary of all languages. It is frequently referred to as "inclusion" which has been formalized by certain scholars in terms of the logic of classes.

Synonymy, hyponym, incompatibility and complementarity are definable in terms of the semantic components of the lexical items in question. A hyponymy includes the meaning of a more general word for example 'dog' and "cat" are hyponyms of "animal, while "sister" and "mother" are hyponyms of "woman." (Cruise,1986). Hyponymy is an invented method of indicating the relationships that can exist between words (Todd, 1987).

The meaning of relations that hold between lexemes of a language (or between lexemes and larger expressions) are called "sense relations", and include

hyponymy, which holds if the sense of one lexeme includes that of another (Ronnie, 1993). In this regard, men, women, young men, young ladies, boys and girls, all fall under this category of *mūndū* (human beings) (Goddard, 1998). The word is inclusive in meaning. In this study, it has been illustrated how hyponymy can be used in the human beings domain using diagnostic componential approach as follows:

*mūūriū* (male)

*kaana* (female/male)

+ animate

+ animate

+ human

+ human

+mature

- mature

+parent

- parent

+ male

± male

Hyponymic relation is inclusive. It is often defined in terms of entailment between sentences which differ only in respect of the lexical items being tested (Cruise, 2000). Hyponymy is a relation between words that result from a relation between their meanings and leads to a relation between their denotations. The meaning of the hyponym contains the meaning of the hyperonym, and the denotation of the hyponym is a subcategory of the denotation of their hyperonym (Lobner, 2002).

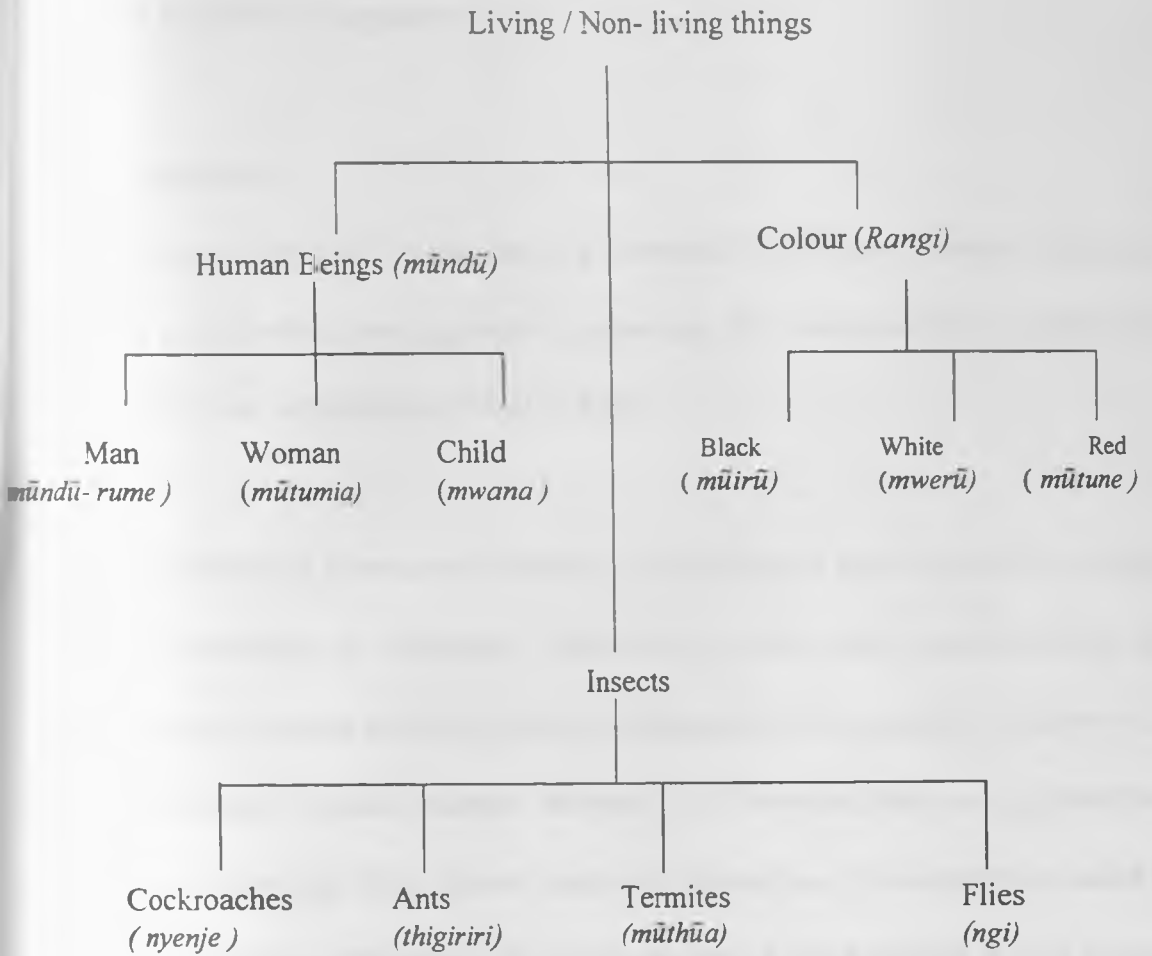


Inferences, particularly entailments, are strongly associated with the hyponym relations, such that a statement entails an equivalent statement that includes one of its words hyperonyms. For instance, the sentence "A cat ate a rat" entails "An animal ate a rat." Thus the hyponym relation plays a role in our (conscious) thinking about what words mean (Murphy, 2003).

Whereas the relationship of implicit denial is called incompatibility, the relationship of implicit inclusion is called "hyponymy". This relationship is easy to demonstrate using colour, whereby different colours such as black, white, red, green, etc are all included in the term "rangi" which means colour. These are *mūirū*, *māverū*, *mūtune*, and *ngirini*, respectively, in Gikūyū. Often, these hierarchical diagrams are called "taxonomies." With each downward step, we encounter terms of more specific meaning.

Hyponymy is the lexical relation corresponding to the inclusion. Its relations have to do with hierarchical relationship, and can be represented in a hierarchical diagram as in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Hyponymous relations



Adopted from Yule (1996)

As shown in Figure 7, there is a hierarchical relationship between the domain and its sub-domains. For example; *nyenje*, *thigiriri*, *mūthūa*, and *ngi*, are all sub-domains of “insects” which acts as an umbrella term for all insects.

Precisely a hyponym is a word or phrase whose semantic field is included within that of another word e.g. an oak tree is a hyponym of a tree. Hyponym words are

inclusive. This hyponymic idea is similar to the use of SFT in the analysis of nouns in any natural language.

### 3.1.2 Antonymy

Antonyms are classified on the basis of meaning. It's a sense relation that exists between words which are opposite in meaning. For example the opposite of a woman is a man, while that of a boy is a girl.

A lexical relation is a semantic relation in which two or more words have some aspect of meaning in common. The term is most often used to refer to paradigmatic relations such as antonymy, hyponymy or synonymy. Antonym is the paradigmatic lexical relation between two lexemes that are opposite in meaning, such as big/little, female/male and down/up. It is sometimes called a relation of minimal difference. In each member of the antonym a pair shares most of its semantic properties with the other member of the pair, except for one that causes the two words to be semantically incompatible (Lynne and Koskela, 2010). This is the general term applied to the sense relations involving oppositeness in meaning. Antonymy or "oppositeness of meaning" has long been recognized as one of the most important semantic relations (Lyons 1968).

The meaning of a word may be partially defined by saying what it is not. In this regard, "male" means not "female" while dead means "not alive". Ironically, the

basic property of two words that are antonyms is that they share all but one semantic property. The semantic redundancy rules reveal knowledge about antonyms, for example:

- A word that is {+married} is {-single}
- A word that is {+single} is {-married}
- A word that is {+adult} is {-young}

These rules show that any word that bears the semantic property "married" such as a "wife" is understood to lack the semantic property "single" and conversely any word that bears the semantic property "single," such as bachelor, will not have the property of "married." Antonyms are exemplified by such pairs as long/ short, fast/ slow, easy/ difficult, and hot/cold. The terms of a pair do not strictly bisect a domain statement containing one member of an antonym pair. It stands in relation to variety with the parallel statement containing the other term (Cruise, 1986).

There are some semantic relations that can be reconstructed from entries in our normal form but not from entries in the conventional dictionary form. One such relations is that of sex - antonymy. To illustrate this we can use the following general example in Gikūyū Language in regard to human beings. What formally characterizes a sex - antonymous pair of words is that the members have identical parts except where one has the semantic marker "male", the other has

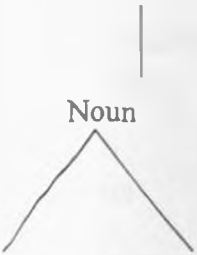
the semantic marker "female." Semantic markers are the elements in terms of which semantic relations are expressed in a theory. We may have the following general antonymic structures as pertains to human being. Essentially they are in an antonymous relationship with each other.

Relative antonyms, which show a reciprocal social relationship and a contrast of direction, have been used to illustrate this as follows:

- Bachelor (*mwanake ūtahikanītie*) - spinster (*mūirītu ūtahikīte*)
- Man (*mūndūrūme*) - woman (*mūndū muka*)
- Aunt (*tata*) - Uncle (*mama*)
- Bridegroom (*mūhikania*) - Bride (*mūhiki*)
- Brother (*mūrū wa maitū*) - Sister (*mwarī wa maitu*)

This can structurally be written as follows:

(i) *mūndū ūtahikanītie*  
(Bachelor)



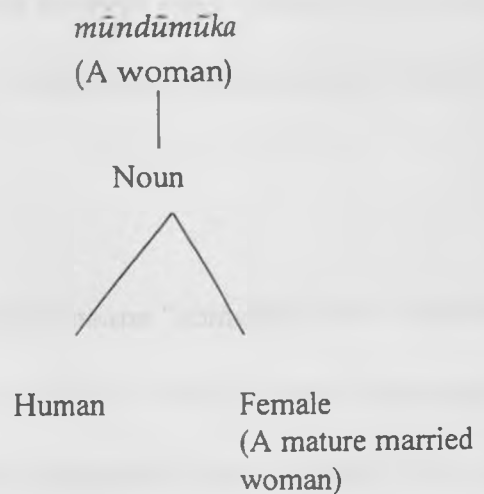
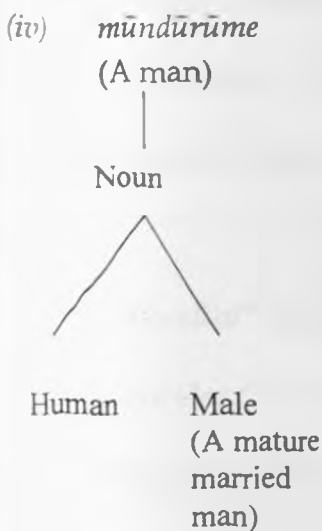
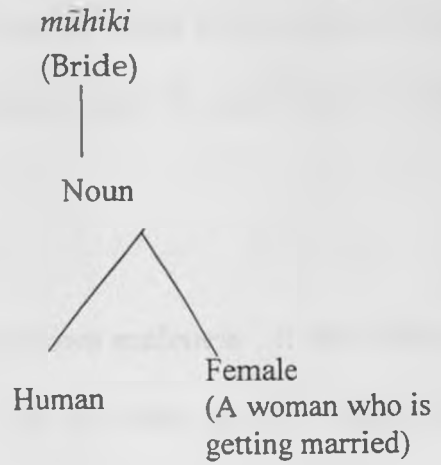
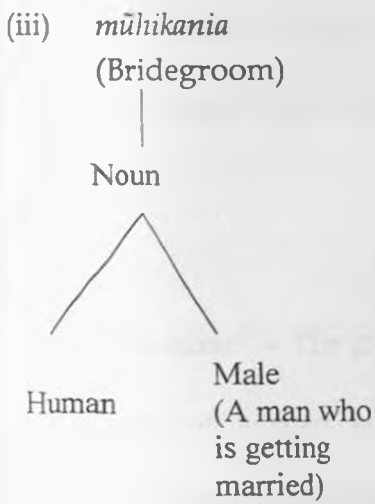
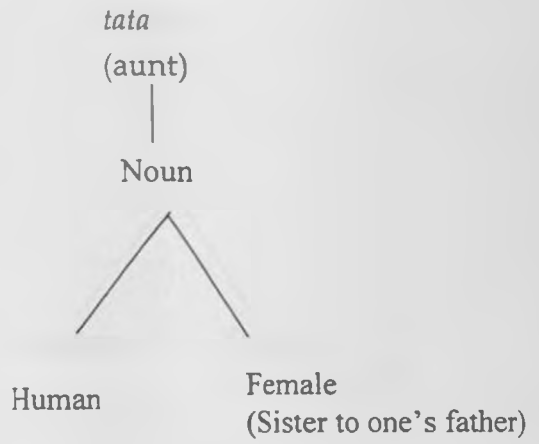
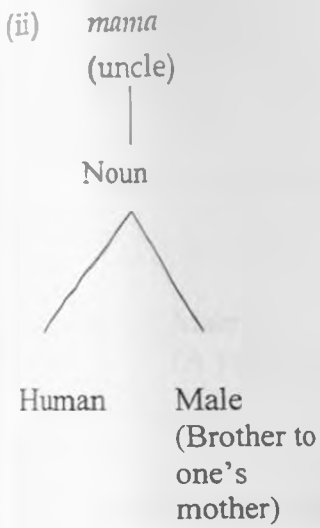
Human  
Male  
(A man who is not married but is of age)

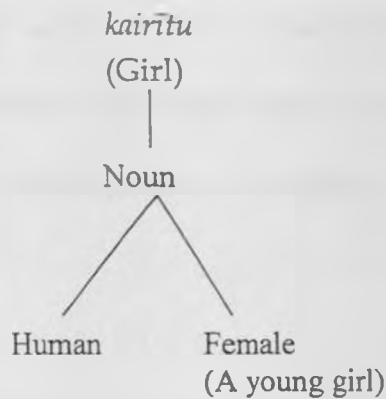
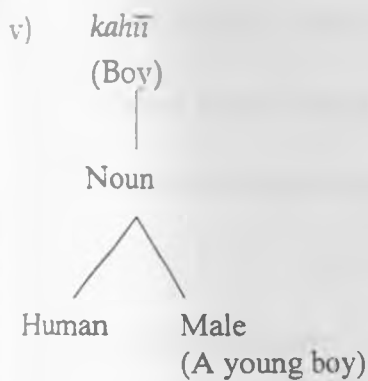
*mūirītu ūtahikīte*  
(Spinster)

Noun



Human  
Female  
(A lady who is not married but is of age)





In Gikūyū, there is a significant difference in the antonym "*Mūndūrūme*" (a man) and "*mūndū-mūka*" (a woman). As one can notice from their structure the last two morphemes, *-rūme* and *-mūka* are different and of course have different meanings.

In "*Mūndū-rūme*" - The part "*-rūme*" here shows maleness. It also shows the headedness of a man in the homestead. He is taken as the owner or an indigenous person of that home, who is meant to own, shield and safeguard the home. In other words he is in that particular home to stay. This can be contrasted with "*mūndū-mūka*" whose part "*-mūka*" implies one who came and that she is not a permanent member of the family.

In "*Mūndū-mūka*" the part "*-mūka*" in essence means "somebody who came from somewhere else." In a sense it shows that women are not permanent members of the families. The idea of them leaving their maternal homes to other new places made them to be called so. In a way they are taken to be like intruders, people

who are on transit, and can slip away anytime. This means fortunately or unfortunately that women are not to be taken with high regard as men, as they are not regarded as permanent members of their particular families.

### 3.2 Kinship Domain

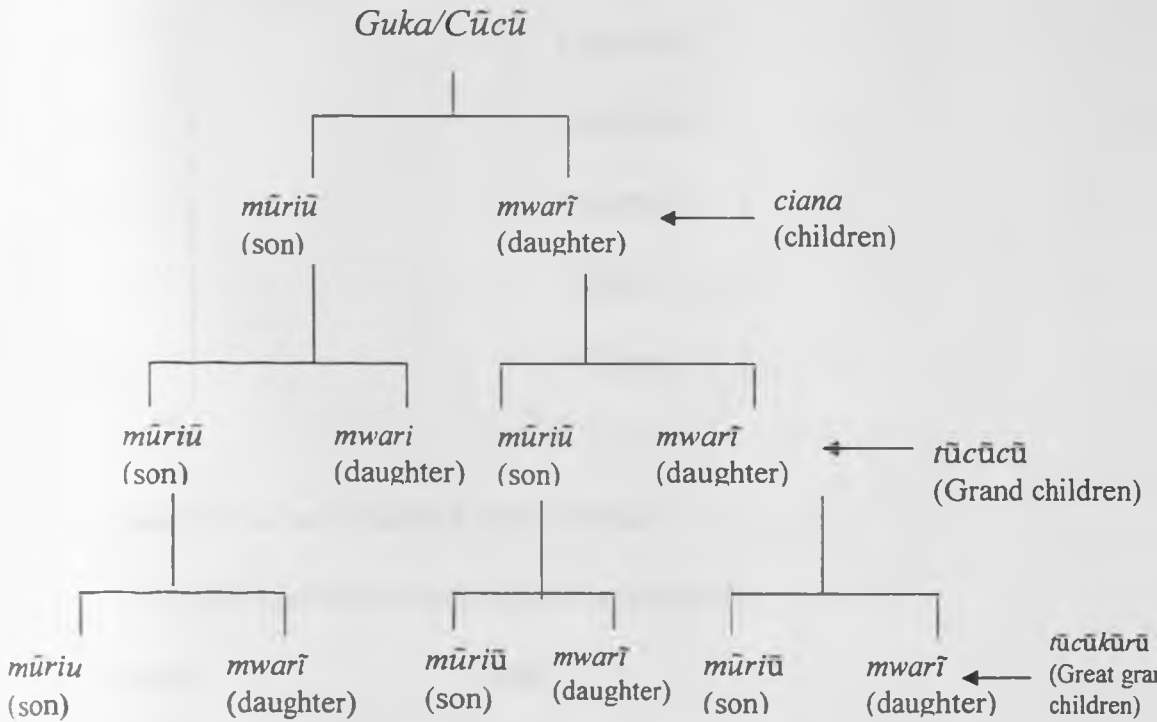
Kinship is a system of social organization between people who are held together biologically or who are given the status of relatives by marriage, adoption or other rituals. One of the components of kinship system is a family. Radcliffe (1922) defines kinship as a relationship between any entities that share a genealogical origin, through biological, cultural or historical descent. Kinship is one of the most basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, roles, categories and genealogy.

The Gikūyū society is organized and functions under the patrilineal system. The father, who is the head of the family, is called "baba" (my or our father), "ithe" (his or her father), "thoguo" (your father). The father is the head of the homestead. The mother is called "maitū" (my or our mother), *nyina* (his, her or their mother), *nyūkwa* (your mother). The term "mother" is considered as an honourable form of address, and one which is desired by every woman in Gikūyū society. A boy (the son's first grand-son ) is called by his grandmother "My husband" (*Mūthuri wakwa*) and a girl is called "my co-wife." The grandfather (*guka*) calls the grandson "Wakini", which means "my equal and the



son's first grand- daughter, "*mūhiki wakwa*" (My bride). This form of address is of course, used figuratively and as a sign of endearment, (Kenyatta, 1938). In Gikūyū culture, a man has a group identity called kinship. The Kinship involves extended family, lineage and the clan itself. The Gikūyū speaker find their self identify in this kinship system. (Mugambi, 2002). Thus, mami (mother), baba (father), Guka (grandfather), cūcū (grandmother), among others, belong to the same domain known as the kinship or family domain as illustrated in Fig.8

Figure 8: Gikūyū Family structure



(Modified from Barlow 1931)

From figure 8, we can infer that *mami* (mother) and *baba* (father) are biological off springs of *guka* (grandfather) and *cūcū* (grandmother). A *mūriū* (son) or *mwari* (daughter) calls his mother's brother *mama* (uncle), while the mother's sister is called *tata* (aunt). *Guka* and *Cūcū* are the grandparents and they call their (grandchildren), *tūcūcū*.

Some of the nouns in fig.8 can be analyzed as follows:

*gūka* (grand-father)

- + human
- + male
- + animate
- + parent
- + mature

*cūcū* (grand-mother)

- + human
- + animate
- + parent
- male
- + mature

### 3.2.1 Glossary of some Gikūyū Family Terms

A Gikūyū extended family is made up of the following:

Gikūyū words	Gloss
<i>Mūtumia</i>	wife
<i>Mūthuri</i>	husband
<i>Mami / maitū/nana</i>	mother (female parent)
<i>Mūiru</i>	co-wife

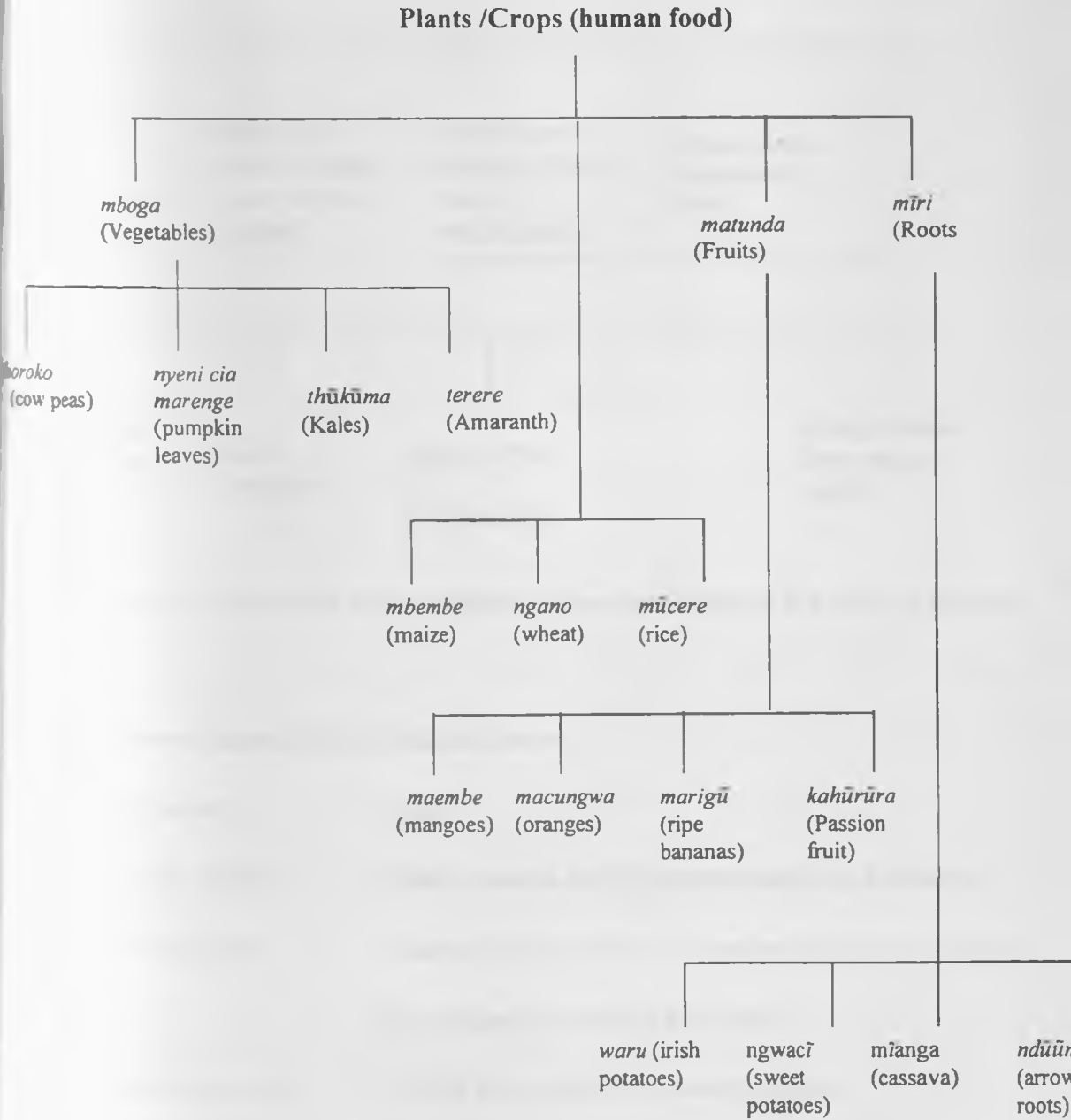
<i>Baba</i>	father (male parent)
<i>Mūrū</i>	a son (male child)
<i>Mūrū wa maitū</i>	a brother (male child)
<i>Mwarī wa maitū</i>	a sister (female child)
<i>Guka</i>	a father, to a father or mother
<i>Gacūcū</i>	grand-daughter
<i>Tūicūkūrū</i>	great- great grand children
<i>Mūriu wa mūrū wa maitū</i>	nephew
<i>Mwarī wa mūrū wa maitū</i>	niece
<i>Baba mūnyinyi</i>	one's junior father
<i>Baba mūkūrū</i>	one's senior father
<i>Tata</i>	one's father's sister
<i>Maama</i>	one's mother's brother
<i>Mūrū -wa aiya</i>	son of one's mother's female relative
<i>Kanyanya</i>	means "little lovers"  (used by a woman towards the husbands of her own grand -daughters).
<i>Mūthoniwa</i>	my in-law.
<i>Kaana</i>	a child

**Adopted from Leakey (1977)**

### 3.3 Plant Domain

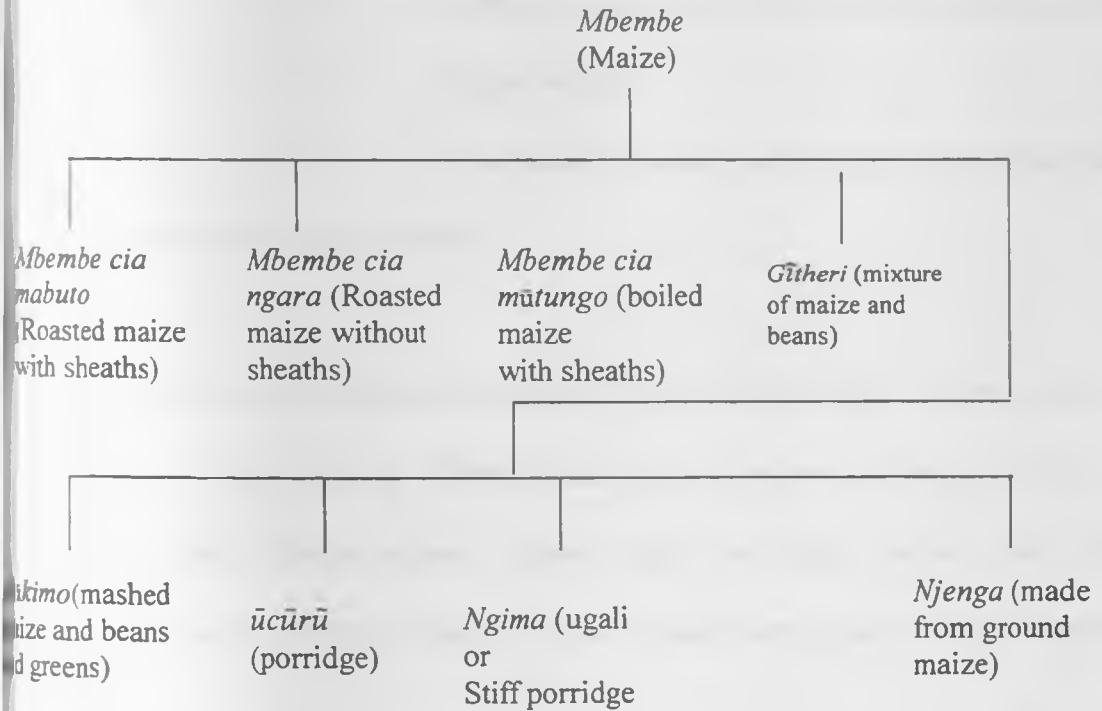
Lexical items such as nouns grouped together, by virtue of their shared relations, make a Semantic Domain. A word meaning is determined by the networks of relations established in other words. In Gikūyū we can group or subsume some given nouns under one "plant" domain which can be illustrated as in fig.9

Figure 9: Plant Domain



One type of food from fig.9 can further be analyzed semantically as follows to form “mbembe(maize) semantic domain”.

Figure 10: Maize Domain



A mixture of beans and maize (githeri) is the staple food of the Gikūyū people.

### Inventory of some Gikūyū Maize Terms

Gikūyū word	Gloss
<i>Mbembe cia mabuto</i>	maize roasted in their outer sheaths in hot ashes
<i>Mbembe cia ngara</i>	roasted maize without it's outer sheaths, by placing the maize cobs near fire to roast .
<i>Mbembe cia mitungo</i>	boiled green maize cobs with sheaths

<i>Githeri</i>	mixture of maize and beans or pigeon peas (njūgū)
<i>Ino cia nyeni</i>	Mashed mixture of cooked maize and beans or any type of greens.
<i>ūcūrū</i>	porridge made from pounded maize.
<i>Ngima</i>	thick porridge, made from pounded maize and boiled water
<i>Njenga</i>	A mixture of maize grains broken into small pieces.

Adopted from Leakey (1939)

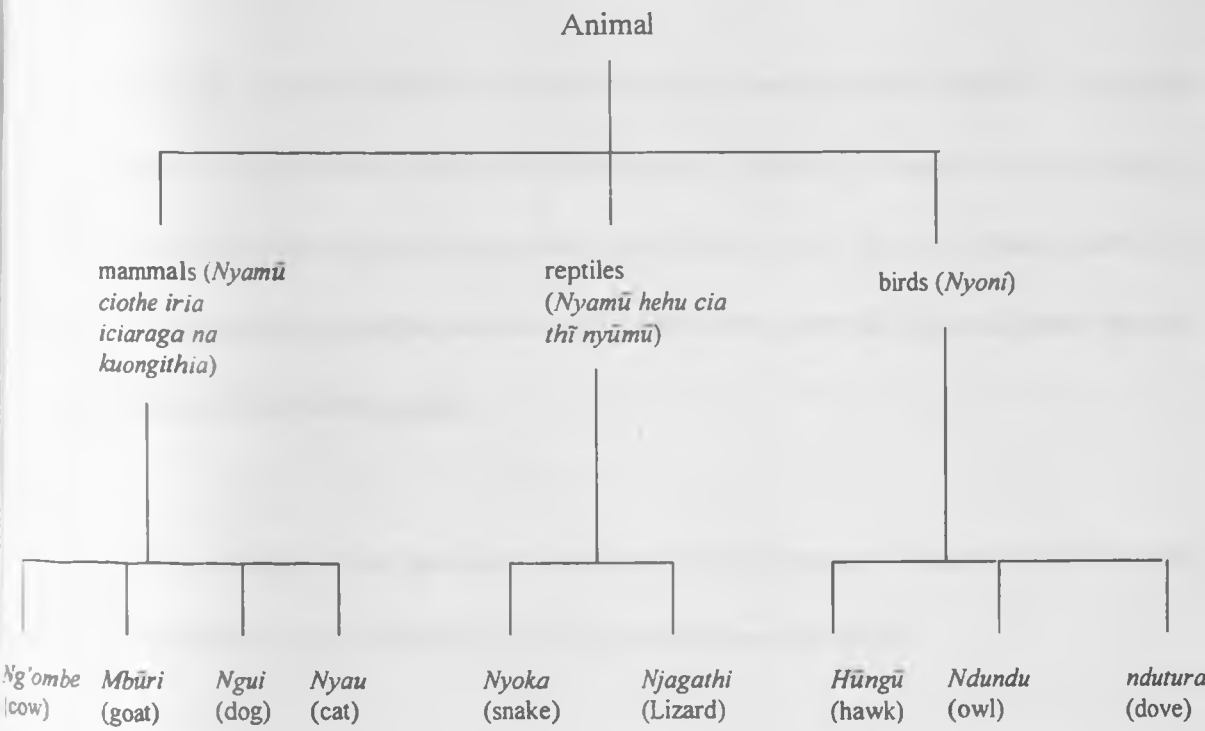
The following are examples of types of foods whose origin is plants, eaten by the Gĩkũyũ. These include “*githeri*” (a mixture of maize and beans) which is their staple food. Others include “*ngima*” (thick porridge), “*waru*” (irish potatoes), “*ikwa*” (yams), “*mĩanga*” cassava, “*njahi*” (black beans), and “*marigũ*” (bananas).

In fig.10, the relationship among the nouns making up the semantic domain of ‘plants’ have been shown, thus deducing the information that foodstuffs such as *ūcūrū* (porridge), *ngima* (ugali), *Githeri* (a mixture of maize and beans), *mbembe cia mutungo* (boiled maize), among others, are related semantically. They all originate from “maize”, which can be taken as an independent semantic domain.

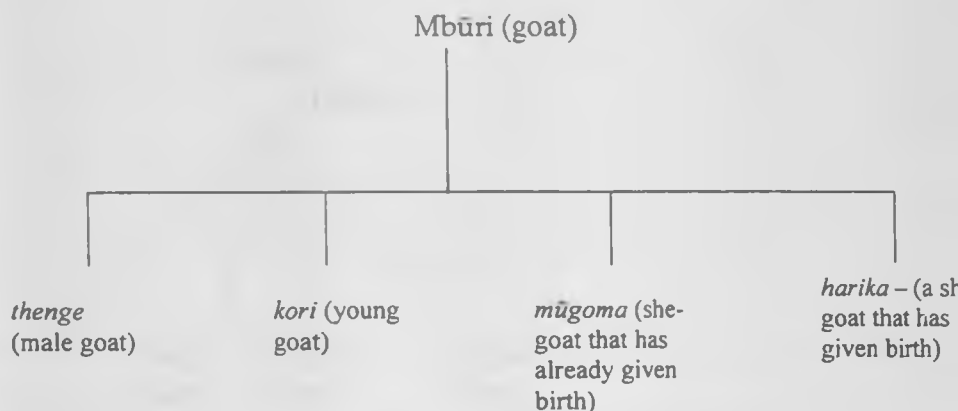
### 3.4 Animal Domain

Animals make a major part of living things. According to the Semantic Field Theory, the term "animal" is a domain made up of nouns which are related semantically. Nouns grouped together into semantic field or domain share a common aspect of meaning as exemplified in fig.11.

Figure 11: Animal Domain



One of the animals in fig.11, can be analyzed as follows:

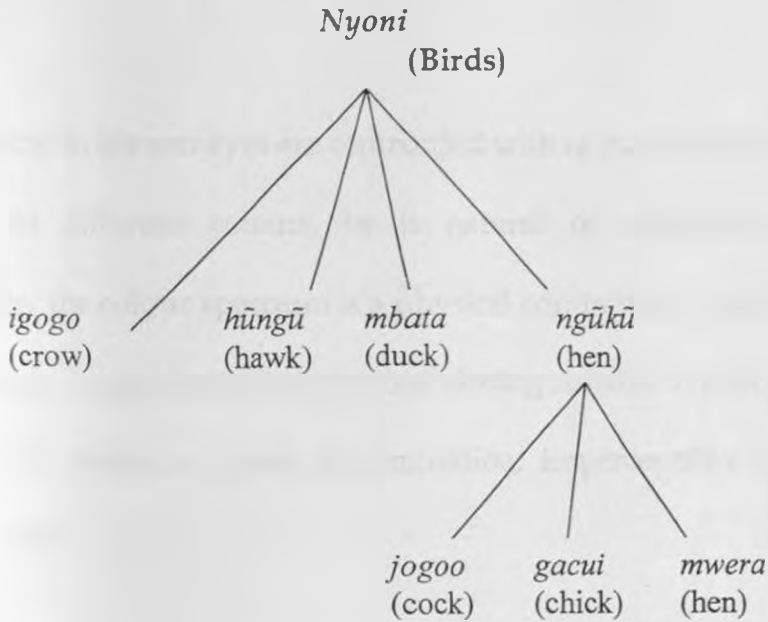


From fig.11, the word *Mbūri* 'is inclusive and an independent domain. It is made up of many other nouns which are semantically related. In essence, *Kori* (a young goat), *harika* (a female goat that has not given birth), and *thenge*, (a male goat) and *mūgoma* (a female goat that has already given birth), are all types of goats termed as *mbūri* in Gīkūyū language,.

Another example given has dealt with the "bird's domain" which includes some of the different types of birds in Gīkūyū ethnic environment.



Figure 12: Birds Domain



(Modified from Saeed 2003).

Here, the *jogoo*, *gacui*, and *mvera* are all semantically related and make up a semantic domain (or field) of *nyoni* (birds).

### 3.5 Colour Domain

The introductory treatments of colour usually confine themselves to the so-called “basic colour terms”, a concept introduced by Berlin and Kay (1969) and made enormously popular by the success of their work. Examples of colour terms in English are red, blue, yellow, orange, and grey. Colour terminology is interesting and important in semantics because it is one of the very few areas in which it is

possible to compare a linguistic system with a system that can be both delimited and analyzed in objective physical terms (Palmer, 1976).

Every time in life our eyes are confronted with or surrounded by the diversity of objects in different colours, be it natural or man-made. (Methuen,1978). Generally, the colour spectrum is a physical continuum. The colour is a physical continuum, in the sense that any one distinguishable colour, shades gradually, and at the limits of visual discrimination, imperceptibly into its neighbours (Lyons 1981).

Many languages have only four or five basic colour terms, and some have as few as two, but English has eleven (Goddard,1998). Comparatively then , *Gīkūyū* as a language is not as rich as English in terms of colour. Steinvall (2002) posited that when a colour term has a classifying function, it can be used outside the normal area of designation. His study pointed to the close affinities between classifying and figurative usage. Figurative expressions of colour terms frequently have a classifying function.

We live in world of colour. Much of the colour vocabulary of a particular language is to a considerable degree the product of culture. Colour can influence our emotions, our actions and how we respond to various people, things and

ideas. Much has been studied and written about colour and its impact on our daily lives.

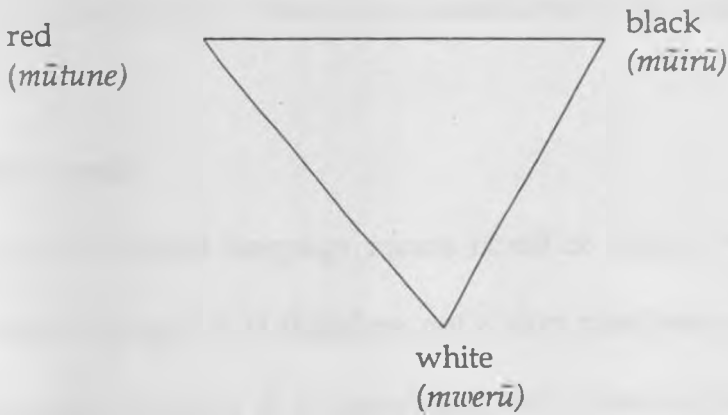
Colours have been an integral part of our lives for a very long time, and so perhaps we are unaware of the profound impact that they can have on our emotions and our psyche. Different cultures have always had different meanings associated with these colours that in turn have shaped our traditions and practices in many ways. Over a period of time, humans have been able to identify colours and their meanings.

Gikūyū has three basic colours namely: '*mūirū*, *mwerū*, and *mūtune*' which uses the adjectives -iru (black), -eru (White) and -tune (red). These adjectives agree with the noun they qualify by means of a prefix depending on the noun class concerned. We would thus say:

- i) *mūndū mwerū* (a white/light skinned person)
- ii) *nguo njirū* (black suits)
- iii) *mūgeka mūtune* (red carpet).

These colours are illustrated in fig.13

Figure 13: Colour Triangle



The following inventory colours are derived from the basic ones. They can also be termed as secondary colours.

Colour	Translation
<i>Gakarakū</i>	Purple
<i>Mbirūirū</i>	blue
<i>Ngoikoni</i>	Orange
<i>Ngoikoni</i>	Yellow
<i>Nyeni</i>	Green
<i>Kibuu /kīmūhu</i>	Grey
<i>Gītūri</i>	Brown

As observed from the above data, the Gikūyū language uses similar term for both yellow and orange. Physically, the two colours may look different, but they

have the same name – ‘Ngoikoni. The primary colours have been given political connotation in the Kenyan context as discussed later in the study.

(i) *Mūtune* (red)

The red color in Gikūyū language means blood or danger. On the negative it means temper or anger. It is therefore not a very passionate colour among the Gikūyū speakers. Actually it is feared and not commonly used in occasional decorations as its presence signifies danger or misfortune. In the real sense, it is called *rangi wa thakame* which means the colour of blood. This is actually very contrary to Chinese who associate the color with prosperity and joy.

However, in some instances the red colour is taken as an extremely intense colour that immediately evokes passionate emotions. This color is associated with the heart and perhaps that is why it symbolizes matters of the heart or love, passion and desire.

(ii) *Ngirini* (green)

Green is believed to be the colour of nature, and life in Gikūyū. Green symbolizes self respect and well being. It also means growth and harmony and prosperity brought about by farming, bearing in mind that the traditional Gikūyū speakers were generally farmers. The colour has two names in Gikūyū, namely *nyeni* and *ngirini*, the latter being a borrowed word from English

language. Green is the symbol of nature. It is believed to have relaxing qualities and emotional peace which avert numerous physical ailments.

### (iii) *Mūirū* (black)

The black colour symbolizes death in many African cultures, Gikūyū included. Some people in some African cultures dress in black during funerals. Black has a deep relationship with grief and loss in Gikūyū culture. The “blackness” can at times be used derogatively. For instance, if somebody is too dark, he is likened to charcoal, coal, soot, or pot. This would therefore mean that the person is extremely dark, by saying, *mūirū ta makara kana nyūngū* (as black as charcoal or cooking pot).

In Gikūyū, the blackness also stands for the black skins of the African people as reflected in the Kenyan Flag. Gikūyū people believe that black is beauty and so we should all appreciate ourselves and carry ourselves with dignity. Black has always been regarded as a powerful colour, and therefore has been associated with authority and power. In fact, fashion experts often advise professionals to wear black since it is inordinately stylish and has a timeless elegance.

### (iv) *Mwerū* (white)

In Gikūyū the white colour means purity. This is also common in many world countries. It stands for the wholeness and completion. It holds the potential to

move toward every colour and this makes it a good choice for new beginnings. It is associated with purity, innocence and freshness. This could be one of the reasons why white garments are worn by brides as it symbolizes holiness, virginity and a new beginning, in many cultures. It also implies sterility and safety and is therefore worn by doctors for its association with healing. The colour symbolizes fresh beginnings and is supposed to help in clear thinking and purification of thoughts. Something that glitters white may be likened to “snow” by saying *Nguo njerū ta ira* (the dress is as white as snow).

Just as it is, in other natural languages, the Gĩkũyũ language has one general term for colour which is *rangi* (colour). The Gĩkũyũ language has no wide spectrum of colour, as it is in English. However, any of the English names can be borrowed to produce a new name for example:

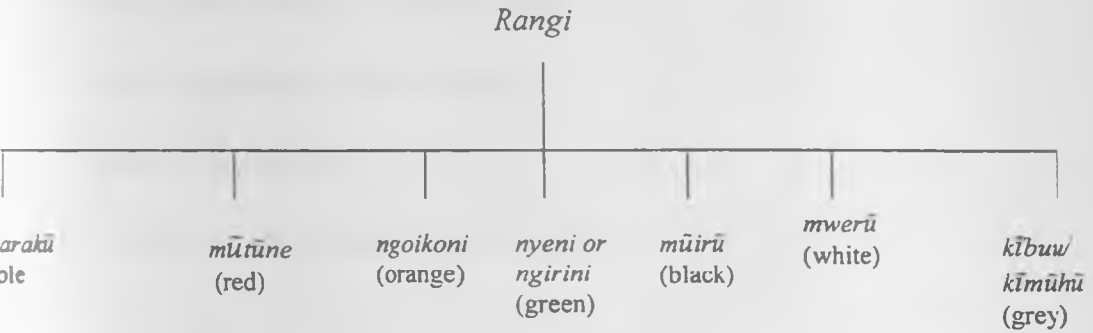
- *Ngirini* for green
- *Mbuluu* for blue
- *Mburaūni* for brown

As for the world view of the colours in Gikuyu, their nuances are expressed through comparisons, such as

- *Ngirini ta nyeki* (as green as grass)
- *Mūtune ta thakame* (as red as blood)
- *Mwerū ta ira* (as white as snow) etc.

The colour domain in Gĩkũyũ can be analyzed semantically as in fig.14.

Figure 14: Colours



From fig.14, the term *Rangi* can be taken as a semantic domain as it constitutes colours in Gĩkũyũ, such as red, black, green, and white, among others. In using the Semantic Field Theory, all the listed colours are related semantically making an independent semantic field. Four colours in Gĩkũyũ have been put in the Kenyan flag. Incidentally, a song is sung in Gikuyu, in relation to these colours found in the Kenyan flag in Gĩkũyũ, explaining their meanings as follows:

*“Bendera itũ Kenya nĩ ya marangi mana x 2*  
*Wamũirũ ĩ ũiya ni wa mũndũ mũirũ,*  
*Naguo mũtune nĩ haki iitũ,*  
*ngirini nĩ thĩ itũ,*  
*naguo ũria mwerũ, nĩ thayũ bũrũri-inĩ.”*



Following is a translation of the song:-

"Our Kenyan Flag is made up of four colours x 2

Blackness stands for the black people,

red stands for blood-shed during

the struggle for independence,

green is our land,

finally, white is peace in the country."

It is patriotic in nature and was sung by traditional Gikūyū dancers. It is

noted that it was sung in the eve of independence in Kenya in 1963. A flag is a

visual representation of one's country. Every flag belonging to any country

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In conclusion, the chapter dealt with some specific semantic domains in Gikuyu

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1 Summary

This section has given a summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study. Chapter one entailed the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, rationale, scope and limitation, significance of the study, theoretical framework and literature review. The methodology which includes the research design, sampling techniques, data collection techniques and data analysis have also been discussed.

Chapter two discussed Gikūyū Noun classifications. It has been established that nouns are classified into seventeen groups in Gikūyū language. The morphological effects on nouns such as affixing, Gikūyū noun loanwords, word formation which include, clipping and compound nouns, among others have also been discussed. It has been confirmed that the morphological changes in Gikuyu nouns display their semantic changes.

The Semantic Domains have been expounded in chapter three by use of the SFT. This has been the core of our study. These domains include: human beings domain, kinship domain, plant domain, animal domain, and colour domain. The analysis of nouns in these domains has proved that a semantic field denotes a segment of a reality, symbolized by a set of related words. It is therefore

explicit through the study, that nouns that belong to the same semantic domain are semantically related. The Semantic Field Theory coupled with Componential Analysis used as an “instrument” can be used to analyze Gikūyū nouns adequately, just as they would to nouns in any natural language.

#### 4.2 Conclusion/Findings

The main focus of the study was to investigate how Gikūyū nouns could be analyzed semantically. In chapter two, it was established that the morphological aspects employed on Gikūyū nouns exhibit semantic differences. This was done through nominalization, affixation, diminutiveness, borrowed nouns, clipping and compounding of these nouns.

It has been observed that the nouns that belong to the same domain in Gikūyū language are related semantically by use of the Semantic Field Theory. The concepts denoted by these noun words in the same field are strongly connected to each other.

Finally, it is apparent after the study that the Semantic Field Theory alongside the Componential Analysis, is suitable for analyzing Gikūyū nouns, the latter being used just as an “instrument” of analysis. The theory may therefore be useful to other scholars who may wish to analyze nouns in any other natural language.

### 4.3 Recommendations

The current study exposed problems that deserve further investigations. Therefore, following the implications based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- i. Polysemic relations among Gikūyū nouns could be done using both diachronic and synchronic approaches.
- ii. Semantic relations such as incompatibility, complementarity and converseness in regard to nouns could be studied. These are primitives entailed in the Semantic Field Theory.
- ii. Semantic properties of nouns, such as gender, number, person, and case could also be analyzed using syntactic approach.

Research of these linguistic works will ultimately provide a rich data on the analysis of nouns in any natural language semantically.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: MAJOR AREAS OCCUPIED BY GIKUYU



Adopted from Karega (1977)