

**ANTONYMY IN GÍKŪYŪ: A COGNITIVE SEMANTICS APPROACH**

**By**

**MUTURI ANTONY MUGU**

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**DECLARATION**

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

Signature..... Date.....

MUTURI ANTONY MUGU

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the university supervisors.

Signature..... Date .....

DR. HELGA SCHROEDER

University of Nairobi.

Signature ..... Date .....

PROF. IRIBE MWANGI

University of Nairobi.

## **Dedication**

To my dear wife *Grace* and children *Christine, Carol* and *Elvis*.

GOD BLESS YOU.

## **Acknowledgement**

I thank God for His love and grace throughout the period of this course. Special thanks go to my wife: I appreciate your understanding and assistance throughout the course. To my children Christine, Carol and Elvis who had patience with me when I was too busy, thank you.

To my late Dad, I thank you for the reading culture you inculcated in us. Mum, I appreciate you for your patience and encouragement and the positive values you instilled in me.

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## **Abstract**

This study endeavored to investigate antonymy in Gīkūyū using the Cognitive Semantics approach and provide an analysis of both the traditional (structural) and the cognitive approaches to this sense relation. This research looked at antonymy beyond the lexical level (following the traditional or structural classification). From the cognitive approach, antonymy is defined as a relation between construals, and involves the structuring of content domains. Thus, the traditional semantic approaches to the categorization of antonymy fail to capture the notion that oppositeness is a matter of construal and is subject to cognitive, conventional, and contextual constraints rather than being mere comparisons. The conceptual cognitive dimension to the study is supplied through Fillmore's Frame theory. The study found that the traditional analysis was inadequate in explaining the choices of antonyms made by a speaker or hearer but the cognitive approach was adequate since the context provided by culture, individual knowledge and experience plays a major part in the determination of antonymy in Gīkūyū. Similarly, sense demarcation (boundaries) and profile are assigning sense autonomy to the antonyms and once a word attains autonomy, it evokes a frame and its frame elements help in interpreting the meaning. The other observation from the study is that in the radial categories of the various senses of nouns, the prototype only matches in oppositeness with the corresponding prototype but not with the periphery elements.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Antonymy	Oppositeness or contrast in terms occurring along specific dimensions.
Autonomy	A word having independence of meaning from other words that are construed in the same contextual environment.
Boundary	When a word attains meaning that is distinct from the other words in a frame.
Cognitive Linguistics	A modern school of linguistic thought and practice. It is concerned with investigating the relationship between human language, the mind and socio-physical experience.
Construal	The use of context by listeners to arrive at an interpretation of a given phrase or word.
Frame	The structure of human experience based in culture and existing in the mind.
Periphery	Meaning derived from semantic extensions.
Profile	The concept symbolized by a word and is resident in the mind.
Prototypes	Cognitive reference points in a category (like VEGETABLE) or the background used to get the meaning of a word.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the background to the language, background to the study, statement of the research problem, objectives and research questions, justification of the study, scope and limitation, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, data collection and analysis, significance of the study and conclusion.

### **1.1 Background to the language**

According to the encyclopedia Britannica, the Kikuyu, also called Gĩkũyũ, Gekoyo is a Bantu-speaking people who live in the highland area of south-central Kenya, near Mount Kenya (and also parts of the Rift Valley) who also speak the Gĩkũyũ language.

Guthrie (1971), in his classification of Bantu languages, classifies Gĩkũyũ under the category of Kikuyu-Kamba (E.50) which comprises: Meru, Mhaiso, Embu, Gĩkũyũ, and Kamba.

According to Ethnologue (Thompson, 2014), there are five major dialects of Gĩkũyũ namely: Southern Gĩkũyũ (Kiambu and Southern Muranga), Ndia (Southern Kirinyaga), Gichugu (Northern Kirinyaga), Mathira (Karatina), and Northern Gĩkũyũ (Northern Muranga and Nyeri).

Wardhaugh (2006:27) states that though people speak and claim knowledge of their languages, they may experience difficulty in deciding whether what they speak should be called a language proper or merely a dialect of some language. Ngure (2005:1) indeed notes that the debate by linguists on the number of dialects in Gĩkũyũ is one that may not end any time soon a view the researcher concurs with. This study will be restricted to the southern dialect of Gĩkũyũ spoken in Kiambu and its environs.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

Gĩkũyũ, like all other languages has antonymous words. This study aims at studying antonymy in Gĩkũyũ using the Cognitive Semantics approach as broadly adopted by Croft & Cruse (2004).

Paradis (2010:1-2), notes that most of the research on antonymy, and lexico-semantic relations took a structuralist approach to meaning (a system of relations between words) alienating it from conceptual analysis and new observational techniques in linguistic research. In this view, every

language is seen as unique and words derive meanings from interaction with other words in the language.

The structuralist approach fails to capture the notion that antonymous relations are perceived in the minds of the speakers and listeners hence the need to investigate them from the perception of their functions in discourse.

According to Chunming, et al (2014:235), “almost all established antonyms have synonyms which could not constitute the antonym pairs, for example, the antonym pair of heavy and light is better than weighty and insubstantial.” A proper understanding of the antonyms therefore calls for the analysis of the construal of this antonym pairs in relation to the cognitive, conventional, and contextual paradigms to explain the choices one makes over other available choices.

Paradis & Willners (2011:7) state that the main tenet in Cognitive Semantics is that “meanings are mental entities in conceptual space.” Accordingly, meanings are in people’s minds unlike in the traditional approach that view meaning as relations within language. The key highlight of Cognitive Linguistics led by Fillmore (1976) is that linguistic elements evoke particular conceptual structures (frames) ‘when they are used in specific constructions in text and discourse.’

Indeed, Evans et al (2006:2) view Cognitive linguistics as a modern school of linguistic thought and practice concerned with “investigating the relationship between human language, the mind and socio-physical experience.”

This is indicative that cognitive researchers go beyond the mere word and look at the sense boundaries which can only be determined by use of frames. For instance, the antonym of ‘kahii’ (boy) is ‘kairitu’ (girl) using a traditional approach. A cognitive approach would employ the use of frame elements evoked by the human domain to give a specific choice of an antonym. The term ‘kahii’ evokes the following frame elements: *kairitu* (girl), *muthuuri* (mature man), *mwanake* (circumcised young man), *mundurume* (brave or strong man).

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to analyze antonymy in Gikūyū. Studies done on Gikūyū have dealt with areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Available literature on sense

relations concentrated on lexical pragmatics (specifically dealing with synonymy, homonymy, and polysemy) and cognitive semantics dealing with polysemy. There is therefore limited literature on antonymy in Gīkūyū from the Cognitive Semantics approach. This research aims to look at antonymy beyond the lexical level (following the traditional or structural classification). Cruse and Croft (2004:169) define antonymy as a relation between construals, and involves the structuring of content domains. Thus, the traditional semantic approaches to the categorization of antonymy fail to capture the notion that oppositeness is a matter of construal and is subject to cognitive, conventional, and contextual constraints rather than being mere comparisons. Therefore this study will investigate how the meaning of Gīkūyū antonyms can be explained from the cognitive, conventional and contextual perspective in the mind of speakers and hearers. The conceptual cognitive dimension to the study will be supplied through Fillmore's Frame theory.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How can Gīkūyū antonyms be classified traditionally?
2. How do the traditional categories of antonyms fit into the new categories of antonymy based on cognitive semantics?
3. What are the mind processes involved in the cognition of antonyms?

#### **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the traditional categories of antonyms in Gīkūyū.
2. To examine the classification of Gīkūyū antonyms from a Cognitive Semantics approach.
3. To explore the mind processes involved in the cognition of antonyms in Gīkūyū like boundary effects and profiling.

#### **1.6 Rationale of the Study**

Cognitive linguistics emerged in the 1970s after dissatisfaction with the formal approaches to language which were dominant, at that time, in the disciplines of linguistics and philosophy Evans et al (2006:1). It focuses on the human language, the mind and socio-physical experience therefore offering an alternative to a structural approach to sense relations specifically antonymy in Gĩkũyũ.

Sense relations in Gĩkũyũ have been studied for instance, Mugure (2009) looked at synonymy, homonymy, and polysemy using a lexical pragmatics approach and Gathara (2015) analysed polysemy in Gĩkũyũ using a cognitive semantics approach. Croft & Cruse (2004:7) assert that:

...a simple assumption that has guided much research in semantics is that words denote *concepts*, units of meaning. Concepts symbolized by words such as *stallion* and *mare* can be compared and contrasted with one another. Comparisons of words is the approach taken by structural semantics, which analyzes types of semantic relations among words, including hyponymy and antonymy.

Evans, et al (2006:156) posit that cognitive semantics treats linguistics meaning as the manifestation of conceptual structure.

This study therefore seeks to test a conceptual account of the sense relation of antonymy. Results of this study- it is hoped- would be of interest to theoreticians and in linguistic research.

It is also important to test whether the classification of antonyms proffered by cognitive semantics can adequately account for all antonyms in Gĩkũyũ.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

This study is on the analysis of Gĩkũyũ antonymy using a cognitive semantics approach. The study will be restricted to the study of antonymy in the Southern Dialect of Gĩkũyũ and the main discussion will be based on Fillmore's Frame Semantics as discussed by Croft & Cruse (2004). Despite the discussion being on sense relations in Gĩkũyũ, other sense relations like synonymy, polysemy, and hyponymy will not be discussed but may be referred to in cases of identification of frame components of antonyms.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**



The main assumption of Fillmore's theory (1976) is that meanings are relativized to scenes, Hamm (2009:1). Here, meanings have internal structure which is determined relative to a background frame or a scene. The following example is quoted by Hamm (2009:1) from Fillmore (1977c):

...in a hospital frame, a nurse's remarks about identical twins: *I see that Mark is able to sit up now* and *I see that Mike is able to sit down now* are interpreted differently by the listeners who have background knowledge of hospitals therefore relativizing the meanings of her remarks to the relevant scenes.

Another important concept discussed by Croft & Cruse (2004:15) is *profile*. This refers to the concept symbolized by the word in question. They cite the example of the concepts RADIUS and CIRCLE as intimately related, and this relationship must be represented in conceptual structure. According to them, Langacker describes the relationship between RADIUS and CIRCLE as one of a concept profile against a base. For instance, *mūrūtūo* (*student*) profiles one element of the *Gĩthomo* frame (education frame); *horo* (cold) profiles one element of the *ūrugarĩ/ũhehu* (temperature) frame. The two concepts of sense boundaries and profile are the major mental processes that form the backbone of the analysis of antonyms in Gĩkũyũ.

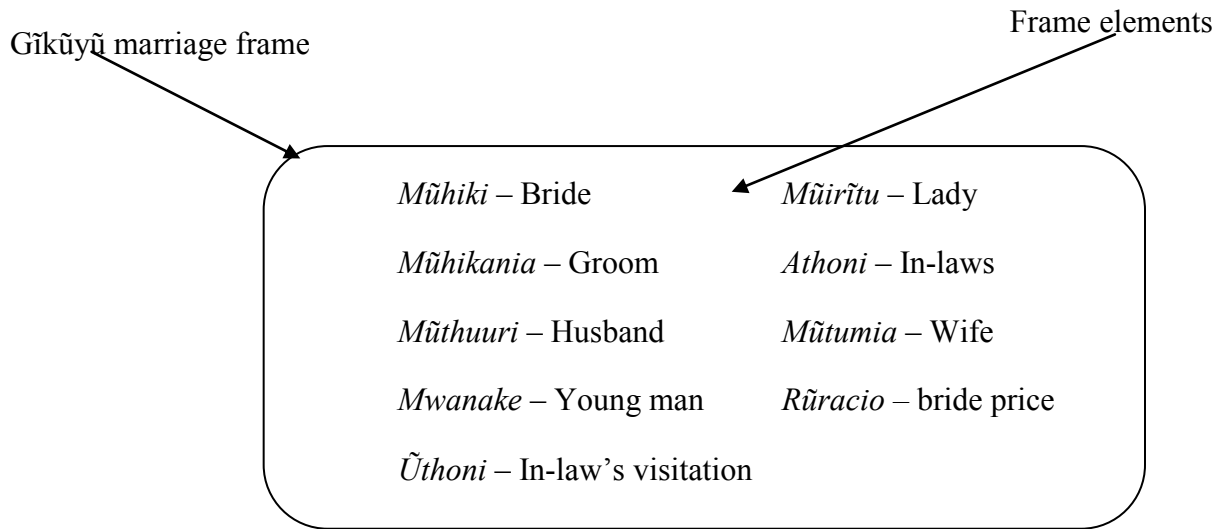
They also classify antonyms into three namely: overlapping, equipollent and polar which are also used in this study.

### **1.8.1 Frames**

Croft & Cruse (2004:14) describes a frame as a coherent region of human knowledge, or as a coherent region of conceptual space. These are knowledge structures represented at the conceptual level which emerge from experience and are continually updated due to human experience.

Evans et al (2006:8) views a frame as a set of lexical concepts, the semantic units conventionally associated with linguistic units such as words, and as only a subset of the full set of concepts in the minds of speaker-hearers.

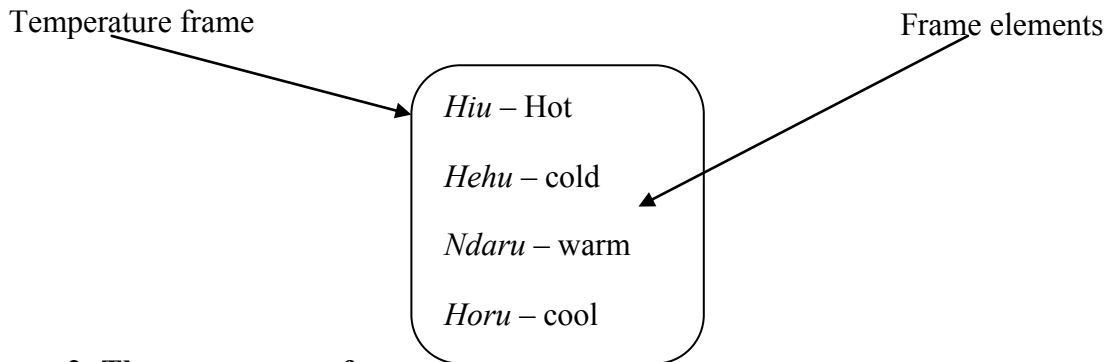
Frames are based on prototypes as Hamm (2009:3) notes. Frames should be understood as prototypical descriptions of scenes. The following is an example of frame elements (within the single frame lie elements that identify concepts and that are readily available to an individual in his construal of meanings) in a Gĩkũyũ marriage frame.



**Diagram 1: Gikūyū marriage frame**

When a speaker utters any of the above terms, the hearer invokes a frame and the relevant elements of the marriage frame emerge. It would, for instance, be difficult for a hearer to understand the term *rūracio* (bride price) without understanding the term *ũthoni* (in-law’s visitation).

Relating this idea of frames to antonymy, when a listener hears an antonymous word, he must construe a domain in which he would understand the word. For instance, the word *hiū* (hot) evokes the temperature domain and all the possible antonyms therein like *hehu* (cold), *ndaru* (warm) and *horu* (cool) as illustrated below.



**Diagram 2: The temperature frame**

### 1.8.2 Types of frames

According to Fillmore (1976:26) a language has two types of frames namely: interactional and cognitive or conceptual frames.

### 1.8.2.1 Interactional frames

According to him, interactional frames amount to a categorization of the distinguishable contexts of interaction coupled with relevant linguistic choices. This is the actual communication situation that exists between a speaker and a hearer. He talks about the greeting frame which is heavily influenced by the societal norms and attitudes and restricted to a strict choice of topics and expressions as an example.

### 1.8.2.2 Cognitive frames

These are categories that speakers wish to bring into focus when dealing with situations that might be independent of the actual speech situation, Fillmore (1976:26). He illustrates this using a commercial event where he uses the concepts of buyer, seller, goods and money as the main events and the exchange of goods and money plus the change of ownership as the sub events. He concludes that anybody who, for instance, comes across any of the following words like buy, sell, goods, pay, cost, spend, and charge will have the whole commercial frame activated in their minds.

VERB	BUYER	GOODS	SELLER	MONEY	PLACE
buy	Subject	object	from	for	at
sell	To				
cost	Indirect object	subject		object	at
spend	Subject	On		object	at

**Table 1 Commercial Transaction Frame**

**Adapted from Hamm (2009:2)**

Each of the words in the above frame carries simultaneously a ground and a figure and a setting to which the word is pointing. The verb *buy* focuses on the buyer and the goods, back grounding the seller and the money; *sell* focuses on the seller and the goods, back grounding the buyer and the money; *pay* focuses on the buyer, the money, and the seller, back grounding the goods.

Petruck (2012:1) notes that the knowledge and experience structured by the Commercial Transaction Frame provide the background and motivation for the categories represented by the words. The words (the linguistic material) evoke the frame (in the mind of a speaker/hearer) and the interpreter (of an utterance or a text in which the words occur) invokes the frame.

## **1.9 Literature Review**

This section is divided into three sub-sections namely: literature on Gĩkũyũ language, literature related to antonymy and literature on Frame theory.

### **1.9.1 Literature on Gĩkũyũ Language**

A number of scholars have done studies in Gĩkũyũ mostly in morphology, syntax, phonology and semantics. For instance,

Njeri (2007) examined language use in Gĩkũyũ HIV/AIDS discourse. She investigates lexical euphemisms as substitutions of taboo words in Gĩkũyũ speech using the Politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and the Neo-Gricean theory of implicatures. Apart from providing an insight into this study, her study will be of immense value since the lexical substitution in euphemistic terms occurs in synonymous relations where antonyms are also construed.

Munga (2009) looked at sense relations in Kikuyu using the lexical pragmatics theory as proposed by Blunter (1990) and developed by Carston (2002) and Wilson (2006). She analysed synonymy, homonymy and polysemy with the role of context in their understanding as her main focus. Though she used the lexical pragmatics theory and did not look at antonymy, her study will be important to this study since the choice of an antonym to use by a speaker or hearer is made from a repertoire of possible synonyms. Moreover, context is an important concept in the construal of antonyms.

Gathigia (2010) explored Gĩkũyũ euphemisms using a cognitive linguistics analysis. He analyses the lexical and semantic processes involved in the creation of euphemism and how gender influences its use and interpretation using the conceptual metaphor theory. His study provides an in-depth analysis of Gĩkũyũ lexicon in areas like metonymy, metaphor, borrowing, vague

expressions and synonymy which will provide this study with ample exemplification and insights into the working of cognitive linguistics.

Wachira (2011) investigated the phonological processes in Kikuyu nouns and adjectives derived from verbs. He looks at the derivational process and how the sound changes can be accounted for using phonological rules. This study will be of immense value to this study since the study will be looking at oppositeness in Gĩkũyũ and adjectives will be looked into.

Maina (2013) scrutinized linguistic sexism in Gĩkũyũ. She fervently indicated that Gĩkũyũ exhibits gender bias in relation to male linguistic dominance where the masculine term used does not necessarily reflect an equal opposite in the feminine. This study aims to look at oppositeness in Gĩkũyũ and her study will therefore provide insights into the cultural bias towards a particular choice of an antonym over another.

Mambo (2014) did a study on the semantic analysis of some Gĩkũyũ words that have acquired new meaning. Though her study is not related to this study theoretically, she has looked into Gĩkũyũ verbs, nouns and adjectives and therefore her work will provide some useful impetus in the choice of examples of Gĩkũyũ antonyms more so in the enrichment of frames and their elements.

Gathigia (2014) looked at the conceptual mapping of metaphors of love in Gĩkũyũ. His study aimed at testing how image schemas accounted for the comprehension of the love metaphors. Apart from highlighting the conceptualization process which is a major part of this study, his work also provides a perception into the Gĩkũyũ language.

Wanjiru (2015) examined polysemy in Kikuyu using the cognitive semantics approach. She investigates polysemy and its relationship with other sense relations from the dynamic construal approach to meaning in cognitive linguistics. The sense relations she looked at are: homonymy, hyponymy-hyperonymy, meronymy, and metonymy. She also looked at the metaphors. Her study will be of help to this study in the discussion of frames in Gĩkũyũ antonyms (since some antonyms have polysemous relationships) from the examples given in polysemy and hyponymy. Her study will also provide insights into the cognitive semantics approach to sense relations.

Other scholars have carried out studies in Gĩkũyũ though none of the studies has looked at antonymy in Gĩkũyũ and more so using the Cognitive Semantics approach. These scholars include: Gatende (1991) who investigated NP and WH movement in Kikuyu using the Government and Binding Theory, Gachomo (2004) who did a study on the morphosyntactic verb inflections in Kikuyu within the Minimalist Program framework (1995). Ngure (2004) looked at the loss of prenasalisation in the Northern and southern varieties of Gĩkũyũ, Ngamau (2004) looked at a morpho-syntactic analysis of agreement in Gĩkũyũ in the Minimalist program, Iribe (2011) looked into The Gikuyu Reference Phrase using A Role and Reference Grammar approach, Njuguna (2014) examined the syntax of control constructions in Kikuyu using a Lexical Functional Grammar approach. Although these studies are not directly related to the current study, they will be of great help in the understanding of the morphology, syntax, and phonology of Gĩkũyũ language.

### **1.9.2 Literature related to antonymy**

Paradis and Willners (2011:135) view the category antonymy as two different but inter-related perspectives: the configurational schema underlying the oppositeness divide and the contentful domain which two antonyms share. They also note that if a pair of lexical items is used as binary opposites, their relation is a BOUNDED configuration dividing a contentful structure into two parts irrespective of whether the contentful dimension is a single-domain concept like LENGTH, HEIGHT or SPEED, or a multi-domain complex like THING. This is beneficial to my study since it will aid in identifying the mind processes involved in the construal of antonyms like boundary effects.

Davies (2013:94) states that one of the basic principles regarding what constitutes opposition is its reliance on both the differences and similarities between the pair. He goes on to aver that the concept that binds the oppositional pair such as TEMPERATURE for hot/cold is analogous to a superordinate in hyponymous relations in that *hot* and *cold* are kinds of temperature. Therefore, the oppositional pair has a coordinate relation in most cases and often differs on just one fundamental level. This will be beneficial to my study since I will be using frames to distinguish such antonymous relations derived from hyponymous relations in Gĩkũyũ lexicon.

Fillmore (1977:71) as discussed by Croft and Cruse (2004:9) argues that many lexical contrasts contain semantic asymmetries that cannot be captured by features (except in an ad hoc fashion), but lend themselves easily to a frame semantic account. For example, the opposing terms used for the vertical extent of an erect human being are *tall* and *short*, for vertical distance from a bottom baseline (e.g. a branch of a tree) they are *high* and *low*, but for the vertical dimension of a building they are *tall* and *low*. In the Gīkūyū lexicon, (like in all languages), the background information that exists in frames is important to participants in a conversation in order to construe the meanings intended hence the appropriate words to use in given contexts. This is also beneficial to this study since it will help in identifying appropriate Gīkūyū antonymous words by putting them in frames with their frame components hence ease in categorization.

Teufel (2011:1) classifies oppositeness into complementaries and antonyms. He goes ahead and classifies antonyms into three types namely: overlapping, equipollent and polar. He notes that antonymy in verbs often concern directional actions and reversible actions. The classification here is beneficial to my study since it will guide my classification of Gīkūyū antonyms and also come in handy in the distinction between the structural and cognitive analysis of antonymy.

Cruse and Croft (2004:164) highlights the importance of the concept of binarity in the construal of oppositeness, where, within the appropriate domain, there are only two possibilities. They note that despite binarity being an important feature of oppositeness it is not, on its own, sufficient. They illustrate this using the following example with only two members but no oppositeness: double-decker - single-decker. They proceed to insist that the construal of antonyms must have 'inherent binarity'. This means the binarity has to be logically necessary, and not just a contingent fact about the world. This is very important to this study since I will use the same components of binarity as identified above to categorize Gīkūyū antonyms and check the same against the traditional categories in structural semantics.

Cruse and Croft (2004:110-114) discuss sense boundaries and boundary effects in the construal of senses. This entails giving a lexical unit autonomy or the ability to behave independently of other units that might be construed in the same context or 'isolating a portion of meaning potential.' This is one of the main differences between the approach of cognitive semantics and the traditional approach to sense relations. They argue that sense relations are context sensitive

construals which leads to boundaries. The example given is *light* with ‘*dark* and *heavy*’ as its two distinct antonyms. This is compared to *old* which has both distinct and joint construal of its antonyms in ‘*new* and *young*’.

From the above discussion it is evident that Gīkūyū antonyms have sense boundaries like all other sense relations and therefore this will be important in my study since I will use the same parameters to identify sense boundaries which will be part of the classification in cognitive frames.

### **1.9.3 Literature on Frame theory**

Petrucci (2012:1) talks about frames and he notes that Frame Semantics emphasizes the continuities between language and experience. The basic assumption in Frame semantics is thus based on the premise that a frame is a network of related concepts in such a way that no concept exist in isolation of the others and introducing any one concept results in all of them becoming available. That denotes the fact that the meaning associated with a word cannot be understood independent of the frames with which it occurs.

Fillmore (1976:23) discusses the main tenets of his theory. The concepts of context, prototype or paradigm case, the notion ‘frame’ or ‘schema’ make up the background of his theory. He views context as the environment (real world situation) in which a statement is uttered or received by a hearer, other utterances surrounding the utterance and the inherent knowledge of the world by the speaker or hearer. Context refers to the feelings that provide the perceptual knowledge of the meaning of a word. He says that the term prototype refers to categorization of elements based on their status with the central element being the prototype while the lesser the meaning similarity the more periphery the constituents become to the prototype. He emphasizes that the important thing is to have in memory a repertory of prototypes in order to attain a concept. The third element of his theory is frame, schema or scenario. This is the inventory of schema in people’s memory that enables them to structure, classify or interpret experiences. To him, particular grammatical choices are associated in memory with particular frames.

A frame is also referred to as a record of an individual’s beliefs about the world, a filtered and partly interpreted record of his past experiences, a current register of information about his position in space, time, and society, together with his version of the world - models of the other relevant people in his environment Fillmore (1976:26).



## **1.10 Research Methodology**

This section deals mainly with data collection and analysis.

### **1.10.1 Data Collection**

The goal of this study was to analyze Gīkūyū antonyms using a cognitive semantics approach and compare the same with the traditional classification. The researcher started by carrying out an intensive and extensive library and internet research specifically on literature based on the theory, language of study and theoretical framework where literature on cognitive linguistics and antonyms was analyzed. Primary data (antonyms) was collected through a data collection form which had two columns where one column was for the lexical item generated by the researcher and the other for the possible antonym(s). The researcher also relied on his intuitions as a native speaker of the language to collect the data by noting separately the possible antonyms then correlating with the actual responses from the sampled speakers. Notes were made from conversations and the data coalesced with that of the data collection form. Three native speakers (purposefully chosen because of their availability) of Gīkūyū were selected through judgmental sampling based on the researcher's perception about their knowledge of the language, to verify the data for authenticity. The three sampled speakers were picked specifically from the age bracket of above forty-five years, two men and a woman, with their education levels having no consideration. The words chosen were mainly nouns, adjectives and verbs since they have opposites and this was restricted to the Southern dialect of Gīkūyū.

### **1.10.2 Data Analysis**

After the antonyms were identified by the researcher and verified by the selected native speakers, they were categorized first according to the traditional approach into gradable, complementary, relation or converses, direction or reversives and taxonomic sisters. The researcher then took a sample of the data due to the detailed nature of the analysis and analyzed the same using a cognitive approach which classifies antonymy into complementariness, antonyms (equipollent, overlapping and polar) and converses. The concepts of profile and boundary effects were used to give autonomy to the antonyms. In addition, the meaning of Gīkūyū antonyms were explained using Fillmore's frame theory where appropriate frames were identified with their frame elements.

### **1.11 Significance of the study**

The findings of this study will provide a new perspective into the study of Gikuyu and other languages especially in the area of antonymy. The findings will also add to the existing bank of knowledge for the Gikuyu linguists to be used as reference and for future researchers. This study will also provide insights into the validity of the theory and the area of study.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

The chapter has provided a background to the study. It started with the background to the language and the study and then the statement of the problem. Other areas discussed include research questions and objectives, rationale of the study, scope and limitations, theoretical framework, literature review, methodology and finally the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONAL/STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION OF ANTONYMS IN GĪKŪYŪ

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the traditional or the structural classification of antonyms in Gīkūyū. Geeraerts (2010:52) posits that “structuralism is interested in the structure of the language rather than the structure of the world outside of language.”

Crystal (2008:429) views structural semantics as one that applies principles of structural linguistics to the study of meaning through the notion of semantic relations (sense relations) such as antonymy. Indeed, traditionally, sense relations are considered as semantic relations between words. Antonymy therefore, is plainly defined as semantic oppositeness or oppositeness of meaning.

Semantic researchers such as Saeed (2003:66-68), Hurford et al (2007:121-124) and Geeraerts (2010:85-88), suggest various types of antonyms. These are:

- i) Complementary / simple / binary antonyms.
- ii) Gradable antonyms.
- iii) Relation or converses.
- iv) Direction or reversives.
- v) Taxonomic sisters / multiple incompatibilities.

The following is a discussion of the five (5) types of antonyms with relevant examples from the Gīkūyū language.

### 2 Simple antonyms

These are antonyms that come in pairs and which exhaust all possibilities between them (have no intermediate positions between them). There is no continuous spectrum between *tindika* (push) and *guchia* (pull) but they are opposite in meaning and are therefore complementary antonyms where the negation of one implies the other, Saeed (2003:66), Hurford et al (2007:121).

Complementary antonyms are found in verbs, adjectives and nouns and the following is an exemplification.

## 2.1 Complementary antonyms in adjectives

Gĩkũyũ	Gloss
1. <i>Emuoyo - Mũkuũ</i>	alive - dead
1) <i>Jesu emuoyo.</i> Jesus is alive.	
2) <i>Jesu nĩ mũkuũ.</i> Jesus is dead.	

According to the structuralist approach, there is no possibility of existing outside either of the states since when one is alive he is not dead and vice versa. These antonyms lack some precision since 'dead' could be partial as in stroke or paralysis for instance:

- 3) *Kimani nĩ mũkuũ mũenaũmũe.*  
Kimani is dead on one side.

This simply means that Kimani is not functioning properly or his organs have a nervous breakdown but the organs are not actually dead see another example:

2. <i>Mwĩhia – Mũthingu</i>	Sinner – righteous
4) <i>Mũndũ mwĩhia agathiĩ kwa ngoma.</i> A sinner will go to hell.	
5) <i>Mũndũ mũthingu nĩ wa Ngai.</i> A righteous person belongs to God.	

There exists no middle ground between a sinner and a righteous person. Nonetheless, there are other lexical elements which are evoked by the mention of *Mwĩhia*, like *watho* (rules), *mũhingia* (a fulfiller), *mwathĩki* (obedient) and *mũĩtikĩri* (collaborator). Similarly, *Mũthingu* evokes antonymous elements like *mũtharia* (fornicator), *mũmaraya* (prostitute), *mũichi* (a thief), *mũrogi* (withdoctor), *mũhoi ngoma* (devil worshipper) and *mũĩragani* (murderer). This will call therefore for a cognitive semantics analysis to exactly get the antonym (s) of the given elements from the boundaries and profile identified.

## 2.2 Complementary antonyms in nouns

### Gikūyū

### Gloss

3. *Igūrũ - thĩ*

heaven - earth

6) *Ngai eigūrũ.*

God is in heaven

7) *Caitani niagũire thĩ.*

The devil fell to the earth.

The term *igūrũ* as seen above has the opposite in the term *thĩ*. This fails to explain the occurrence of other terms like *ruungu* (below) and *irima* (hole). A person talking from inside a hole would refer to someone not inside the hole as being *igūrũ*.

4. *Kahĩ – Kairĩtu*

Boy – Girl

8) *Kana gakwa nĩ kahĩ.*

My child is a boy.

9) *Kana gakwa nĩ kairĩtu.*

My child is a girl.

In Gikuyu, the terms *kahĩ* and *kairĩtu* have cultural connotations (the perspective of the speaker, hearer and occasion) and therefore require context to understand. This would be clear in a frame that would for instance have elements like *mũthuuri*, *mũtumia*, *kĩhĩ*, *mwanake* and *kairĩtu* as the possible antonyms of *kahĩ*.

5. *Mũthuuri – Mũtumia*

Man – Woman

10) *Ūyũ ni mũthuuri wa kanitha.*

This is a man of the church.

11) *Ūyũ ni mutumia wa kanitha.*

This is a woman of the church.

The term *mũthuuri* though traditionally given the term *mũtumia* as its antonym has complexities in determining its antonym since the context and the cultural domain play a significant role. For instance the possible antonyms would include: *Mũtumia* (woman), *mwana* (child), *kĩhĩĩ* (uncircumcised male), *mũthuuri kĩhĩĩ* (not a member of the council of elders), *mwĩhia* (none pious man) and *mwanake* (unmarried man).

6. *Mwana – Mũndu mũgima*

Child – Grown up

12) *Arohiruo kĩoho kĩa mwana.*

He was sentenced like a child.

13) *Arohiruo kĩoho kĩa mundu mugima.*

He was sentenced like a grownup.

The term *mwana* does mean a child when viewed narrowly from the structural approach. This leaves the fact that it also means a grownup under certain contexts where the speaker disregards age and looks at the biological connection. For instance, when eulogizing, a grandfather or a one day old would all be referred to as: *Ararĩ mwana wa...* (He was the child of...)

7. *Mũhiki – Mũhikania*

Bride – Bride Groom

14) *Twathiĩ kugira mũhiki.*

We have gone for the bride.

15) *Twathiĩ kugĩra mũhikania.*

We have gone for the bridegroom.

From a mere traditional view, *mũhiki* (bride) evokes the antonym of *mũhikania* (bridegroom) but following the marriage frame, the term evokes other possible antonyms like *thũ* (enemy) – from *mũrata* (girlfriend); the synonym of *mũhiki* (young woman), *mũtumia* (woman), *cũcũ* (grandmother) and *mũrera rika* (spinster). Consider the following:

16) *Ũyũ nĩ mũhiki wakwa.*

This is my girlfriend.

This sentence (16) excludes the other meaning of *fiancé* which evokes a different antonym hence the need for a cognitive approach.

8. *Mũndũrũme - Kĩguoya* a brave person – a coward

17) *Mũtumia ũyũ nĩ mũndũrũme.*

This woman is brave.

18) *Mũtumia ũyũ nĩ kĩguoya.*

This woman is cowardly.

Depending on the context or the scene, *mũndũrũme* (brave person) has other antonyms not present in the structural approach. These are *mũtumia* (woman) and *mwana* (child).

9. *Mwanake - Mũiritu* Young man – Young woman

19) *Mwanake ũrĩa nĩwau?*

Whose son is that?

20) *Mũiritu wakwa emũcĩ.*

My daughter is at home.

Superficially, *mũiritu* (mature girl) is the antonym of *mwanake* (young man). But on closer scrutiny, other antonyms are present which include: *mũthuri* (mature man), *kĩhĩ* (big uncircumcised boy) and *kĩrĩgũ* (a big uncircumcised girl) which can only be analyzed cognitively.

### 2.3 Complementary antonyms in verbs

10. *Hĩtũka - gũa* pass – fail

Consider the following examples.

21) *Kĩmanĩ nĩahĩtũka kĩgerio.*

Kimani has passed his exam.

22) *Kĩmanĩ nĩagũa kĩgerio.*

Kimani has failed his exam.

The verbs *hītũka* and *gũa* require context to be understood since *hītũka* also means ‘to overtake’ or ‘to pass by’ and *gũa* means ‘to fall’, ‘to die’ or ‘have an accident (a car)’. Consider the following:

23) *Ngaari yake yahītũka yakwa taĩrũgamĩte.*

His car has overtaken mine like it’s at standstill.

24) *Kĩbakĩ nĩahītũka oorũu.*

Kibaki has just *passed by*.

25) *Mwana nĩagũa thimitinĩ.*

The baby has fallen on the floor.

26) *Ngaari ya Kĩnuthia nĩragũire.*

Kĩnuthia’s car had an accident.

#### 11. *Rega* - *ĩtikĩra*

refuse – accept

27) *Cũcũ niarega kũrĩa irio.*

My grandmother has refused to eat.

28) *Cũcũ nĩetikĩra kũrĩa irio.*

My grandmother has accepted to eat.

The term *Rega* not only means ‘to refuse’ but also ‘to bar’ therefore, the antonym *ĩtikĩria* (allow).

Consider the following:

29) *Cucu niarega ndĩe irio ciakwa.*

My grandmother has refused me to eat my food.

30) *Cucu nĩanjĩtikĩria ndĩe irio ciakwa.*

My grandmother has allowed me to eat my food.

#### 12. *Gũra* - *endia*

buy - sell

31) *Ndathiĩ kũgũra nguo ciakwa.*

I have gone to buy my clothes.

32) *Ndathiĩ kũendia nguo ciakwa.*

I have gone to sell my clothes.



The term *gũra* means to buy hence the antonym proffered is sell. In a commercial frame, the term would invite antonyms like *endia* (sell), *komba* (take on credit), *heana* (give away), *mwĩroreri* (window shopper), and *mũrehi* (supplier). Consider the following:

33) *Ndathiĩ gũkomba cukari.*

I have gone to take sugar on credit.

34) *Uyu timũgũri ni mwiroreri.*

This is not a buyer but a window shopper.

35) *Kĩnuthia ni mũrehi wa mbembe ti mũgũri.*

Kĩnuthia is the maize supplier not the buyer.

36) *Nduka yake niraheana cukari ndirendia.*

His shop is giving away sugar and not selling.

These examples highlight the weakness in the structural approach hence the need for a cognitive approach.

**13. Gwatia - horia**

light - extinguish

37) *Wanjirũ gwatia mwaki.*

Wanjiru, light the fire.

38) *Wanjirũ horia mwaki.*

Wanjiru, extinguish the fire.

The examples above indicate the direct meaning of the terms *gwatia* and *horia*. What is not indicated is that a different context would result in a different set of antonyms. For instance:

39) *Mũteti nĩagwatia mbaara ya rumena.*

The politician has started the war on hatred.

40) *Mũteti nĩagwatia rurĩrĩ rungi rumena.*

The politician has spread the hatred to another tribe.

41) *Nĩaragwatirie mũka mũrimũ.*

He has infected his wife with a disease.

42) *We horia kanua kau gaku.*

You shut up!

43) *Niarahorie munigu.*

He brought down his ego.

14. *Koma* - *ũkĩra* sleep - wake

44) *We thiĩ ũgakome.*

You go and sleep.

45) *We ũkĩra.*

You wake up.

‘*Koma*’ (sleep) and ‘*ũkĩra*’ (wake) like all other antonymous relations require a contextual frame to analyze. For instance, the term ‘*koma*’ also means ‘to die’ or ‘to rest’ while *ũkĩra* means ‘to rise up in arms’, ‘improve’ or ‘to resurrect’ as exemplified below.

46) *Lucy nĩarakomire.*

Lucy died.

47) *Lucy nĩakomire nĩ mĩnoga.*

Lucy slept due to fatigue.

48) *Rurĩrĩ nĩ ruokĩrĩre rukingethanĩra na mũkoroni.*

The tribe rose up against the colonizers.

49) *Mũrutũo arerirũo okĩre kana aingatũo cukuru.*

The student was told to improve or be sent away.

50) *Jesũ nĩokĩrĩre kuma kũrĩ akũo.*

Jesus rose from the dead.

To sum it up, it’s evident that though structural classification is appropriate, it’s inadequate since it fails to capture many possibilities in the construal of binary antonyms.

### 3. Gradable antonyms

Gradable antonymy is a relationship between word pairs whose meanings are opposite and which lie on a continuous spectrum, for instance, hot/cold exist on polar positions but between them other possibilities exist like warm (warmer, warmest), tepid and cool (cooler, coolest), Hurford et al (2007:125). They are relative to the speaker’s perspective since most of them elicit a sense of vagueness. Examples in Gĩkũyũ:

**Gĩkũyũ**

**Gloss**

**15. *Hiũ – hehu***

hot – cold

The possibilities between *Hiũ* and *hehu* are:

- a) *Hiũ – hiũ gukĩra – hiu biũ.* Hot – hotter - hottest  
b) *Hehu – hehahehu – hehu biũ.* Cold- colder- coldest

The sentence ‘*Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ biũ*’ (this water is very hot) depends with the speaker hence context to clarify the speaker meaning since for instance to a child the water could be very hot but to an adult it might just be slightly above warm.

**16. *Nene - nini***

big – small

- a) *Nene – nenanene – nene biũ.* Big – bigger – biggest  
b) *Nini – ninanini – nini biũ.* Small – smaller – smallest

Consider the following examples in sentences:

51) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ **mũnene**.*

My husband is big. (Being said by a slight woman)

52) *Mũthuuri wakwa ni **mũnini**.*

My husband is small. (Being said by a monstrous woman)

The two sentences may look like opposites yet on a closer look evoke a different outlook dictated by the context of the speaker. To the slight woman, ‘big’ may be a dwarf or a midget as compared to the ‘small’ coming from the monstrous woman who might actually be gigantic to the slight woman.

**17. *Mũthĩni - mũtongu***

poor – rich

- a) *Mũthĩni – mũthĩnathĩni – mũthĩni biũ.* Poor – poorer – poorest  
b) *Mũtongu – mũtongatongu – mũtongu biũ.* Rich – richer – richest

Consider the following examples.

53) *Mũthuuri ũyũ ti **mũthĩni**.*

This man is not poor.

54) *Mũthuuri ũyũ nĩ **mũtongu**.*

This man is rich.

Sentence (51) does not necessarily imply sentence (52) yet ‘*mũthĩni*’ (poor) is the opposite of ‘*mũtongu*’ (rich). This is so because there are various levels of ‘richness’ or ‘poverty’ which makes the meaning vague requiring the scene or frame for clarity.

- 18.** *Mwĩthĩ - mũkũrũ* Young – old  
a) *Mwĩthĩ – mwĩthethĩ – mwĩthĩ biũ.* Young – younger – youngest  
b) *Mũkũrũ – mũkũrakũrũ – mũkũrũ biũ.* Old – older – oldest

Consider the following example:

55) *Mũndũ mwĩthĩ nĩekũenda kũmenyererwo.*

The youth should be taken care of.

The antonym of *mũndũ mwĩthĩ* ‘a young person’ is vague and can only be determined with reference to the speaker and the context in which it is uttered. If the speaker is older than the addressee then the antonym ‘old’ would be relevant. If the speaker is about the same age bracket then the antonym becomes ‘older’. This is replicated in all the other elements in the age frame.

- 19.** *Hakuhĩ - haraihu* Near – far  
a) *Hakuhĩ – hakuhakuhĩ – hakuhĩ biũ.* Near – nearer – nearest  
b) *Haraihu – haraiharaihu – haraihu biũ.* Far – further – furthest

Example:

56) *Aikaraga hakuhi na bara.*

He lives near the road.

57) *Aikaraga haraihu na bara.*

He lives far from the road.

A hearer is in a difficult position in case he is expected to give the antonym of the term *hakuhĩ* or *haraihu* since it is unclear about the actual distance from the road. The context of the speaker plays a part in the construal of the possible antonyms hence the gradability.

- 20.** *Mũkuhĩ mũraihi* short – tall

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| a) <i>Mũkuhĩ – mũkuhakuhĩ – mũkuhĩ biũ.</i>     | Short – shorter – shortest |
| b) <i>Mũraihu – mũraiharaihu – mũraihu biũ.</i> | Tall – taller – tallest    |

In an utterance like: ‘*Mũthuuri ũyũ nĩ mũkuhĩ*’ (This man is short), the vagueness in the understanding of its opposite can only be cleared through the indulgence of context. As mentioned in other sections of this analysis, the interpretation is dependent on the speaker and the hearer where *mũkuhĩ* (short) may appear to be the *mũraihu* (tall) of the listener. Another point about these relations is that ‘a short building’ cannot be compared to ‘a short man.’

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>21. <i>Thaka - njoŋi</i></b>            | beautiful – ugly                            |
| a) <i>Thaka – thaka thaka – thaka biũ.</i> | Beautiful – more beautiful – most beautiful |
| b) <i>Njoŋi – njoŋjoŋi – njoŋi biũ.</i>    | Ugly – uglier – ugliest                     |

There is a saying that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Simply put the opposite of ‘*thaka*’ does not necessarily become *njoŋi* since there exists intermediaries between the two polars *thaka* (beautiful) and *njoŋi* (ugly). Secondly, the same parameters cannot be used to describe for instance a human and a house. Consider the following:

58) *Nyũmba yakwa nĩ thaka.*

My house is beautiful.

59) *Mũtumia wakwa nĩ mũthaka.*

My wife is beautiful.

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>22. <i>Njega - njũru</i></b>        | good – bad           |
| a) <i>Njega – njegega – njega biũ.</i> | Good – better – best |
| b) <i>Njũru – njũroru – njũru biũ.</i> | Bad – worse – worst  |

Consider the following example:

60) *Irio ici nĩ njega.*

This food is good.

61) *Irio ici nĩ njũru biũ.*

This food is very bad.

The elements *njega* (good) and *njũru* (bad) are relative to the speaker and the context. For instance, a rich man would find stale food bad while to a beggar it becomes good. There also exists a variable on the degree of either ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’.

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>23. <i>Njerũ - ngũrũ</i></b>           | new – old            |
| a) <i>Njerũ – njereru – njerũ biũ.</i>    | New – newer – newest |
| b) <i>Ngũrũ – nguranguru – nguru biũ.</i> | Old – older – oldest |

The relativity of gradable antonyms is evident in the terms *njerũ* (new) and *ngũrũ* (old). A clothing item manufactured a month earlier would be considered older than one released a month later. Likewise, secondhand vehicles are deemed older than newly assembled ones though they are also regarded as new. For instance:

- 62) *Omondi niaragurire ngaari **njerũ**.*  
 Omondi has bought a new car – Secondhand.
- 63) *Omondi niaragurire ngaari **njerũ**.*  
 Omondi has bought a new car – Brand new.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>24. <i>Mũtana – Mũkarĩ</i></b>              | Generous – Mean                          |
| a) <i>Mũtana – mũtana gũkira – mũtana biũ.</i> | Generous – more generous – most generous |
| b) <i>Mũkarĩ – mũkarĩ gũkira – mũkarĩ biũ.</i> | Mean – meaner – meanest                  |

Consider the following:

- 64) *Mwarimũ witũ nĩ **mũtana**.*  
 Our teacher is generous.
- 65) *Mwarimũ witũ nĩ **mũkarĩ**.*  
 Our teacher is mean.

As earlier seen, the concepts of *mũtana* (generous) and *mũkarĩ* (mean) lie on a continuous spectrum and between them are other possibilities. For instance, in a fundraiser, a teacher may be considered mean yet he has donated like a hundred thousand shillings while another deemed generous after giving a similar amount depending on the perceived richness or not.

- |                                       |               |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>25. <i>Mũhoreri - Mũgũrũki</i></b> | Gentle – Wild |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|

- a) *Mũhoreri – mũhorahoreri – mũhoreri biũ.* Gentle – gentler – gentlest.  
 b) *Mũgũrũki – mũgũragũrũki – mũgũrũki biũ.* Wild – wilder – wildest

66) *Kimani ni mwana mũhoreri.*

Kimani is a gentle child.

67) *Kimani ni mwana mũgũrũki.*

Kimani is a wild child.

This example shows the presence of a query on the element ‘*mũgũrũki*’ in the mind of the listener since it also means ‘a mad person’. Moreover, there are other elements existing between the two poles of the spectrum creating vagueness. It also evokes antonyms like *mũkuũku*, *mũgĩ* and *mũgima* that require context to understand.

In conclusion, it is evident from the above discussion on gradable antonyms that they are mental construals where the understanding of them requires the knowledge of the relevant frames from where the antonyms are construed.

### 2.3 Relation or converse antonyms

Relation or converse antonyms are terms where opposite makes sense only in the context of the relationship between the two items for example teacher – pupil. Hurford et al (2007:123) say they exist when a relationship between two things is described by two predicates existing in the opposite order. The implication here is that the predication of one term entails the predication of the other positively related term.

Examples in Gĩkũyũ

#### Gĩkũyũ

#### Gloss

26. *Mũrutani – mũrutwo*

Teacher – Pupil

68) *Kĩmani nĩ mũrutani wa Wambua.*

Kimani is Wambua’s teacher.

69) *Wambua nĩ mũrutũo wa Kĩmani.*

Wambua is a pupil of Kimani.

From the examples (a) and (b) above, it is evident that the speaker has semantic knowledge on the relation existing between the teacher and the pupil where one order (being a teacher) is the opposite of the other order (being a student).

27. *Mwandikani – mwandikwo*

Employer – Employee

Example:

70) *Njoroge nĩ **mwandikwo** wa Muhamedi.*

Njoroge is Muhamed's employee.

71) *Muhamedi nĩ **mwandikani** wa Njoroge.*

Muhamed is Njoroge's employer.

In the examples given, the relation between Njoroge and Muhamed is clear since the two sentences are paraphrases and describe the same situation.

28. *Ndagitarĩ – Mũrũarũ*

Doctor – Patient

72) *Ūyũ nĩwe **Ndagitarĩ** wa **mũrũaru** ũrĩa.*

This is the doctor of that patient.

73) ***Mũrũaru** ũrĩa nĩwa **ndagitarĩ** ũyũ.*

This patient belongs to this doctor.

There is semantic knowledge by the speaker of the relationship between the doctor and the patient.

29. *Mũciari – Mwana*

Parent – Child

74) *Njeri nĩ **mwana** wa Mwangi.*

Njeri is the child of Mwangi.

75) *Mwangi nĩ **mũciari** wa Njeri.*

Mwangi is Njeri's parent.

When Njeri is the child of Mwangi, it follows automatically that Mwangi is the parent to Njeri.

30. *Gura – endia*

Buy – sell

76) *Opiyo **nĩagurire** ngaari kwĩ Munyota.*

Opiyo bought a car from Munyota.

77) *Munyota **nĩendirie** ngaari kwĩ Opiyo.*



Munyota sold a car to Opiyo.

From this example we can say that the terms ‘*gũra*’ and ‘*endia*’ are converses because they are describing the same concept from different viewpoints of the buyer or of the seller.

31. *Rungu – igũrũ* Below – above

78) *Nyumba yakwa ã igũrũ wa rũĩ.*

My house is above the river.

79) *Rũĩ rwĩ **rungu rwa nyũmba** yakwa.*

The river is below my house.

The two predicates in the two sentences are converses since they exist in the opposite order.

Other examples of converse antonyms are:

32. *Guka – kaguka* Grandparent – grandchild

33. *Enda – mena* Love – hate

34. *Komba – kombera* Borrow – lend

35. *Mwene – yakwa* Own – belong to

In converses therefore, the semantic knowledge of the speaker is applied in the paraphrases to describe the same situation using opposite predicates.

## 2.4 Directional or reverse antonyms

Directional or reverse antonyms are those relations between terms describing movements, where one term describes movement in one direction, and the other the same movement in the opposite direction, Saeed (2003:67).

Directional antonyms involve spatial orientation relative to a point of reference, Geeraerts (2010:86). This spatial orientation can either be literal or perceived for instance in:

36. *Ūka – thiĩ* Come – go (literal)

80) *Kĩmani **ũka** haha.*

Kimani, come here. (There is movement to... )

81) *Kĩmani thĩũ ũkĩũmaga.*

Kimani go while drying. (There is movement away from...)

37. *Ūria – cokia* Ask – answer (perceived)

82) *Ondieki ūria kĩũria.*

Ondieki, ask a question. (There is perceived movement from the speaker).

83) *Ondieki cokia kĩũria.*

Ondieki, answer the question. (There is perceived movement to the speaker)

Other examples are:

38. *Kũnja – kũnjũra*

Wrap – unwrap

39. *Huhĩra – huhũra*

Inflate – deflate

40. *Nyita – rekia*

hold – release

41. *Tonyia – ruta*

insert – withdraw

42. *Thĩĩ – ũka*

go – come

43. *Ciarwo – kua*

to be born – to die

## 2.5 Taxonomic sister antonyms

Taxonomic sister antonyms describe words which are on the same level in taxonomy hence incompatible. Word A is a taxonomic sister of word B if and only if word A and word B are hyponyms of all the same words, Crystal (2008:233).

They are also referred to as multiple incompatibilities or terms in a given system (like colour, season, days of the week, etc.) which are mutually incompatible and cover all the areas of the system, Hurford et al (2007:124). Gĩkũyũ has taxonomic sisters as illustrated in the following examples:

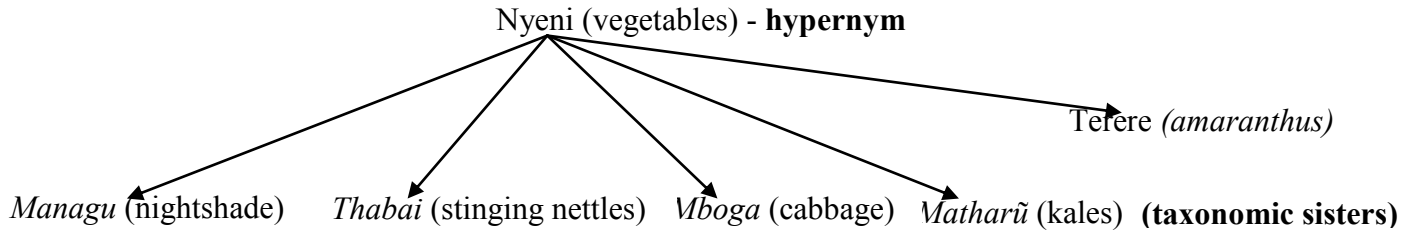
44. *Nyeni* (vegetables)

The following sentence would be difficult to understand unless in the context of use:

84) *Mami atũheire ngima na nyeni.*

Mother gave us ugali and vegetables.

The following diagram illustrates the possible interpretations that arise from the use of the hypernym *nyeni* where the speaker could be referring to any of the members of the taxonomy.



**Diagram 3: Nyeni Hyponyms**

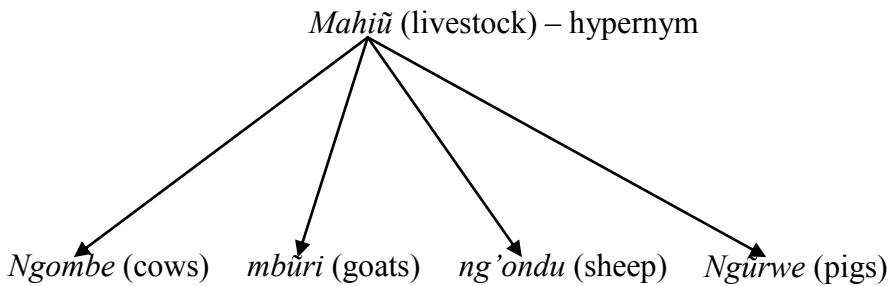
**45. Mahiũ (livestock)**

Consider the following:

85) *Nyuma kũgĩra mahiũ makwa rũru.*

I have come from collecting my livestock from the fields.

The sentence elicits difficulty in interpretation since the information given is scanty and therefore the listener would have to know the elements contained in the livestock frame. The following is an illustration of the hypernym *mahiũ* (livestock).



**Diagram 4: Mahiũ (livestock) hyponyms**

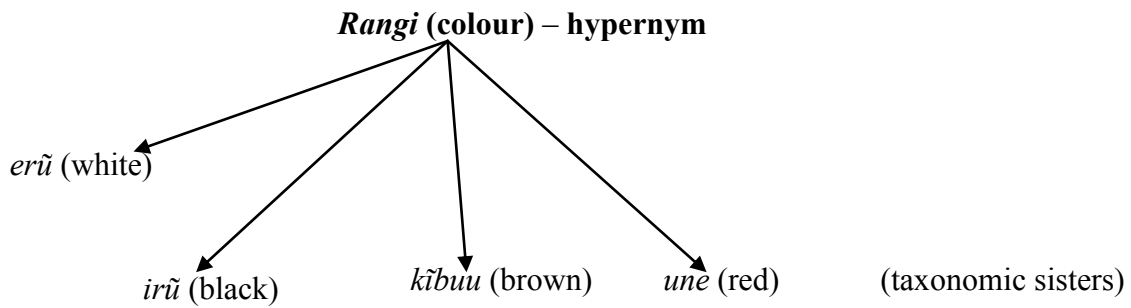
**46. Rangi (colour)**

For instance:

86) *Nyũmba ãno ãna rangi mũthaka.*

This house has a beautiful colour.

The speaker here could be referring to any of the members of the colour frame as illustrated below.



**Diagram 5: Rangi hyponyms**

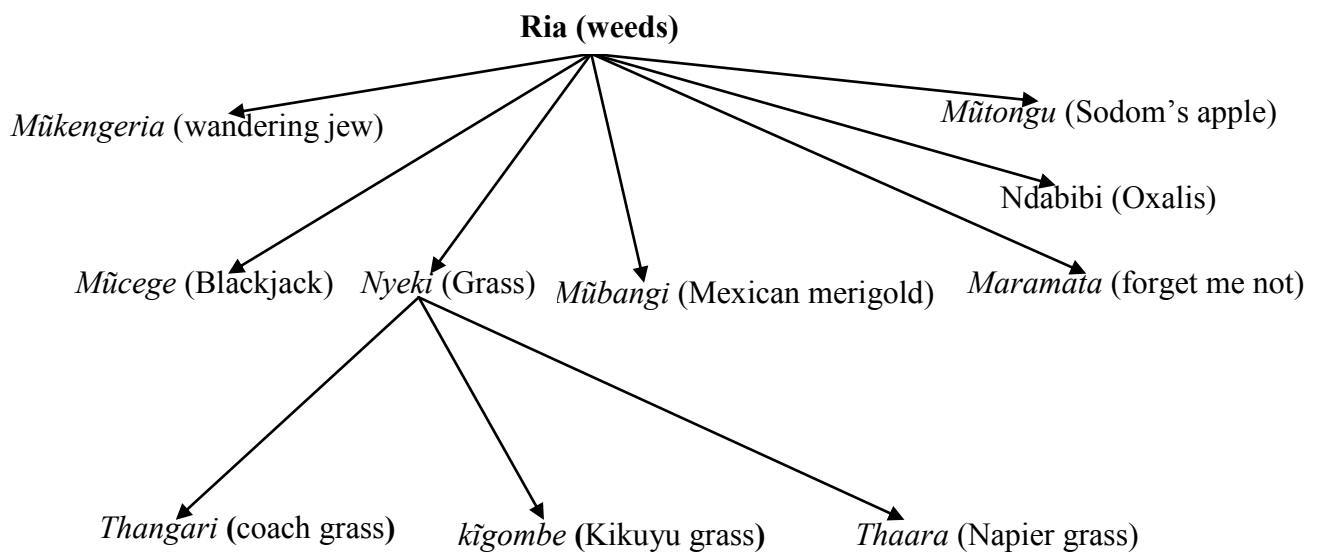
**47. Ria (weeds)**

Consider the following:

87) *Mũgũnda wakwa wĩna ria rĩngĩ.*

My shamba has a lot of **weeds**.

The listener in this sentence would think of any of the following possible types of the weeds the speaker is referring to in his identification of the speaker meaning.



**Diagram 6: Ria hyponyms**

The taxonomic sisters are incompatible that where one appears say 'nyeki' (grass) another like *Mũbangi* (Mexican merigold) cannot appear.

## 2.6 Conclusion

From the discussion above, it is worth noting that Gĩkũyũ antonyms can be analyzed structurally but the traditional approach fails to capture the notion that antonyms are mental construals that are determined by context. This is well illustrated by the reading of an antonymous relation like *kahĩĩ / kairĩtu* (boy / girl) where other possible antonymous relations like: *kĩhĩĩ* (big uncircumcised boy), *mũndũrũme* (a brave person), *mũthuuri* (mature man), *mwanake* (a circumcised young man) and *karĩgũ* (a non circumcised young girl) are evident and which require context to be understood. This therefore calls for a cognitive semantics approach to analyze the available data using Fillmore's frame theory.

## CHAPTER 3: COGNITIVE SEMANTICS APPROACH TO OPPOSITENESS: COMPLEMENTARIES

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at a cognitive approach to the notion of oppositeness. It will look at complementaries using a selected number of lexicons from Gikūyū. The previous chapter gave a lexical analysis of Gikūyū antonyms from the traditional approach which was a general comparison of relations between antonymous words but the following chapters go beyond the general comparisons and seek to use a frame semantics approach where elements have underlying meanings which evoke specific frames with their elements.

### 3.1 Complementaries

These are elements that exhaust a certain domain in two without allowing any element in between them. They are construals that exhaustively bisect some domain into two subdomains, Croft and Cruse (2004:166).

A word can have various related meanings that originate from the prototype depending on the context in which it is used. A prototype in this case refers to the best or most representative member of a given category. Indeed, Croft and Cruse (2004:111) note that cognitive linguistics appreciates that the possible readings of any word are uncountable and therefore a word can have many related meanings that emerge from the prototype and which depend on context to bring out the periphery construals of a sense. The following is an illustration of the complementaries in Gikuyu.

#### 48. *Mwīhia* – *Mūthingu*

#### Sinner – Righteous

As has been mentioned earlier in chapter two, *mwīhia* evokes the following frames: *watho* (rules), *mutaratara* (order), *wathīki* (obedience), and *ūngai* (righteousness). Consequently, its opposite is *mūthingu* (righteous) but its periphery elements evoke the following opposites: *mūhingia* (a fulfiller), *mwathīki* (obedient) *mwega* (good) and *mūītīkīri* (collaborator). Similarly, *mūthingu* evokes the following elements: *mwīhia* (sinner), *mūūru* (bad), *mūregi* (rebel), *mūtharia* (fornicator), *mūmaraya* (prostitute), *mūīci* (a thief), *mūrogi* (witchdoctor), *mūhoi ngoma* (devil worshipper) and *mūūragani* (murderer). The prototype opposite of the word *mwīhia* is *mūthingu* while the other elements in that frame are the periphery opposites derived from the periphery

elements arising from the prototypes (*mwĩhia* and *mũthingu*). The choice of an opposite in this case will depend on the context: mental, environmental and cultural.

88) *Mũndũ **mũthingu** nĩwa Ngai.*

A righteous man belongs to God.

The presence in sentence (88) of the noun *Ngai* ‘God’ gives the hearer the religious context that enables him to understand the meaning of *mũthingu* (righteous). It follows that the opposite of *mũthingu* in this case is *mwĩhia* ‘sinner’.

The adjective *mwĩhia* (sinner) is construed differently depending on the context in which the ‘sinner’ is. It is also noteworthy to mention that *mũtharia* (fornicator), *mũregi* (rebel), *mũmaraya* (prostitute), and *mũũragani* (murderer) are all semantic extensions of *mwĩhia* (sinner) since they all refer to social ills or sins as illustrated below.

89) *Kamanu nĩ **mwĩhia**.*

Kamanu is a sinner. (Religious context)

90) *Kamanu nĩ **mũtharia**.*

Kamanu is a fornicator. (Social context)

91) *Kamanu nĩ **mũregi**.*

Kamanu is a rebel. (Political context)

92) *Kamanu nĩ **mũmaraya**.*

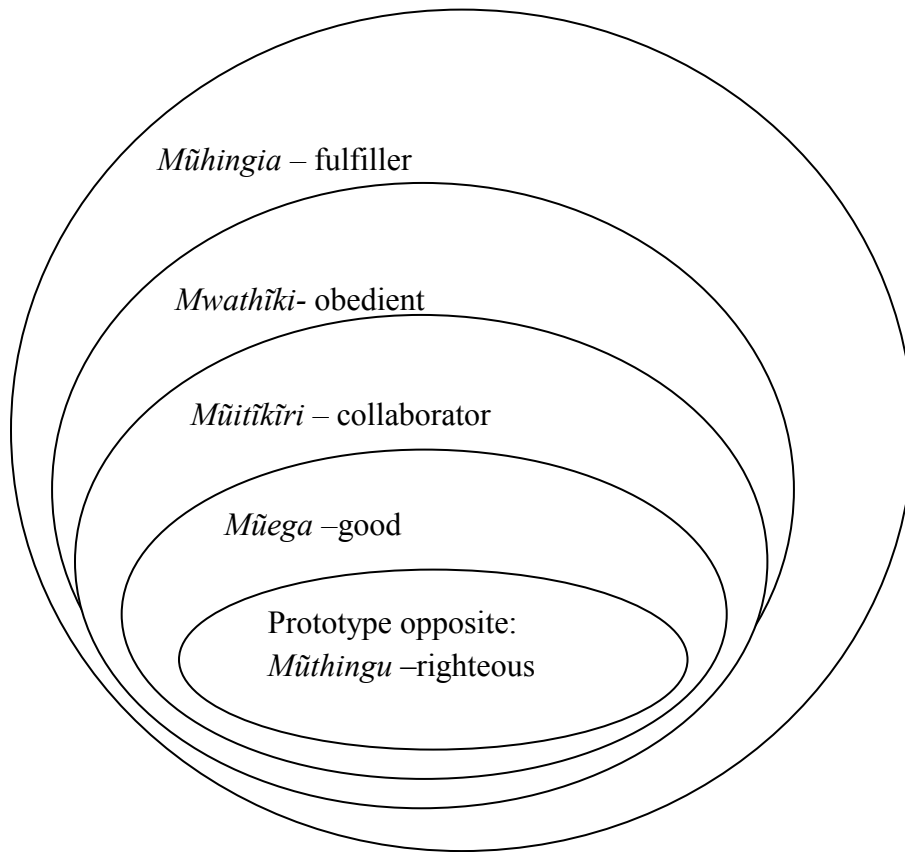
Kamanu is a prostitute. (Social context)

93) *Kamanu nĩ **mũũragani**.*

Kamanu is a murderer. (Either social or religious contexts)

From the examples (89-93), it is evident that the context in which the subject (Kamanu) is in will enable a listener to construe different opposites for the different peripheral meanings of the prototype *mwĩhia* (the first opposite that comes to the mind of a hearer upon coming across the lexicon *mũthingu* (righteous) in the absence of context is *mwĩhia* (sinner)). *Mũtharia* ‘fornicator’ takes *mũtheru* ‘clean’, *mũregi* ‘rebel’ takes *mũtĩkĩri* ‘collaborator’, *mũmaraya* ‘prostitute’ takes *mũkindĩrĩku* ‘settled’, *mũũragani* ‘murderer’ takes *mũhonia* ‘healer’. Each of the construals evokes different frames with their frame elements.

The following shows the radial categories of the opposites of *mwĩhia* (sinner).



**Diagram 7 Radial categories of the prototype opposite of *mwĩhia***

As earlier mentioned, prototype refers to categorization of elements based on their status with the central element being the best in the category. From the above diagram the underlying opposite of *mwĩhia* (sinner) is *mũthingu* (righteous). The other senses are related to the underlying but are extensions of the prototype especially when context is applied.

Consider the following examples:

94) *Jesũ nĩoheire mũndũwanja mwĩhia.*

Jesus forgave the lady *sinner*.

Due to the religious knowledge or background, a listener construes the opposite of *mwĩhia* (sinner) in sentence (94) above as *mũthingu* (righteous) as illustrated in the following example:

95) *Jesũ nĩendete mũndũ mũthingu.*

Jesus loves a *righteous* man.



The word *mũũru* (bad) is used as a general reference to an all-round bad person or one who is known for many vices. It is also used to refer to someone as being bad on a lighter note or jokingly. The following examples are illustrations:

96) *Mũthuri wakwa nĩ mũũru.*

My husband is *bad*.

97) *We wĩmũthuri mũũru.*

You are a *bad* husband. (wife telling her husband)

The examples above (96&97) illustrate that *mũũru* (bad) in this context does not take *mũthingu* as its opposite but rather takes *mwega* (good). For instance:

98) *Mũthuri wakwa nĩ mwega.*

My husband is *good*.

### **Boundary effects**

When a hearer hears the word *mwĩhia* ‘sinner’ or *mũthingu* ‘righteous’ in the absence of context, all the senses of the two words in the *watho* (rules), *mutaratara* (order), *wathĩki* (obedience), and *ũngai* (righteousness) frames as discussed above become available. The opposites of either of the terms can only be sorted out through the use of context which assigns meanings to words by use of sense boundaries that provide sense autonomy. When autonomy is rendered to a sense, it is able to stand independently of other senses construed in the same context, Croft & Cruse (2004:112). This implies that all these senses will be competing for attention and it is only one that will be selected depending on the context it has been used in. This is referred to as **attentional autonomy**.

Consider sentence (11) as repeated below.

99) *Mũndũ mũthingu nĩwa Ngai.*

A righteous man belongs to God.

100) *Mũndũ mwĩhia tiwa Ngai.*

A sinner does not belong to God.

The opposite of *mũthingu* (righteous) that will be selected here is *mwĩhia* (sinner). The context given by the noun ‘God’ gives the sentence a religious touch that gives the hearer a clue to the right opposite thus eliminating all the other antagonistic senses like *mũtharia* (fornicator), *mũregi* (rebel), *mũmaraya* (prostitute), and *mũũragani* (murderer). The word *mwĩhia* (sinner)

attains autonomy and it opens up the *Wĩhia* (Sin), *Mwĩhia* (Sinner) and *Ũthingu* (Righteousness) sub frames with their frame elements that will assist in the assignment of meaning.

The other boundary effect is **compositional autonomy**. This refers to the independence a word gets from its composition or position of modification in a sentence.

Consider the following example.

101) *Maria arĩ mũthingu akĩhika.*

Mary was righteous when getting married.

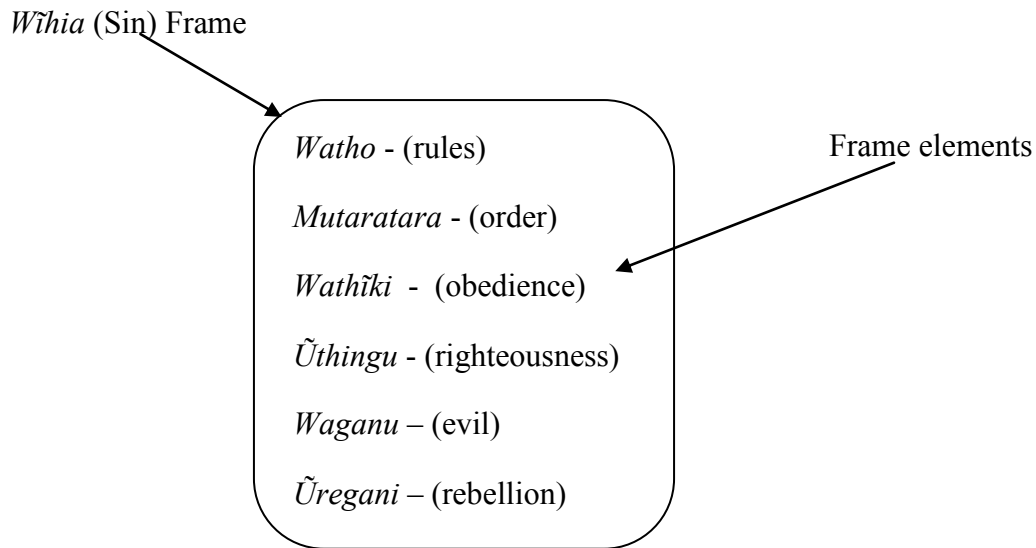
The fact that the word *mũthingu* (righteous) is used in a composition with the word *akĩhika* (when getting married) forces the sense *mũthingu* (righteous) to take a meaning which relates to marriage. Therefore the opposite chosen will be *mũtharia* (fornicator) because of the relationship between ‘marriage’ and ‘sex’. As explained earlier, the sense chosen will attain autonomy and have its frames and frame elements as will be seen in the following section.

#### **Frame and frame elements of *Mwĩhia* (sinner) and *Mũthingu* (righteous)**

A listener will open the *WĨHIA* (SIN) FRAME in his mind when he comes across either of the terms *mwĩhia* (sinner) and *mũthingu* (righteous) as illustrated in example (101) repeated below which will guide him in the choice of an appropriate antonym for either of the terms.

102) *Maria arĩ mũthingu akĩhika.*

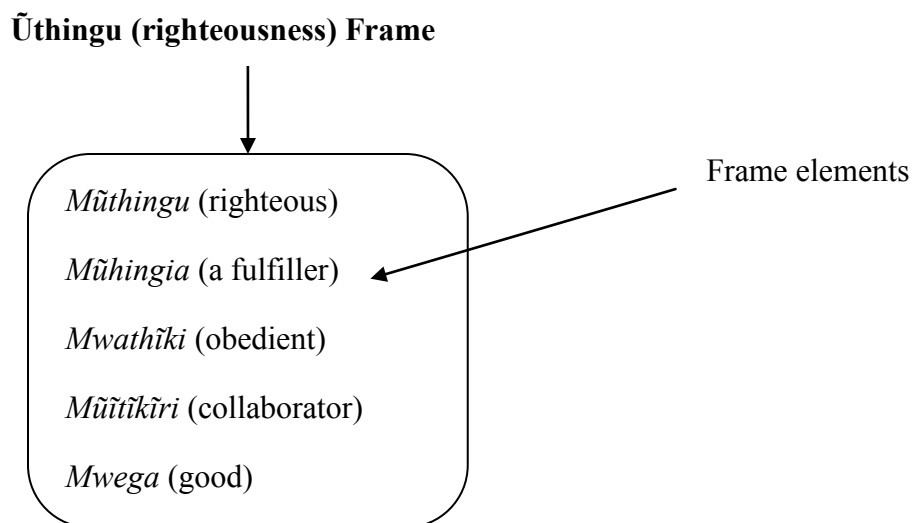
Mary was righteous when getting married.



**Diagram 8: The Frame elements of *Wĩhia***

After the hearer opens the *Wĩhia* (sin) frame, the right frame element will be chosen which will attain autonomy as earlier explained and consequently have its own elements. The *ŨTHINGU* (RIGHTEOUSNESS) FRAME will be opened by a hearer as a consequence of his search for the antonym of *wĩhia* (sin) in speech as illustrated below.

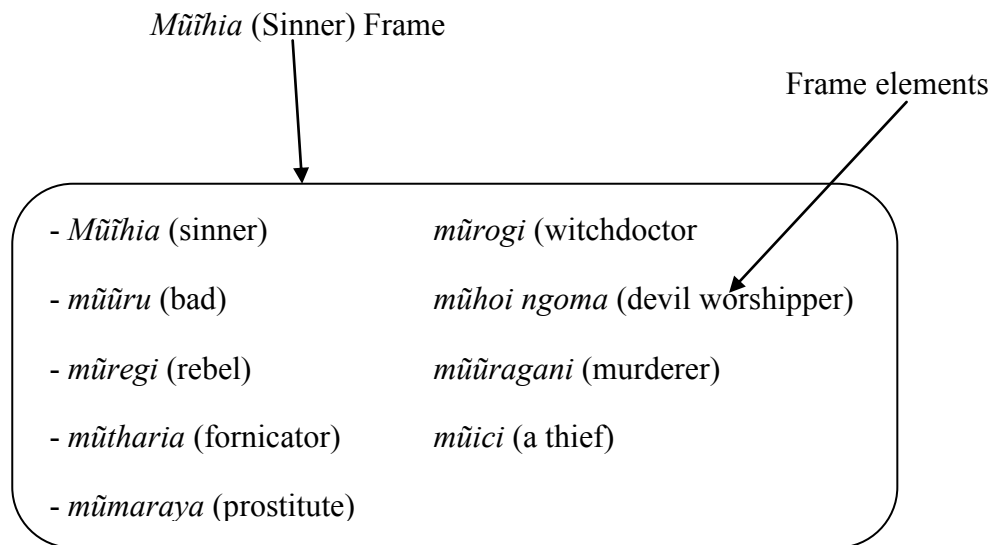
- 103) *Ararĩ mũndu wĩna wĩhia mũingĩ.*  
 He was a person full of sin.



**Diagram 9: Frame elements of *Ũthingu***

The hearer will also make available the *MWĪHIA* (SINNER) sub Frame when he encounters the word *mwīhia* (sinner) in a sentence as illustrated by sentence (100) repeated below.

- 104) *Mūdũ mwīhia tiwa Ngai.*  
A sinner does not belong to God.



**Diagram 10: Frame elements of *Mūīhia* (sinner)**

The following are more illustrations of complementaries in Gĩkuyu.

**49. *Kahĩ* – *Kairĩtu***

**Boy – Girl**

In the structural approach to antonyms, the word *kahĩ* (boy) is considered as the prototype antonym of the word *kairĩtu* since without context it is the only available possibility. Consider examples (8&9) as repeated below.

- 105) *Kana gakwa nĩ kahĩ.*  
My child is a boy.
- 106) *Kana gakwa nĩ kairĩtu.*  
My child is a girl.

As earlier mentioned, in Gĩkũyũ the terms *kahĩ* (boy) and *kairĩtu* (girl) have cultural connotations determined by the speaker, hearer and occasion and therefore call for context to be understood. For instance a newly born baby boy would have the parent refer to him as:

107) *Gaka nĩ **kahĩĩ** gakwa.*

This is my son.

The antonym of *kahĩĩ* (boy) from the above example is *kairĩtu* (girl) and it is based on the premise of the diminutive form and the age as seen in the following sentence.

108) *Gaka nĩ **kairĩtu** gakwa.*

This is my daughter.

In another context where culture is in force, the term *kahĩĩ* refers to a boy child who is not circumcised and the antonym becomes *karĩgũ* (uncircumcised girl - considered vulgar).

The term *kahĩĩ* (boy) which is in diminutive form also has *kĩhĩĩ* (a big uncircumcised boy) as one of its antonyms since it is its augmentative form. Consider the following examples.

109) ***Kahĩĩ** kau nĩkarabatara ndagĩtarĩ.*

That small boy requires a doctor.

110) ***Kĩhĩĩ** kũ nĩkĩrabatara ndagĩtarĩ.*

That big boy requires a doctor.

It should also be noted that the terms *kahĩĩ* and *kĩhĩĩ* are used interchangeably in most speech contexts to refer to any size of a boy depending on the speaker and their relationship to the boy. The following is an illustration.

111) *Gĩkĩ nĩ **kĩhĩĩ** giakwa.*

This is my son. (A father referring to his son irrespective of size or age)

Still on the circumcision context, another angle emerges where *kahĩĩ* contrasts with *mwanake* (a circumcised young man) as seen in the following examples.

112) *Haha tũtirenda **tũhĩĩ**.*

We don't want lads here.

113) *Haha tũrenda **anake** tu.*

Here we want only circumcised boys.

The term is also used antonymously with *mũthuuri* in the context of the cultural council of elders (*kĩama*). A man who has not given out some goats to the *kĩama* is deemed a lad (*Kahĩĩ*) and is usually frowned at in the cultural ceremonies. Consider the following examples:

114) *Kimani nĩ **mũthuuri** wa kĩama.*

Kimani is a man of the council.

115) *Kimani nĩ **kahĩĩ** ndangĩtũmwo kĩama.*

Kimani can't be sent to a case since he is a boy.

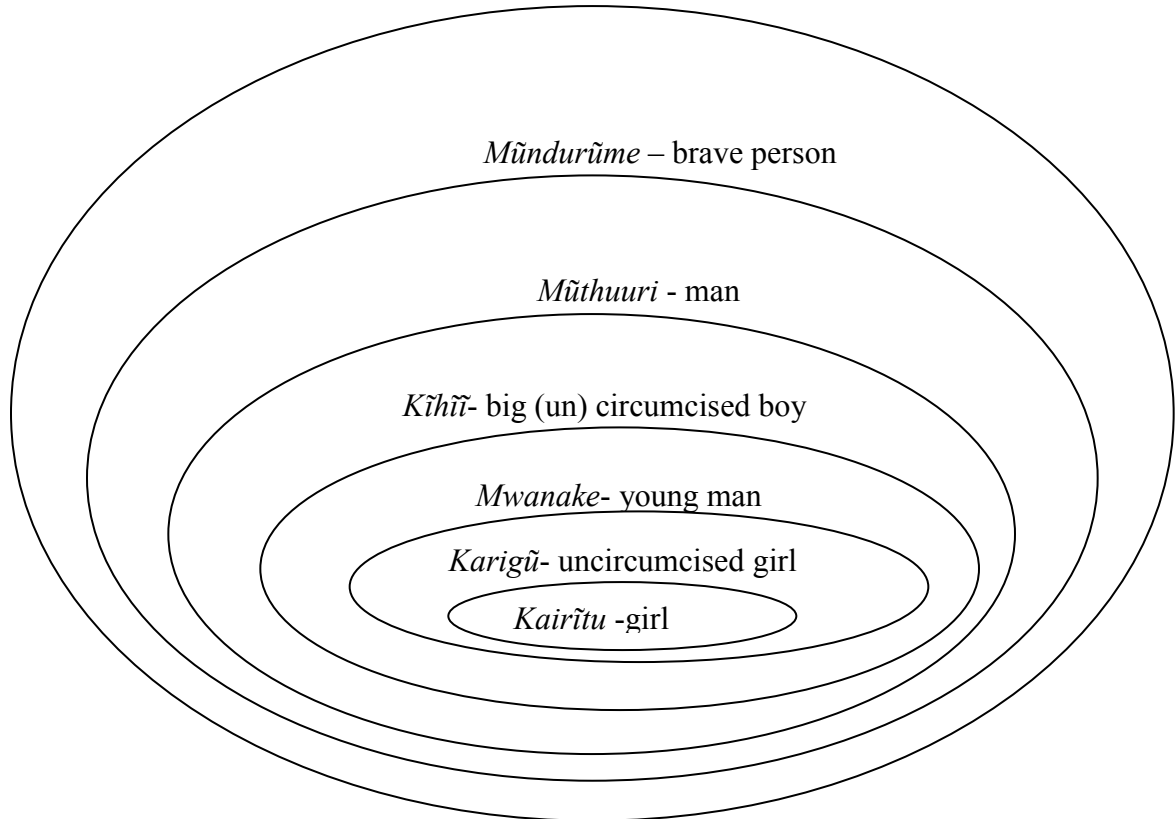
The sentence below (116) brings another sense of the term *Kahĩĩ*.

116) *Mũthuuri wakwa ti kahĩĩ nĩahotire kũũraga mũrũthi ũcio.*  
My husband is not a boy since he managed to kill the lion.

117) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mundurume nĩahotire kũũraga mũrũthi ũcio.*  
My husband is brave since he managed to kill the lion.

In the examples above (116&117), the word *kahĩĩ* is antonymous to *mũndũrũme* (a brave person or narrowed to a brave and strong man).

The following is an illustration of the radial categories of the antonyms of *Kahĩĩ* (boy).



**Diagram 11 Radial categories of the antonyms of *Kahĩĩ* (boy)**

From the illustration above, the gender aspect is selected as the base of the antonyms of *kahĩĩ* ‘boy’ due to the obvious physical differences between the male and the female (for instance: a child who is male or female) hence *kairĩtu*. The next antonym *karigũ* (uncircumcised girl) is

related to *kahĩĩ* on the cultural practice of the Gĩkũyũ where the term *kahĩĩ* means a non-circumcised young male. Still on the circumcision front is the antonym *mwanake* which means a circumcised young man. The antonym *kĩhĩĩ* is derived from the comparison based on size where *kahĩĩ* is a small boy and *kĩhĩĩ* a big boy (though in most speech contexts the two are used interchangeably without a regard to the size). The further the antonyms move from the prototype the more the context is called upon to render meaning. This is seen in the antonyms *mũthuuri* (man) and *mũndũrũme* (a man or a brave person). *Mũthuuri* in this context is a deviation from the cultural premise of circumcision where *kahĩĩ* no longer refers to a non-circumcised male but to one who is mature and circumcised but has not performed some cultural requirements of being an ‘elder’. *Mũndũrũme* is a term that is used to refer to men on a general level and also to any person male or female that is brave while *kahĩĩ* is used to refer to a cowardly person.

### Boundary effects

When a hearer hears the word *kahĩĩ* ‘boy’ or *kairĩtu* ‘girl’ in the absence of context, all the senses of their opposites as discussed above become available. This implies that all these senses will be competing for attention and it is only one that will be selected depending on the context it has been used in. This is referred to as **attentional autonomy**. Consider the following example (112) as discussed earlier.

118) *Haha tũtirenda tũhĩĩ.*

We don’t want lads here.

The hearer will not understand the sense of the antonym implied in this sentence without the requisite context. For instance in the following sentence (119), the context provided by the phrase ‘*athuri a kĩaama*’ (council of elders) eliminates competition from the construal of other antonyms other than *mũthuuri* (man) thus creating autonomy since to Gĩkũyũ culture, as earlier explained, a man (whether circumcised or not) is deemed a lad if he has not fulfilled his cultural obligations of becoming an elder.

119) *Haha harĩ athuri a kiama tũtirenda tũhĩĩ.*

In this council of elders we don’t want boys.

**Compositional autonomy** is the other boundary effect. The use of other lexical items with the term *kahĩĩ* helps to create sense autonomy.

120) *Mũici na kũhĩĩ akenaga kĩa rua.*

Someone who steals with a lad celebrates (when the lad is circumcised).

From this example, *kīhī* (boy) is likely to elicit antonyms like *mūthuuri* (man), *kairītu* (girl) and *mwanake* (circumcised young man) in the absence of the phrase ‘*kīa rua*’ (when circumcised). Therefore, the presence in the construction, of the phrase ‘*kīa rua*’ ‘when circumcised’ enables the hearer to construe the antonym *mwanake* (circumcised young man) locking out all the other possibilities. Another example of compositional autonomy is as shown below.

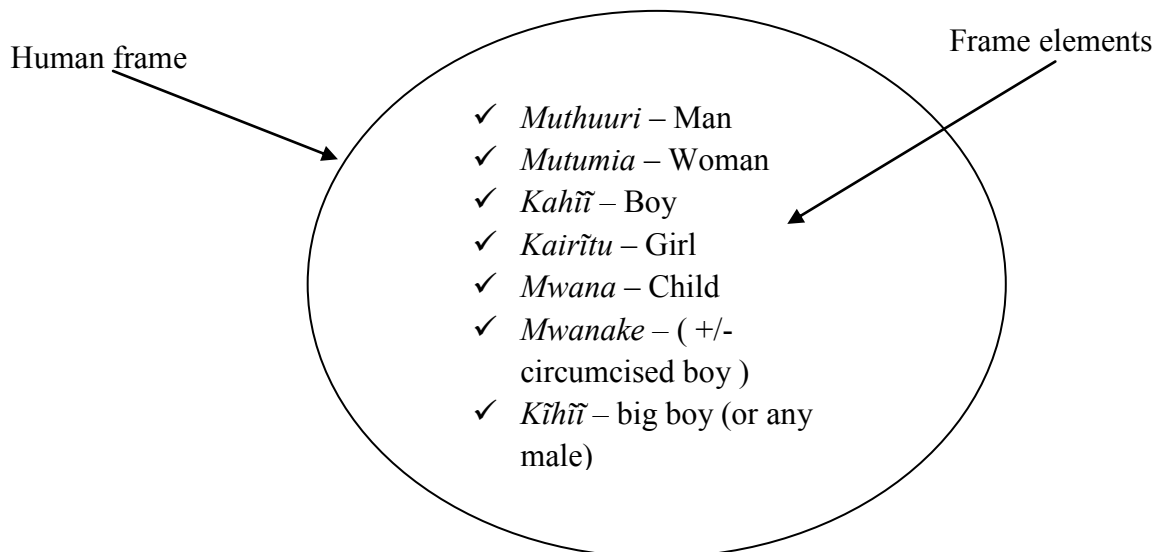
121) *Kana gakwa nī kahī ti kairītu.*

My child is a boy and not a girl.

The above example *contrasts* the pair of antonyms *kahī* (boy) and *kairītu* (girl) providing the context under which the sense boundary is achieved hence eliminating the possibility that the construed antonym of *kahī* is *karīgū* and not *kairītu*.

### Frame and frame elements of *kahī* and *kairītu*

As mentioned above, when a word attains autonomy it creates a sense boundary which enables it to evoke a frame with its elements that help in assigning meaning to the word. For instance a hearer listening to the mention of either *kahī* (boy) or *kairītu* (girl) will open in his mind different frames and their frame components. The first would be the HUMAN FRAME which is illustrated below.



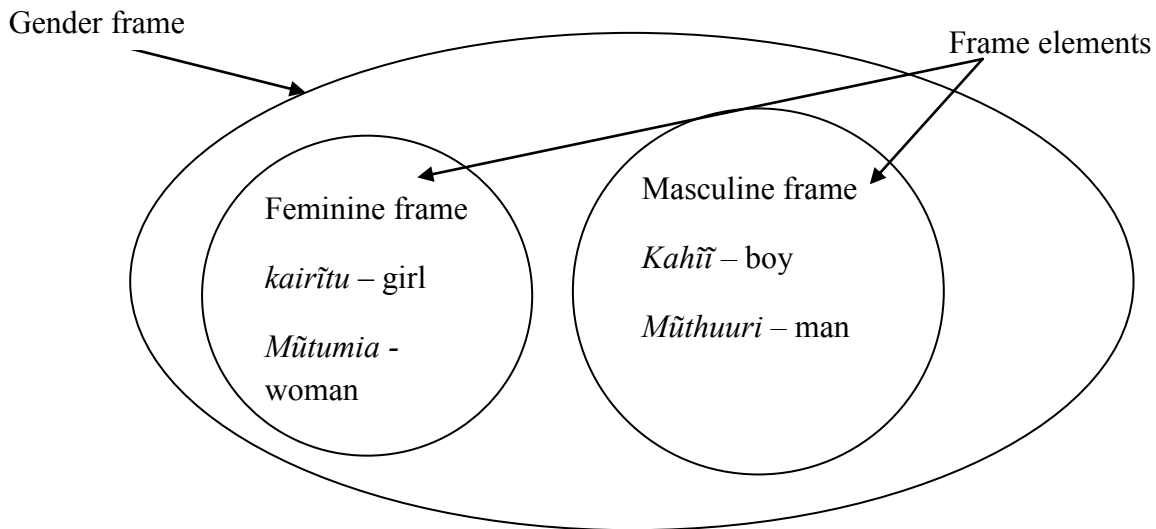
### Diagram 12 Human frame

The other frame evoked by the two terms is the GENDER FRAME. When the hearer gets either of the terms he opens the human frame first as the umbrella frame then sorts out the elements



therein. As discussed earlier, the components identified in the frame will be given boundaries depending on the context and autonomy will be attained which will then allow them to have their frames and their elements as illustrated by sentence (121) above as repeated below.

- 122) *Kana gakwa nĩ kahĩ ti kairĩtu.*  
 My child is a boy and not a girl.

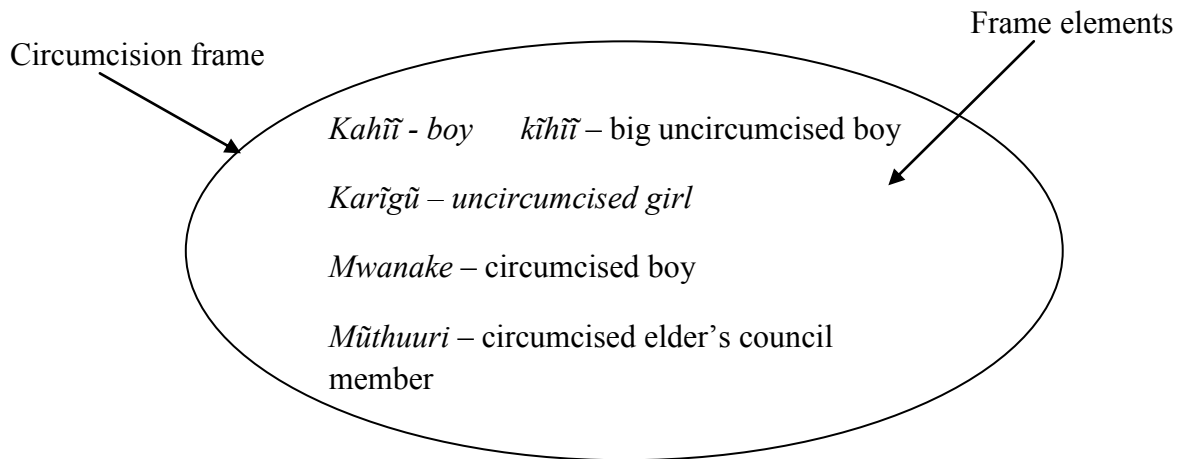


**Diagram 13 Gender frame**

The gender frame above contains two frames embedded in one since gender is a binary concept. A hearer would not understand either of the elements in the different frames (feminine or masculine) without understanding the umbrella gender frame.

The other frame evoked by the two terms is the CIRCUMCISION FRAME. Every language has a repertoire of adjectives that denote cultural entities like the rites of passage and life stages and therefore every native speaker would have the knowledge and experience connected to and with the culture domain as illustrated by sentence (115) as repeated below.

- 123) *Kimani nĩ kahĩ ndangĩtũmwo kĩama.*  
 Kimani can't be sent to a case since he is a boy.



**Diagram 14 circumcision frame**

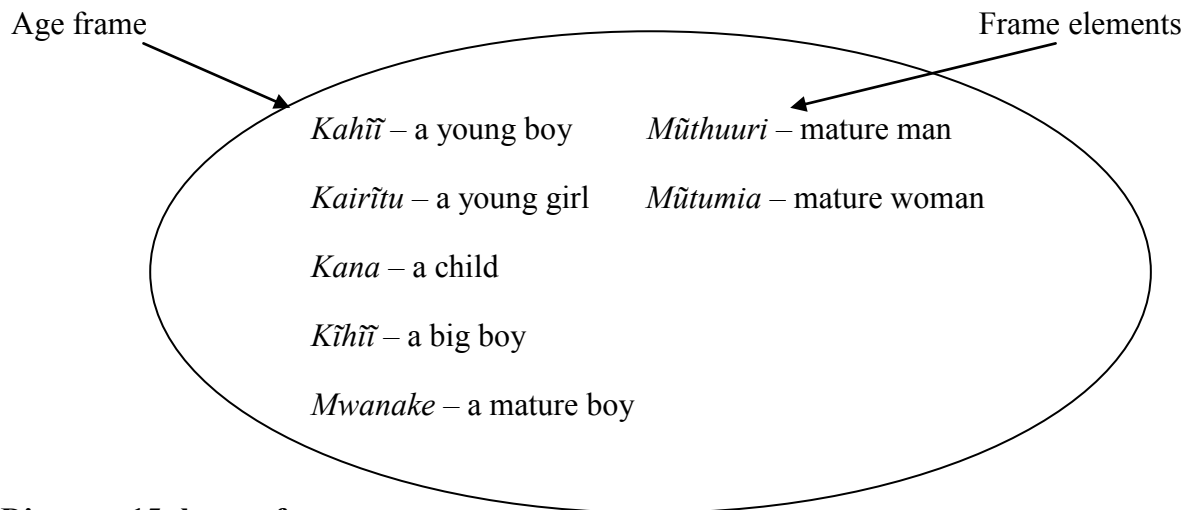
Another frame evoked by two terms is the AGE FRAME arising from the diminutive form attributed to the prefix ‘*ka*’ as used in the two terms *kahĩĩ* (boy) and *kairĩtu* (girl) as exemplified by the sentences (105&107) as repeated below.

124) *Kana gakwa nĩ kahĩĩ.*

My child is a boy.

125) *Kana gakwa nĩ kairĩtu.*

My child is a girl.

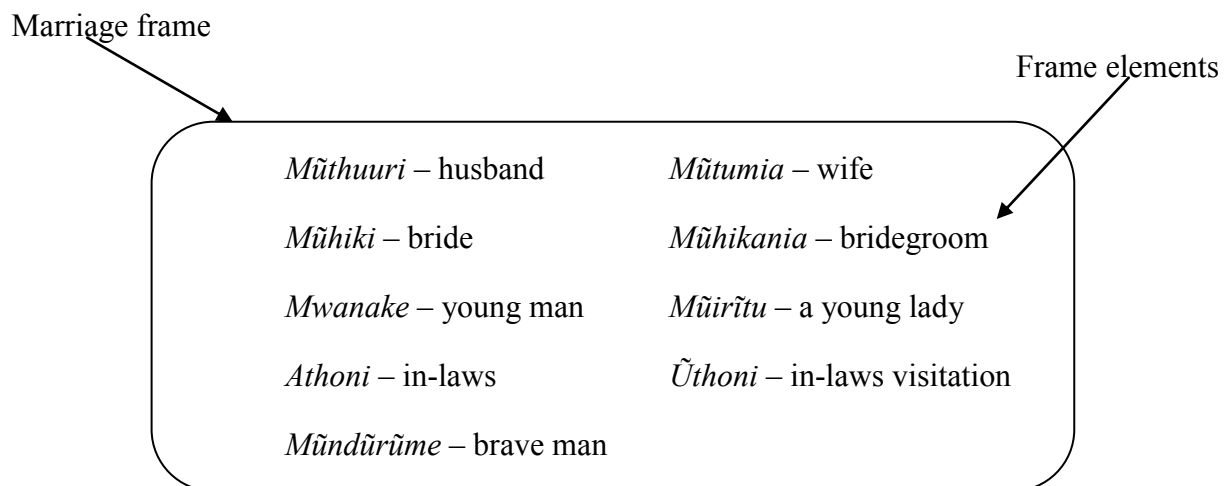


**Diagram 15 the age frame**

The MARRIAGE FRAME is opened by sentence (116) as repeated below following the use of the phrase ‘*mũthuuri wakwa*’ (my husband).

- 126) *Mũthuuri wakwa ti kahĩ nĩahotire kũũraga mũrũthi ũcio.*  
 My husband is not a boy since he managed to kill the lion.

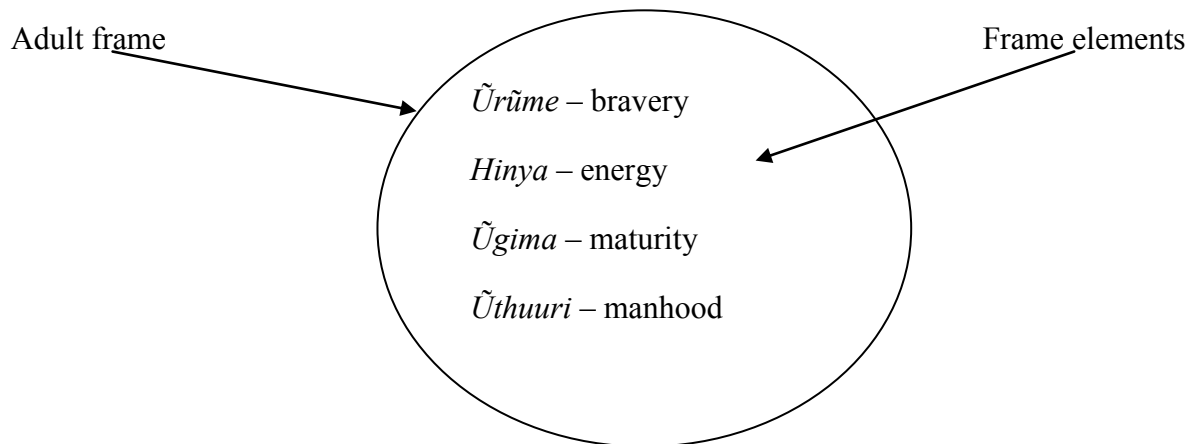
When a hearer hears the sentence above the phrase *mũthuuri wakwa* ‘my husband’ evokes the *marriage frame* and the hearer construes the possible antonyms of *kahĩ* (boy) from the frame elements of the marriage frame opened in his mind, following his experience and background knowledge on the language and actual happenings in the society (encyclopedic entries). *Mũndũrũme* (brave man) will therefore be chosen as the antonym of *kahĩ* (boy) since it fits the requirements of the speaker’s meaning leaving all the other elements in the frame. Consider the illustration below.



**Diagram 16 marriage frame**

The ADULT FRAME is evoked by the hearer when he hears the terms ‘*mũthuuri wakwa*’ (my husband), ‘*mũndũrũme*’ (brave man) and ‘*ti kahĩ*’ (not a boy). The assumption here is that marriage is only allowed to adults thus the terms *mũthuuri* (man), *mũndũrũme* brave (man) and ‘*ti kahĩ*’ (not a boy) all refer to adults. This is illustrated by the sentence below.

- 127) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũndũrũme ti kahĩ nĩahotire kũũraga mũrũthi ũcio.*  
 My husband is brave and not a boy since he managed to kill the lion.



**Diagram 17 adult frame**

The hearer construes the antonym of ‘*kahĩĩ*’ (boy) in this context to be *mũndũrũme* (brave man) which is an element of the *Ũrũme* (bravery) sub frame present in the Adult frame, when he opens the adult frame in his mind and considers the frame elements associated with the term *mũndũrũme*. According to the sentence the woman acknowledges the strength in her husband which makes him kill a lion.

The following is another illustration of complementaries in Gĩkuyu.

**50) *Mũthuuri – Mũtumia***

**Man – Woman**

In chapter two section 2.1.2, it was noted that given context the noun *mũthuuri* (man) would not only take *mũtumia* (woman) as its antonym but also other antonyms like *mwana* (child), *kĩhĩĩ* (uncircumcised male), *mũthuuri kĩhĩĩ* (not a member of the council of elders), and *mwanake* (unmarried man). Consider the sentences (10&11) as repeated below.

128) *Ũyũ nĩ mũthuuri wa kanitha.*

This is a **man** of the church.

129) *Ũyũ nĩ mũtumia wa kanitha.*

This is a **woman** of the church.

In a church context as illustrated above, the terms bring a distinction between the ‘types’ of man and woman in the sense that two domains are in existence here which are antagonistic: *mũthuuri wa kanitha* (a man of the church) is antonymous to *mũthuuri ũtarĩ wa kanitha* (a man without a

church) and *mũtumia wa kanitha* (a woman of the church) with *mũtumia utarĩ wa kanitha* (a woman without a church).

130) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ wa kanitha.*

My husband goes to church.

131) *Mũthuuri wakwa ti wa kanitha.*

My husband does not go to church.

The sentences above illustrate the hearer's construal of the antonym of 'of the church' to be 'without a church' or a man that does not attend church.

The same church context also brings in another aspect of the term *mũthuuri* (man) to mean a church elder which will therefore make the hearer construe a different antonym of the term *mũthuuri*.

132) *Athuuri akanitha matigwo thutha wa mitha.*

The church elders to be left after the mass.

The implication in the above sentence is that there are other men in the church that are not church elders.

Biologically and socially *mũthuuri* (man) is an adult and hence antonymous to *mwana*.

133) *Ũyũ nĩ mũthuuri ti mwana.*

This is a man and not a child.

The Gĩkũyũ culture as mentioned earlier considers circumcision as one of the tests for maturity hence a *mũthuuri* (man) is one that is circumcised and consequently becomes antonymous to *kahĩĩ or kĩhĩĩ* (uncircumcised male). The sentences (121&122) as repeated below give an illustration.

134) *Kimani nĩ mũthuuri wa kĩaama.*

Kimani is a man of the council.

135) *Kimani nĩ kĩhĩĩ ndangĩtũmwo kĩaama.*

Kimani can't be sent to a case since he is a boy.

*Mũthuuri* (man) also has another antonym in *mwanake* (young man) in the context of marriage. A hearer construing the antonym of the term *mũthuuri* (man) would select from an adult frame an element commensurate with the status 'married'.

136) *Mwangi nĩ mũthuuri wene ti mwanake.*

Mwangi is somebody's husband and not a young man.

As discussed previously, *mũthuuri* (man) has a cultural reference to a man who has fulfilled the obligation of becoming a man and therefore has the antonym of *mũthuuri kīhĩĩ* 'a boy man' or simply *kīhĩĩ* 'boy'. This should be differentiated from the ordinary meaning of *kīhĩĩ* (uncircumcised male) since in the eldership case the man is already circumcised but has 'failed' to become an elder. The following sentence is an illustration.

137) *Mwangi nĩ mũthuuri wa kiama ti kīhĩĩ.*

Mwangi is a member of the council of elders and not a boy.

For a man to qualify to be a Gĩkũyũ council elder he must be circumcised (not a boy) and give to the council a prescribed number of goats in an elaborate ceremony. If one satisfies these, he qualifies to be called *mũthuuri wa kiama* (an elder). The man (whether circumcised or not) who does not fulfill either of the two procedures is deemed a boy '*kīhĩĩ*'. The term *mũthuuri* (man) therefore will not have *mũtumia* (woman) as the opposite but will take *kīhĩĩ* (boy).

The following is an illustration of the above discussion.

### Radial categories of the antonyms of *mũthuuri*

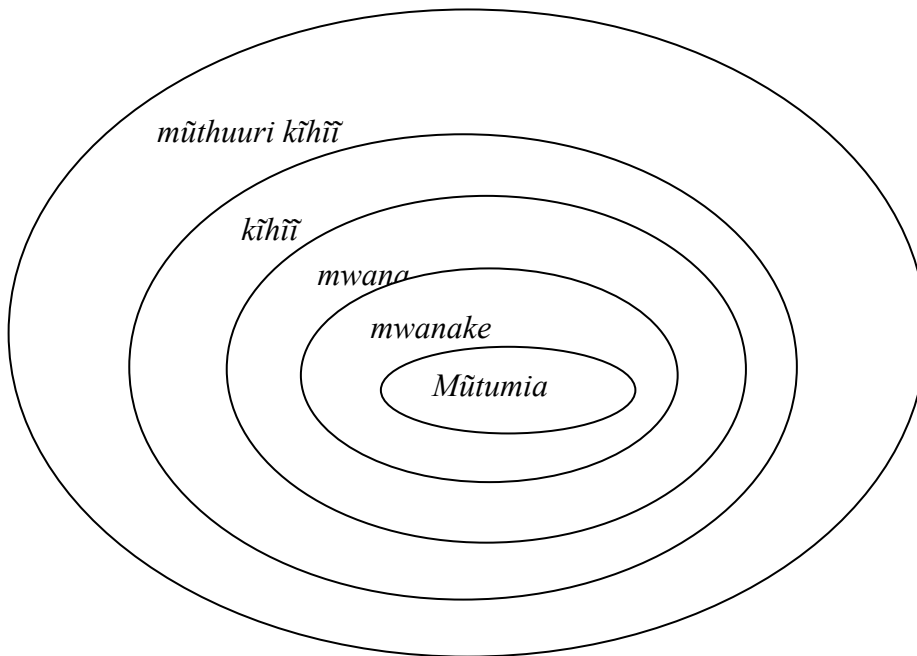


Diagram 18 radial categories of the antonyms of *mũthuuri*

The diagram illustrates the prototype antonym of the term *mũthuuri* (man) with other members in that category. *Mũtumia* (woman) is the underlying prototypical antonym because it does not require context to understand its meaning unlike all the other elements. It is followed by *mwanake* (young man) which contrasts to *mũthuuri* (man) on age, context and the speaker. *Mwanake* (young man) refers to a man who is not yet married but circumcised. He might also be married but still referred to as ‘mwanake’ (young man) by an older person like his father.

*Mwana* (child) is an antonym based on age and it follows *mwanake* in the periphery order. From the cultural perspective, *Kĩhĩĩ* (big boy) is an antonym of *mũthuuri* (man) based on circumcision while *mũthuuri kĩhĩĩ* (a non elder) is based on certain rites performed by the council of elders.

### Boundary Effects

A hearer makes available all the senses of the antonyms of *mũthuuri* (man) and *mũtumia* (woman) as discussed above on hearing the terms in the absence of context. All the available senses will be competing for attention and will reach autonomy on application of relevant context. This is **attentional autonomy** as illustrated by the following sentence.

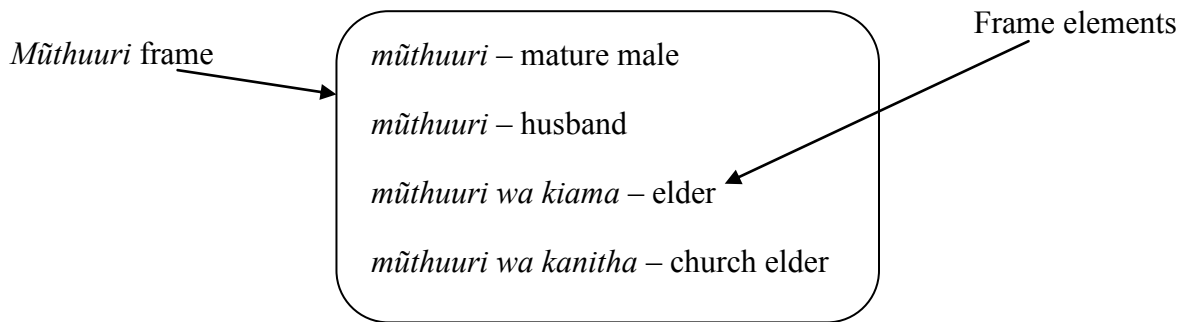
- 138) *Mwangi nĩ mũthuuri wakwa.*  
Mwangi is my husband.

The use of the word ‘*wakwa*’ (my) in the sentence above evokes the antonym of *mũthuuri* (man) in this context to be *mũtumia* (wife) hence providing the sense boundary that gives it autonomy and consequently locking out all the other possible antonyms in the mind of the hearer.

The other sense boundary available here is **compositional autonomy**. For instance in the example repeated below (sentence 133) the term *mũthuuri* (man) appears in a composition with the words ‘*wene ti mwanake*’ (somebody’s...not a young man) which gives it only one meaning of ‘husband’ in that context and therefore allows for a single selection of the antonym *mũtumia* (woman) barring other possibilities.

- 139) *Mwangi nĩ mũthuuri wene ti mwanake.*  
Mwangi is somebody’s husband and not a young man.

**Frame and frame elements of *mũthuuri***

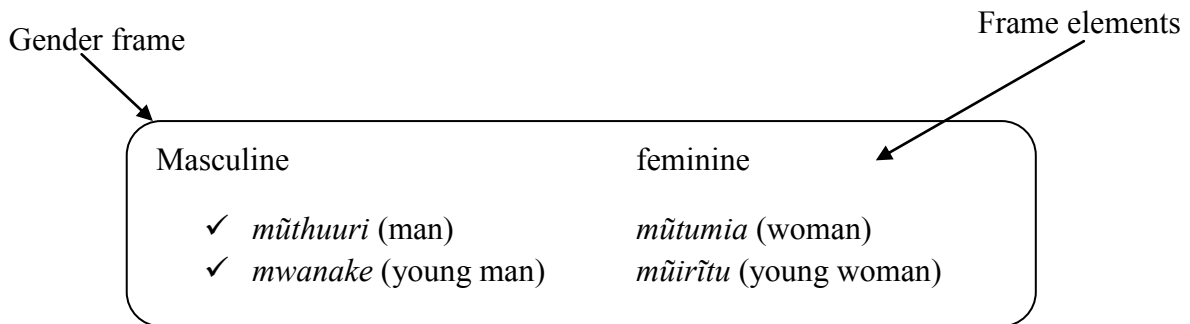


**Diagram 19 *mũthuuri* (man) frame**

A hearer will open in his mind the encyclopedic entries illustrated above when he comes across the term *mũthuuri* (man) after he assigns sense boundary effects and the words attain autonomy. The hearer will then isolate the antonyms of the term *mũthuuri* (man) based on the elements in the *mũthuuri* (man) frame.

The GENDER FRAME will be opened through the term *mũthuuri* (man) as illustrated in the following sentence.

- 140) *Ūyũ nĩ mũthuuri ti mũtumia.*  
This is a man not a woman.

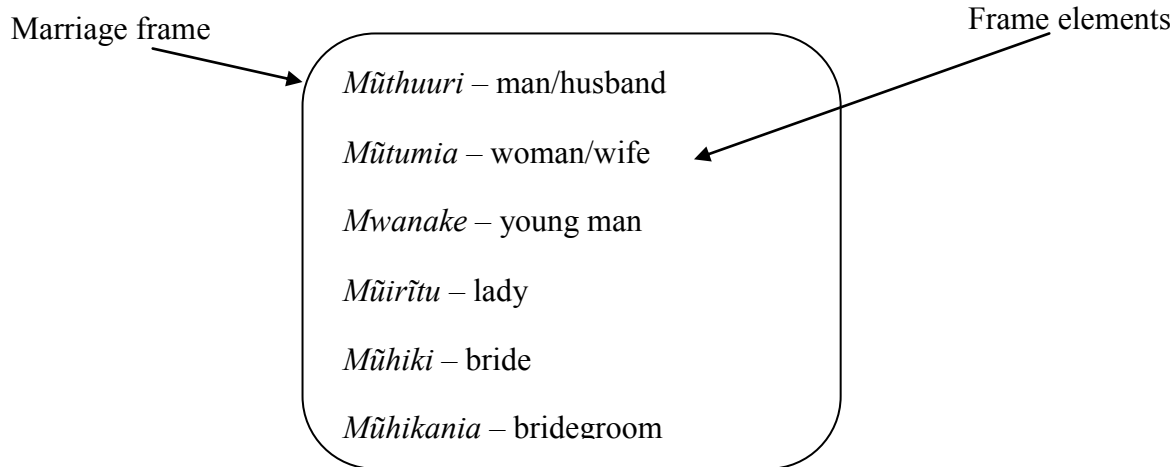


**Diagram 20 gender frame**

The MARRIAGE FRAME is opened by the listener following the mention of ‘*mũthuuri wakwa*’ and he will be guided by the available elements of the frame to identify a relevant antonym as illustrated below.

- 141) *Ūyũ nĩwe mũthuuri wakwa.*  
This is my husband.



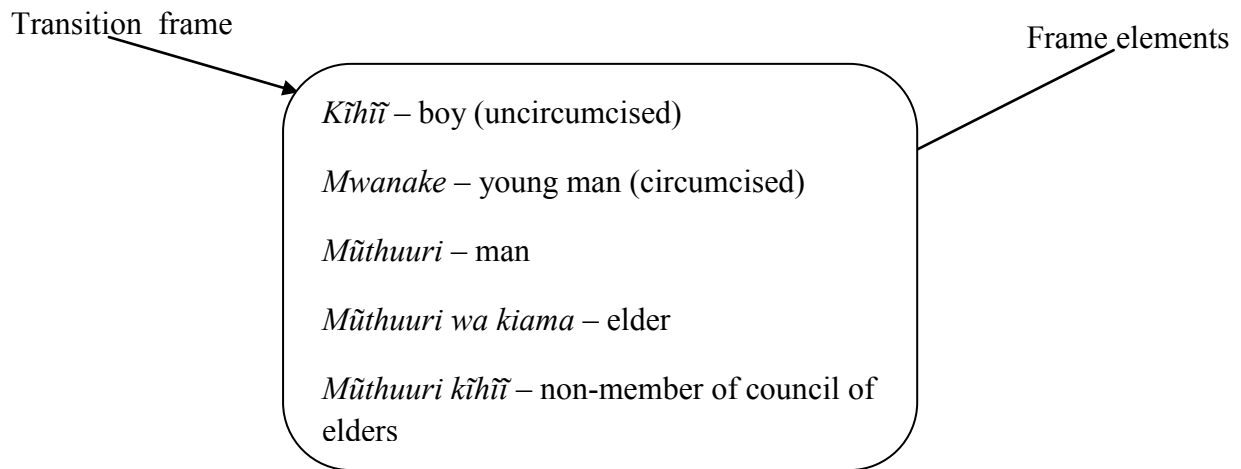


**Diagram 21 marriage frame**

The other frame available to the hearer is the TRANSITION FRAME evoked by ‘*mũthuuri wa kiama*’ as illustrated below. As mentioned earlier, becoming a member of the council of elders is a traditional rite and the hearer must thus be versed with the rites of transition of the Gĩkũyũ to understand the context in which to interpret the meaning of the phrase ‘*mũthuuri wa kiama*’ (council of elders member) and ultimately construe an antonym.

142) *Kimani nĩ mũthuuri wa kĩaama ti mũthuuri kĩhĩĩ.*

Kimani is a man of the council and not a boy.



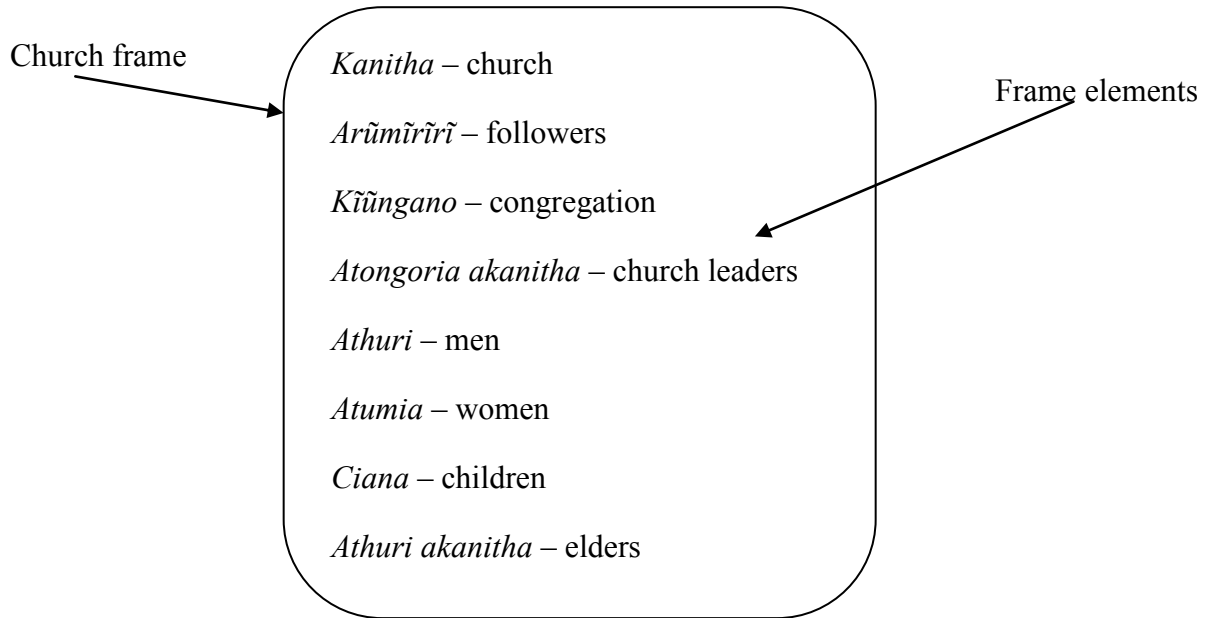
**Diagram 22 Transition frame**

The CHURCH FRAME is also available to the hearer when the phrase ‘*athuuri akanitha*’ (church elders) is mentioned. The hearer must be versed with the experience and knowledge relating to the church to understand the meaning of the term and therefore is able to construe the

relevant antonym after applying context and the word attaining autonomy and having its frame and its elements. This is illustrated by the following sentence.

143) *Athuuri akanitha matigwo thutha wa mitha.*

The church elders to be left after the mass.



**Diagram 23 Church frame**

The hearer in the illustration above chooses the antonym from the elements opened in the church frame where the antonym of *mũthuuri wa kanitha* (church elder) specifically becomes *mũthuuri* (ordinary man or one who attends church but is not a church elder) based on the phrase *wa kanitha* (of the church) and which picks ‘without a church’ (non-engaged in church affairs).

### 3.2 Relation Antonyms

As earlier discussed in chapter 2, these class of oppositeness (relation) is well captured in the above discussion on complementaries since the complementaries show an existing relation between the pairs of opposites like illustrated in *mũthuuri* (man) and *Mũtumia* (woman). It will not therefore be analysed further as a classification in the cognitive approach.

### 3.3 Conclusion

From the discussion on complementaries, it is evident that Gĩkũyũ has complementaries which can be analyzed cognitively. It also emerges that there are prototypical opposites and periphery

opposites which are extensions of the prototype and the use of context helps to draw sense boundaries hence autonomy of the senses and clear opposites derived. Lastly, in the radial categories of the elements of some senses, the prototype only matches in oppositeness with the corresponding prototype but not with the periphery elements.

# CHAPTER 4: COGNITIVE SEMANTICS APPROACH TO OPPOSITENESS: POLAR, EQUIPOLLENT AND OVERLAPPING ANTONYMS.

## 4.0 Introduction

The chapter analyses polar, overlapping and equipollent antonyms using a cognitive semantics approach which is a deviation from the structural approach adopted in chapter two. Antonyms can occur in comparative and superlative degrees for instance in *ndaihu* (long) – *ndaihandaihu* (longer) – *ndaihu biū* (longest) but need to be interpreted in relation to some reference value since antonyms do not exhaustively divide a domain in two (unlike complementaries): there is a neutral area between them which belongs to neither.

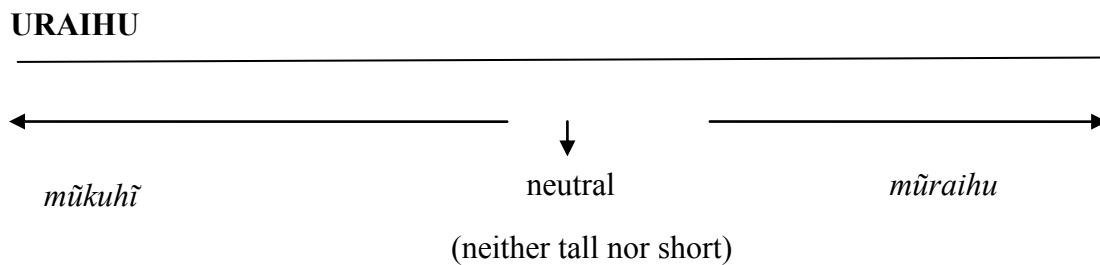


Diagram 24 *ŪraiHU scale*

Section 4.1 looks at polar antonyms, 4.2 looks at overlapping antonyms, section 4.3 looks at equipollent antonyms and section 4.4 is the conclusion.

## 4.1 Polar antonyms

Polar antonyms are those in which the affirmation of one of the antonyms entails the negation of the other for instance *mūraiHU* (tall) implies *timūkuhĩ* (not short), and *mūkuhĩ* (short) implies *timūraiHU* (not tall), Geeraerts (2010:86).

Polar antonyms are fully gradable and occur with modifiers like *hanini* (slightly), *mūno* (very), *makīria* (excessively), and *biū* (totally).

<u>Simple</u>	<u>comparative</u>	<u>superlative</u>
<i>MūraiHU</i> (tall)	<i>muraiharaiHU</i> (taller)	<i>muraiHU biu</i> (tallest)
<i>Mūkuhĩ</i> (short)	<i>mukuhakuhi</i> (shorter)	<i>mukuhi biu</i> (shortest)

1. *aihu – uhĩ*

Tall Short

52) *Mūraihu – Mūkuhĩ*

Tall – Short

Let us look at the following example as previously given in chapter two, example (20).

144) *Mūthuuri ũyũ nĩ mūkuhĩ.*

This man is short.

145) *Mūthuuri ũyũ nĩ mūraihu.*

This man is tall.

The gradability of the word *mūkuhĩ* (short) creates vagueness in the understanding of its opposite which can only be cleared through the use of context under which the term has been used, the speaker and the listener. The word evokes in the mind of the listener possibilities of antonyms like *mūraihu* (tall), *muraiharaihu* (taller) and *muraihu biu* (tallest). As mentioned in other sections of this analysis, the interpretation is dependent on the speaker and the hearer where *mūkuhĩ* (short) may appear to be the *mūraihu* (tall) of the listener.

The term *mūraihu* also exhibits vagueness in its understanding hence the construal of its antonym will require context. Let us consider the following example.

146) *Mūthuuri ũyũ nĩ mūkuhĩ gūkira mūriũ.*

This man is shorter than his son.

As noted earlier, in the absence of context, the construal of the opposite of *mūkuhĩ* (short) is shrouded in vagueness since all the elements in the *URAIHU* (Height) Frame will be available for choice. The phrase ‘*gūkira mūriũ*’ (than his son) gives the context needed to clear the vagueness where the antonym of *mūkuhĩ* (short) will thus be ‘*mūraihu gūkira*’ as illustrated below.

147) *Mūthuuri ũyũ nĩ mūraihu gūkira mūriũ.*

This man is taller than his son.

## Boundary Effects

When a hearer hears the term *mūraiḥu* (tall) all the possible antonyms in the *Ūraiḥu* (height) frame like *mūkuḥi* (short), *mūkuḥakuhĩ* (shorter), *mūkuḥĩ biũ* (shortest), *mūkuḥĩ mũno* (very short) and *mūkuḥĩ makĩria* (extremely short) are opened in his mind and they will all be competing for attention in the midst of vagueness and the absence of context. This is attentional autonomy. Consider the following example (148) as discussed earlier.

148) *Mũthuuri ũyũ nĩ mūraiḥu gũkira mūriũ.*

This man is taller than his son.

The word *mūraiḥu* (tall) in the sentence above without the phrase *gũkira mūriũ* (than his son) evokes all the antonyms in the *Ūraiḥu* (height) frame where all the elements therein, as explained above, will be competing for attention. The phrase ‘*gũkira mūriũ*’ (than his son) in the sentence provides the context necessary to eliminate the construal of all other senses hence the antonym will be *mūkuḥakuhĩ* (shorter). The vagueness is cleared when the sense chosen as the antonym achieves autonomy and consequently keeping all the other possibilities at bay.

Compositional autonomy is evident in the pair of antonyms *mūraiḥu* (tall) and *mūkuḥi* (short). As discussed in the earlier sections, the composition a word finds itself in determines the choice the word makes in its antonym. Consider the following example.

149) *Kimani timūkuḥĩ ta Mwangi.*

Kimani is not as short as Mwangi.

The context of the word *mūkuḥĩ* (short) in the above sentence is a composition bearing the comparison ‘*ta Mwangi*’ (like Mwangi). This creates a sense boundary which limits any other meaning thus eliminating other construals which gives the antonym *mūraiḥu gũkĩra* (taller than) autonomy as the only possible construal in that context. This is illustrated below.

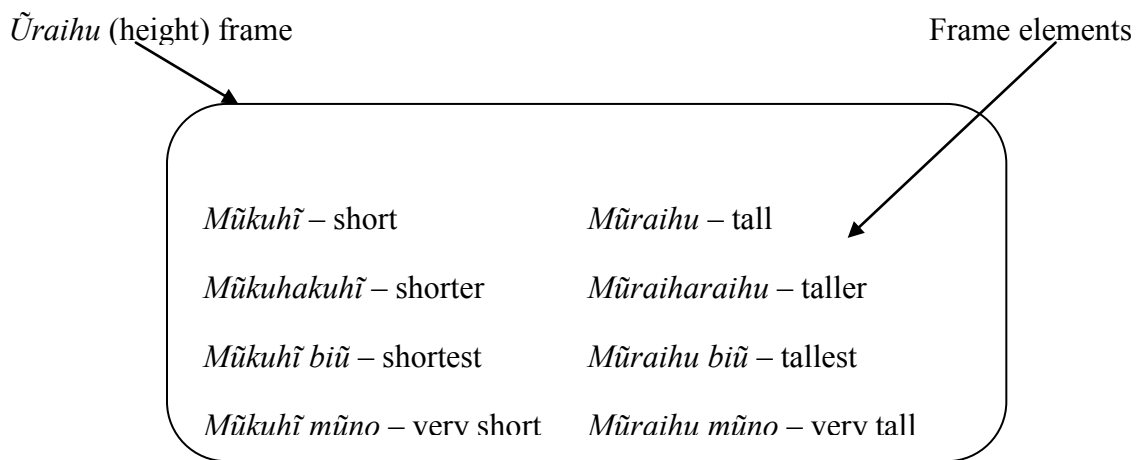
150) *Kimani ni muraiḥu gukira Mwangi.*

Kimani is taller than Mwangi.

## Frame and frame elements of the *ŪRAIHU* (height) FRAME

The following *ŪRAIHU* (height) FRAME will be evoked by a hearer when he comes across either of the terms *mūkuhĩ* (short) or *mūraihu* (tall). The hearer will grapple with all the elements in the frame like *mūkuhĩ* (short), *mūkuhakuhĩ* (shorter), *mūkuhĩ biũ* (shortest), *mūkuhĩ mũno* (very short), *mūraihu* (tall), *mūraiharaihu* (taller), *mūraihu biũ* (tallest), *mūraihu mũno* (very tall) in the search for an appropriate antonym for either of the terms as illustrated in the following sentence.

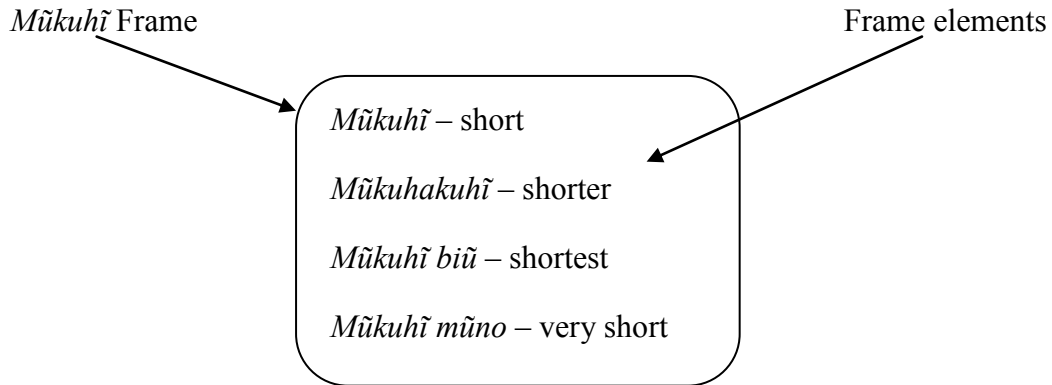
- 151) *Maitũ ti mūraihu na ti mūkuhĩ.*  
 My mother is neither tall nor short.



**Diagram 25** *Ūraihu* (height) frame

The *-UHĨ* (short) FRAME with its elements namely: *mūkuhĩ* (short), *mūkuhakuhĩ* (shorter), *mūkuhĩ biũ* (shortest), and *mūkuhĩ mũno* (very short) is evoked in the mind of a hearer when he comes across the term *mūkuhĩ* (short) in a sentence. The hearer will try to determine the actual meaning of *mūkuhĩ* (short) by using context relevant to his situation through assignment of sense boundary effects until autonomy is attained. The hearer will then isolate the antonym of *mūkuhĩ* based on the elements contained in the sister *-IHU* (tall) frame like *mūraihu* (tall), *mūraiharaihu* (taller), *mūraihu biũ* (tallest) and *mūraihu mũno* (very tall). This is illustrated below.

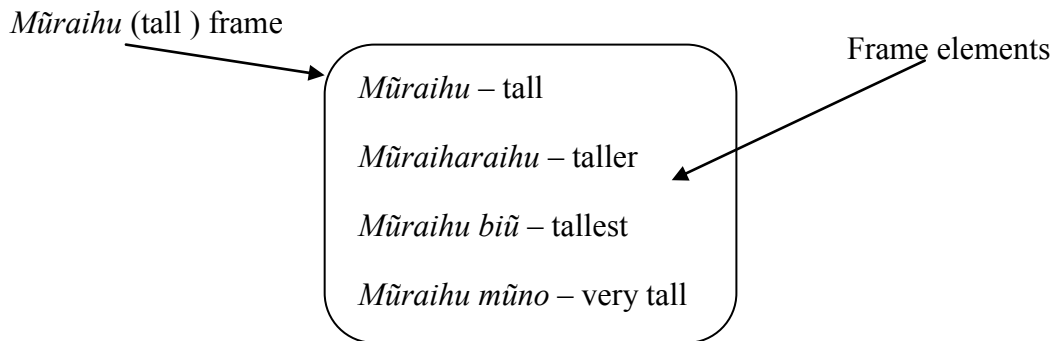
- 152) *Mũngai ndangĩkinyĩra matunda tondũ nĩ mūkuhĩ mũno.*  
 Mungai can't reach the fruits since he is very short.



**Diagram 26 Mũkuhĩ (short) Frame**

The *-IHU* (TALL) FRAME will be opened in the mind of the hearer upon hearing the word *mũraihu*. The elements therein like *mũraihu* (tall), *mũraiharaihu* (taller), *mũraihu biũ* (tallest) and *mũraihu mũno* (very tall) will guide him in determining the appropriate antonym after determining the exact meaning through use of sense boundaries and autonomy as illustrated in the following example.

- 153) *Mũtumia wakwa nĩ mũraihu kũngĩra.*  
 My wife is taller than I.



**Diagram 27 -ihu (tall) frame**

The hearer in sentence (156) above clears the vagueness through the use of the comparison ‘than I’ hence the meaning construed of *mũraihu kũngĩra* ‘taller than I’ is ‘taller’ and therefore the antonym of *mũraihu* (tall) in this context is *mũkuhahukuhĩ* (shorter) and not *mũkuhĩ* (short).

**2. Nene - Nini**

**Big – Small**

53) *Nene – Nini*

**big – small**



Let us look at the following sentences (154&155) as previously given in chapter two.

- 154) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnene.*  
My husband is big. (Being said by a slight woman)
- 155) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnini.*  
My husband is small. (Being said by a monstrous woman)

As earlier stated, the two sentences (154&155) may look like opposites yet on a closer look evoke a different outlook dictated by the context. To the slight woman, ‘big’ may be a dwarf or a midget as compared to the ‘small’ coming from the monstrous woman who might actually be gigantic to the slight woman.

At another angle, the gradability of the adjectives introduces vagueness to the sentences hence the need for context in the search for appropriate antonyms. Let us consider the following examples as given above without the explanations.

- 156) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnene.*  
My husband is big.
- 157) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnini.*  
My husband is small.

To a listener, the adjective *mũnene* (big) evokes possible antonyms like *mũnini* (small), *mũninanini* (smaller) and *mũnini biũ* (smallest). The speaker is judged according to the immediate context of her speech to enable the listener construe the appropriate meaning and follow that with an appropriate antonym. The vagueness in the above sentences can therefore be eliminated through giving them context as illustrated in the following sentence.

- 158) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnene gũkĩra Moi.*  
My husband is *bigger than Moi*.

The phrase ‘*gũkĩra Moi*’ (than Moi) gives the necessary context under which the construal of the meaning is based and as a result the antonym will be *mũnini gũkĩra* (smaller than) as illustrated below.

- 159) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnini gũkĩra Moi.*  
My husband is smaller than Moi.

## Boundary effects

The mention of the words *mũnene* (big) and *mũnini* (small) evoke in the mind of the listener the *UNENE* (Size) Frame and its constituents. All the elements in that frame like *nene* (big), *nenanene* (bigger), *nene biũ* (biggest), *nene makĩria* (excessively big) and *nene hanini* (slightly bigger); *nini* (small), *ninanini* (smaller), *nini hanini* (slightly smaller), *nini biũ* (smallest) *nini mũno* (very small) and *nini makĩria* (excessively small) will be in competition in the absence of context when the hearer wants to determine the antonyms. This is the attentional autonomy. Consider the following example as illustrated earlier (159).

160) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnene gukĩra Moi.*

My husband is *bigger than* Moi.

In the sentence above, the word *mũnene* (big) creates vagueness and it evokes all the possible antonyms from the *NINI* (small) sub-frame when context is unavailable but the phrase ‘*gukĩra Moi*’ (than Moi) gives the necessary context to enable the construal of the right antonym from the size frame and clear the vagueness. When this happens the antonym *mũnini gukĩra* (smaller than) attains autonomy and all the other possible construals are kept at bay.

The word also attains autonomy when used in certain compositions hence compositional autonomy. Consider the following example.

161) *Mũthuuri wakwa nĩ mũnene biũ ta Moi.*

My husband is big like Moi.

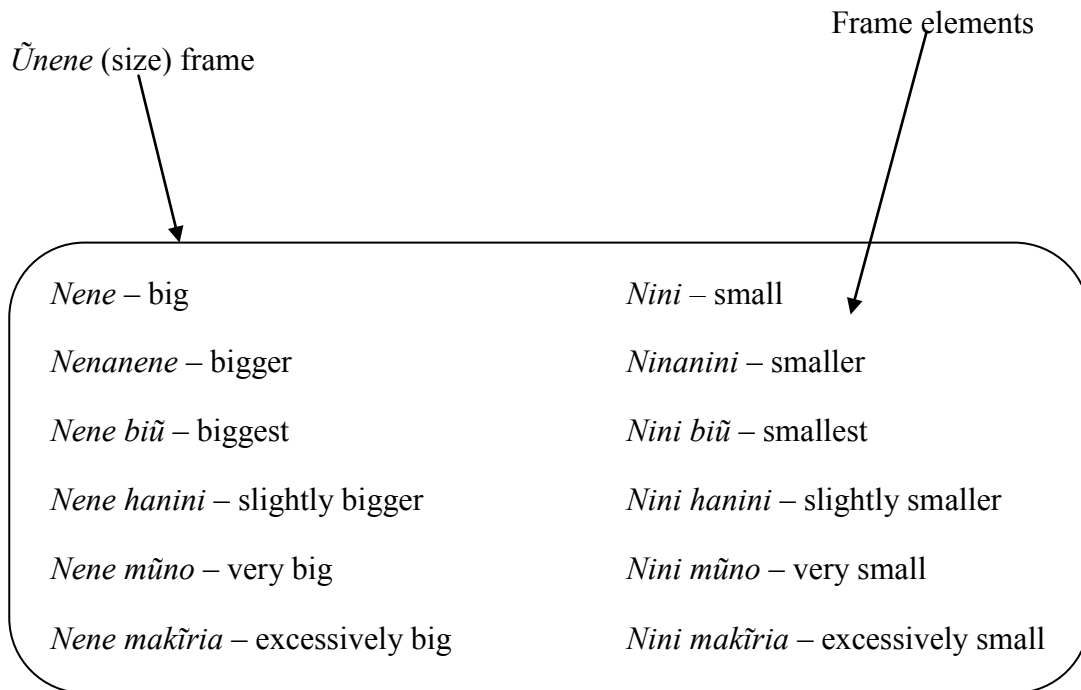
The adjective phrase *mũnene biũ* (biggest) appears in a sentence with the preposition ‘*ta*’ (like) which chooses the meaning construed by the hearer and it gives it a sense boundary. Though the husband is tall, the basis of that height is judged in accordance with the height of another subject (Moi) hence the context. This clears the vagueness and the antonym chosen, ‘*mũnini biũ ta...*’ (small like...), will have sense autonomy.

The following is an illustration of the frames of *nene* (big) and *nini* (small) in the size frame.

## Frame and frame elements of the *Ũnene* (size) frame

As discussed earlier, once a word attains autonomy it evokes a frame and its frame elements which helps in its interpretation. The *ŨNENE* (SIZE) FRAME will be opened in the mind of a listener when the terms *nene* (big) or *nini* (small) are mentioned. This is illustrated below.

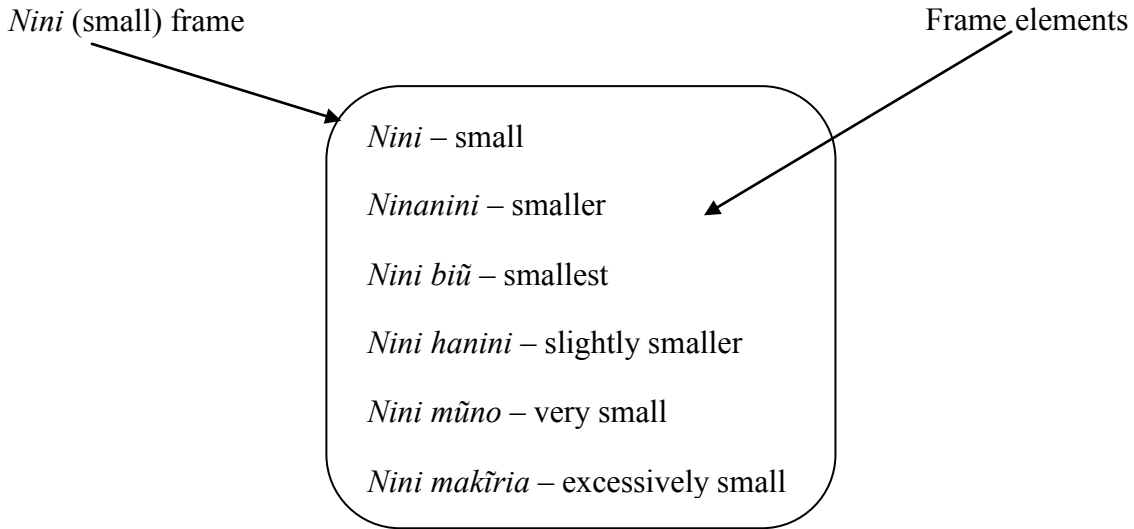
- 162) *Nyũmba yaku nĩ **nene** kana nĩ **nini** gũkĩra yakwa?*  
 Is your house bigger or smaller than mine?



**Diagram 28 *Unene* (size) frame**

From the size frame two frames are embedded namely ‘the small’ and ‘the big’. The SMALL FRAME and its elements: *nini*, *ninanini*, *nini biu*, *nini hanini*, *nini muno* and *nini makiria* will be opened in the mind of the hearer when she hears the word *nini* (small). This will guide her in determining the meaning of *nini* (small) according to the context it has been used in and then the antonym will follow upon the word attaining a sense boundary and autonomy.

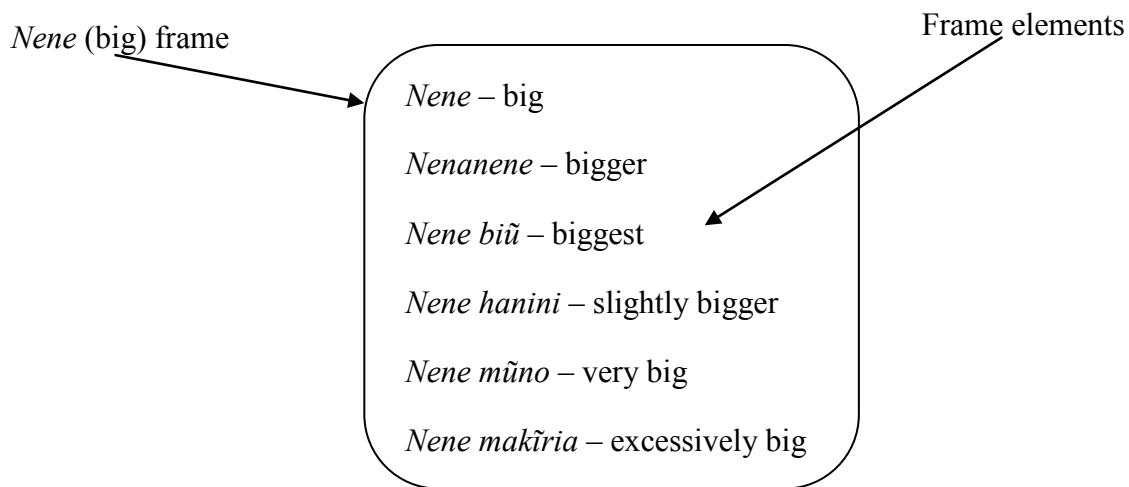
- 163) *Nyũmba yakwa nĩ **nini** gũkĩra yaku.*  
 My house is smaller than yours.



**Diagram 29 *Nini* (small) frame**

The NENE (BIG) FRAME with its elements (*nene*, *nenanene*, *nene biũ*, *nene makĩria*, *nene mũno* and *nene hanini*) will be available to the hearer’s mind upon hearing the adjective *nene* (big). The specific adjective chosen from among the elements of the frame according to the context will determine the antonym that will be chosen from the sister frame (*nini*- small frame) in the *Unene* (size) frame.

- 164) *Nyũmba yakwa nĩ nene gũkĩra yaku.*  
 My house is bigger than yours.



**Diagram 30 *Nene* (big) frame**

From the two embedded frames of the *Ūnene* (size) frame (the *nini* ‘small’ and the *nene* ‘big’) the hearer will have autonomy of senses created in his mind and will therefore match the various senses accordingly in his search for antonyms.

#### 4.2 Overlapping antonyms

These are antonyms where the members have an evaluative character and one member is usually positive while the other one derogatory. In addition, both terms are used in normal ‘how’ questions but one term yields an impartial question while the other a committed one, Lorenzetti (2008:9). For instance in the following example of *njega* (good) and *njūru* (bad), ‘good’ yields an impartial question while ‘bad’ a committed one as shown below.

165) *Nĩ njega atĩa?*

How good is it?

166) *Nĩ njūru atĩa?*

How bad is it?

These antonyms are also gradable as illustrated below.

*Njega* (Good) *njegega* (better) *njega biũ* (best).

*Njūru* (bad) *njūrajūru* (worse) *njūru biũ* (worst).

#### 1. *ega – ūru*                      **Good – bad**

#### 54) *Njega - njūru*    **good – bad**

The following examples were previously given in chapter two.

167) *Īrio ici nĩ njega.*

This food is good.

168) *Īrio ici nĩ njūru.*

This food is bad.

In chapter two it was noted that the elements *njega* (good) and *njūru* (bad) are relative to the speaker and the context. For instance, a rich man would find stale food bad while to a beggar it becomes good. There also exists a variable on the degree of either ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’. What is lacking in a full interpretation of the pair of antonyms is the context in which both the speaker and the listener are in. Therefore, the antonym of *njega* (good) in the above sentence does not

automatically become *njũru* (bad) since as earlier mentioned the gradability of the pair and the speaker makes it require context for the construal of the appropriate antonyms.

169) *Îrio ici nĩ njega mũno.*

This food is very good.

The use of the word *mũno* (very) in the example above gives the adjective *njega* (good) the basis for the listener to construe an appropriate antonym from the frame opened by the mention of the term *njega* (good) thus eradicating vagueness since the quality of the noun has been given context. The antonym will therefore be *njũru mũno* as exemplified below.

170) *Îrio ici nĩ njũru mũno.*

This food is very bad.

### Boundary effects

The words *njega* (good) and *njũru* (bad) when used in a conversation will make the hearer open the *wega* (goodness) frame with all its elements namely: *njega* (good), *njegega* (better), *njega biũ* (best), *njega mũno* (very good), *njega makĩria* (extremely good) *njũru* (bad), *njũroru* (worse), *njũru biũ* (worst), *njũru mũno* (very bad), and *njũru makĩria* (extremely bad). All these components in the frame compete for attention when the hearer wants to construe the antonyms of the two terms. As discussed earlier, this is attentional autonomy.

171) *Ngaari yakwa nĩ njega gũkĩra yaku.*

My vehicle is better than yours.

Vagueness is evident in the example above since both the nouns compared (my vehicle and your vehicle) are ‘good’ and it is only context that can be used to clear the vagueness. Without the context the hearer evokes all the potential antonyms from the goodness frame but the use of ‘*gũkĩra yaku*’ (than yours) gives the requisite context that give the hearer the clue that enables him to clear the vagueness and consequently construe the right antonym. This gives the antonym of *njega* (good) as *njũru gũkĩra* (worse than) giving it sense autonomy and eliminating any other possible construals.

The word *njega* (good) may appear in a sentence together with the preposition ‘*ta*’ (as) which makes it to have sense autonomy. This is compositional autonomy as illustrated below.

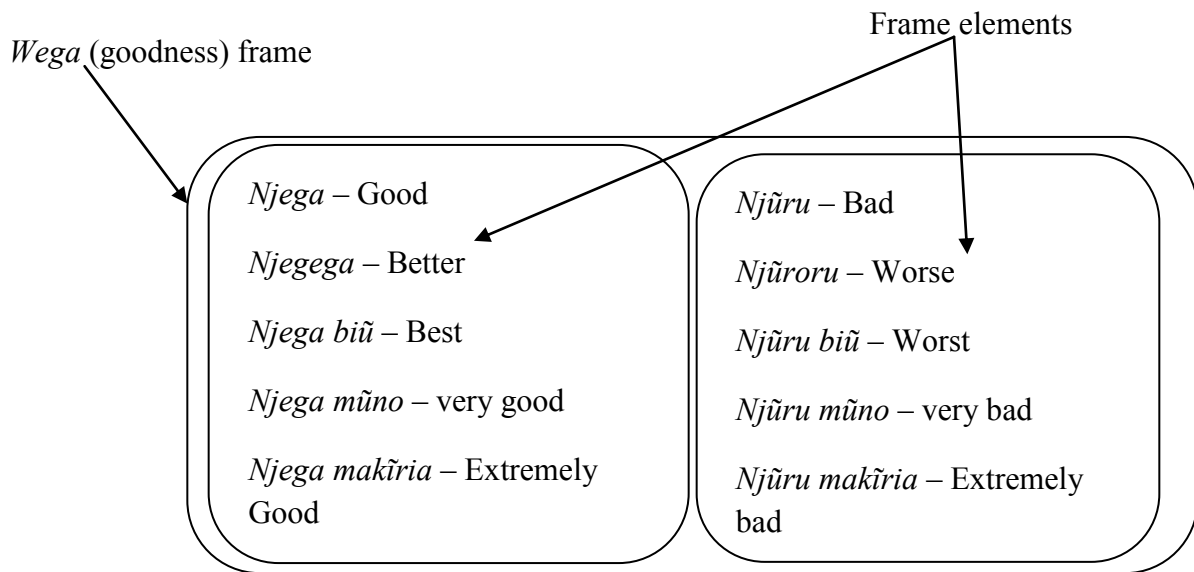
172) *Ngaari yakwa nĩ njega ta yaku.*

My vehicle is as good as yours.

The phrase ‘*ta yaku*’ in this composition creates a sense boundary on the adjective *njega* (good) by specifying what is being compared and this clears vagueness ensuring no competition from the other possible senses since its meaning has been established. The antonym will therefore be *njũru ta...* (worse than...) and it will have a sense autonomy.

**Frame and frame elements of *njega* (good) and *njũru* (bad)**

The moment a listener hears a word and the word achieves a sense boundary, it attains autonomy and evokes frames and its frame elements in his mind. The words *njega* (good) and *njũru* (bad) evoke in the mind of the listener the *WEGA* (GOODNESS) frame with all the components as illustrated below.



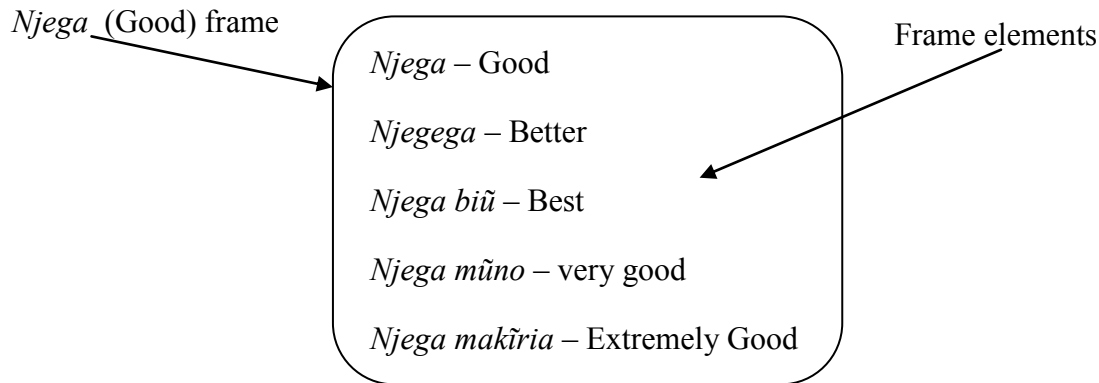
**Diagram 31 *Wega* (goodness) frame**

From the *WEGA* (goodness) frame a listener can open in his mind the *NJEGA* (GOOD) FRAME independent of the *NJURU* (bad) sister frame with the following elements: *njega* (good), *njegega* (better), *njega biũ* (best), *njega mũno* (very good) and *njega makĩria*

(extremely good) upon hearing the term in a conversation then determine the antonym after establishing a sense autonomy as illustrated with sentence (175) repeated below.

173) *Ngaari yakwa nĩ njega ta yaku.*

My vehicle is as good as yours.

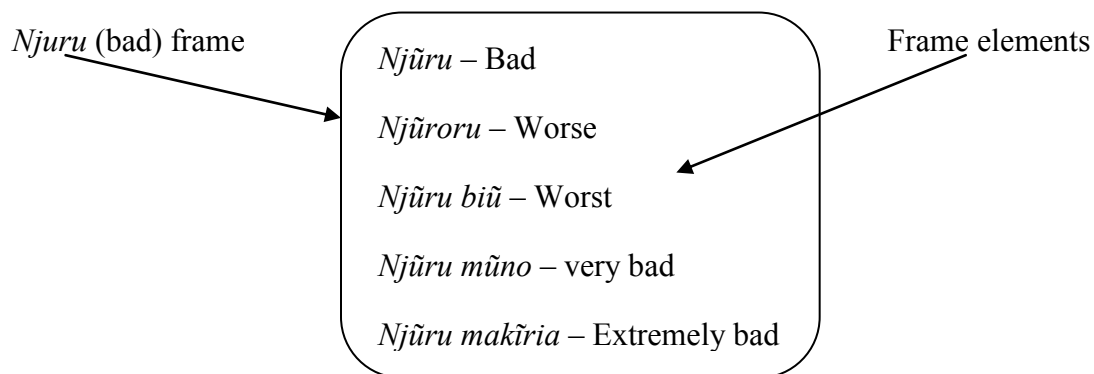


**Diagram 32 Njega (Good) frame**

The *NJŪRU* (BAD) FRAME will also be available in the mind of the listener when he hears the word *njũru* (bad). All the elements therein namely: *njũru* (bad), *njũroru* (worse), *njũru biũ* (worst), *njũru mũno* (very bad), and *njũru makĩria* (extremely bad) will be opened.

174) *Thaa nĩ njũru nĩ tuinũke.*

Time is bad let's go home.



**Diagram 33 Njuru (bad) frame**

2. *Thaka – -ongi*                      Beautiful – Ugly

55) *Thaka – -ongi*                      Beautiful – Ugly



In chapter two it was noted that the opposite of ‘*thaka*’ does not necessarily become *njoŋi* since there exists intermediaries between the two antonyms *thaka* (beautiful) and *njoŋi* (ugly) since they are gradable adjectives. Secondly, the same parameters cannot be used to describe for instance a human and a house and the listener will be forced to evoke different frames for the different nouns with their different elements in his attempt to ascribe meaning and consequently relevant antonyms.

175) *Nyũmba yakwa nĩ thaka.*

My house is beautiful.

176) *Mũtumia wakwa nĩ mũthaka.*

My wife is beautiful.

The vagueness in the two sentences is brought by the fact that the understanding of ‘beautiful’ is dependent on the speaker and the listener and the context hence would elicit a different opinion from other speakers and listeners. The different possibilities of understanding of the meaning of the words mean that the hearer will also construe all possible antonyms therein in the absence of context like *njoŋi* (ugly), *njoŋanjoni* (uglier), *njoŋi biu* (ugliest), *njoŋi mũno* (very ugly) and *njoŋi makiria* (extremely ugly).

177) *Nyũmba yakwa nĩ thaka ta ya mũtongoria.*

My house is beautiful like a leader’s.

The use of the phrase ‘*ta ya mũtongoria*’ (like a leader’s) in the example (180) above gives the clue of the meaning of *thaka* (beautiful) to the listener. He therefore construes the antonym (*njoŋi ta... - as ugly as...*) from the *ũthaka* (beauty) frame in his mind in line with the context and the speaker.

### Boundary effects

A listener who hears the word *thaka* (beautiful) or *njoŋi* (ugly) opens the beauty frame in his mind. When the listener searches for their antonyms all the elements in the frame will be available and will be competing for attention hence attentional autonomy. Consider the following example.

178) *Mũtumia wakwa nĩ mũthaka gũkira wa Kimani.*

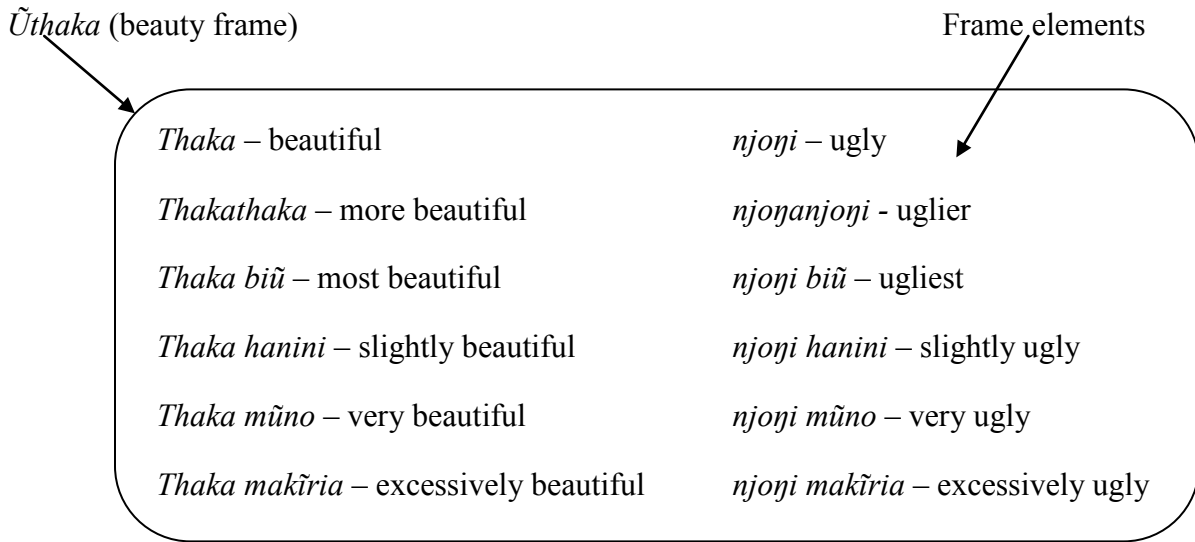
My wife is more beautiful than Kimani's.

*Mũthaka* (beautiful) in the example above without context creates vagueness and is therefore open to all the possible antonyms in the beauty frame as earlier stated. The use of '*gũkĩra wa Kimani*' (more than Kimani's) in the sentence gives the context necessary for the interpretation of the meaning of *mũthaka* hence the sense '*mũthaka mũthaka*' (more beautiful) will attain autonomy and all others lost and the antonym *njojanjoji* (uglier) will take root.

Compositional autonomy is also evident when the term *mũthaka* (beautiful) occurs in the same construction with the term *gũkĩra* (more than) which defines the sense boundary by clearing the vagueness and ensuring the right construal of the antonym *njojanjoji* (uglier) as earlier illustrated with its frame and frame elements.

**Frame and frame elements of *thaka* (beautiful) and *-oji* (ugly)**

The *ŨTHAKA* (BEAUTY) FRAME) will be available in the mind of a hearer who comes into contact with the terms *thaka* (beautiful) or *njoji* (ugly) after the sense boundaries have been achieved and the words attain autonomy as illustrated below.



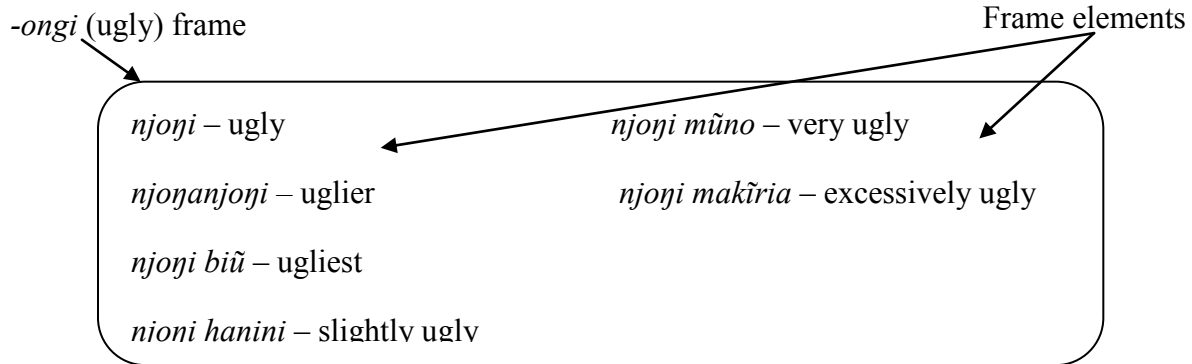
**Diagram 34 *Ũthaka* (beauty) frame**

Before the hearer construes the antonyms of either of the terms in his mind, he must first encounter the individual frames in the *Uthaka* (beauty) frame that is *thaka* – beautiful and *-ongi* – ugly as illustrated below.

The *-ONGI* (UGLY) frame will be opened in the hearers mind on hearing the term *mucongi* as exemplified below.

179) *Wanjiru nĩ mũcongi.*

Wanjiru is ugly.

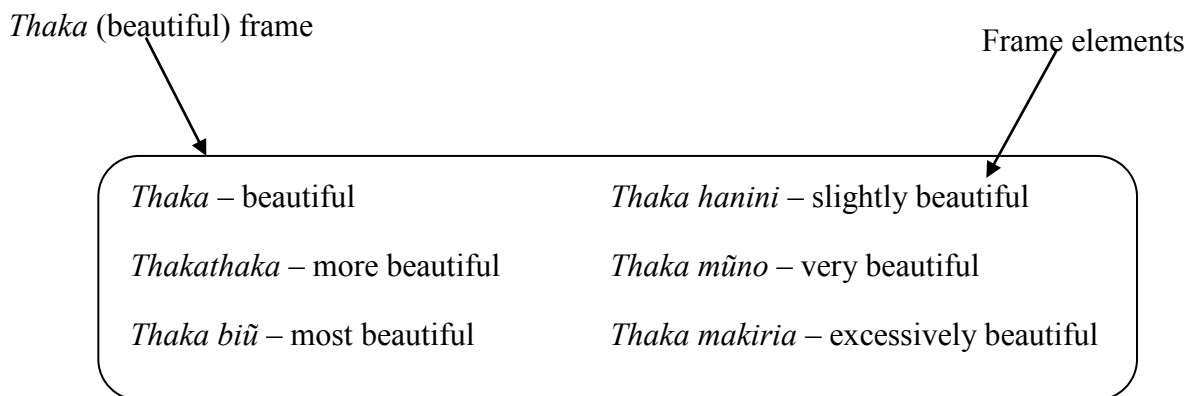


**Diagram 35 -ongi (ugliness) frame**

The *THAKA* (BEAUTIFUL) FRAME with its elements namely: *thaka* (beautiful), *thakathaka* (more beautiful), *thaka biũ* (most beautiful), *thaka hanini* (slightly beautiful), *thaka mũno* (very beautiful), and *thaka makiria* (excessively beautiful) will become available in the hearer’s mind when the word *mũthaka* (beautiful) appears in discourse. The hearer will then apply sense boundaries depending on the available context and get the meaning of the term used. The word will attain autonomy and he will then choose the antonym accordingly.

180) *Wanjiru nĩ mũthaka.*

Wanjiru is beautiful.



**Diagram 36 thaka (beautiful) frame**

### 4.3 Equipollent Antonyms

Equipollent antonyms are those where the comparative of both terms entails the corresponding positive form for instance: in ‘hot’ vs ‘cold’, *the water* is hotter than *the tea* entails ‘*the water* is hot’, *the water* is colder than *the tea* entails *the water* is cold. They also denote sensations or emotions based on subjective reactions; are gradable and the two members of a pair are committed in case of the ‘how’ question for instance;

181) How *cold/hot* is the water?

Let us look at examples in Gīkūyū.

#### 1. Hiu – Hehu

#### Hot – Cold

##### 56) *Hiu – Hehu*

##### Hot – Cold

As explained above on this type of antonyms, this pair deals with the sense of touch which induces the ‘heat’ or ‘cold’ sensations. The conventional gradable possibilities between *Hiū* (hot) and *hehu* (cold) are:

- a) *Hiū – hiū gukīra – hiu biū.* Hot – hotter – hottest  
b) *Hehu – hehahehu – hehu biū.* Cold – colder – coldest

In chapter one section 1.7 it was noted that when a listener hears an antonymous word, he must construe a domain in which he would understand the word. For instance, the word *hiū* (hot) evokes the temperature domain and all the possible elements therein like *hiū* (hot), *hehu* (cold), *ndaru* (warm) and *horu* (cool).

Consider the following example.

182) *Maī maya nī mahiū.*

183) This water is hot.

The meaning of sentence (182) is vague and it depends on the speaker and the hearer hence context to clarify the speaker meaning since for instance to a child the water could be very hot but to an adult it might just be slightly above warm. The antonym of *hiū* (hot) in this case would

therefore not be *hehu* (cold) automatically until context is available. Consider the illustration below.

184) *Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ ma mwana ma gwĩthamba.*

This water is hot to bathe the baby.

185) *Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ ma kũfuta ngũkũ.*

This water is hot (enough) to de-feather the chicken.

The term *mahiũ* (hot) in sentence (184) above means the water is only warm (not hot) and the context is provided by the phrase ‘*ma mwana ma gwĩthamba*’ (of the child to bathe) since the child uses warm not hot water. This is contrasted to sentence (185) where *mahiũ* (hot) from the context of ‘*kũfuta ngũkũ*’ (de-feathering chicken) means ‘very hot’ since removing feathers from a chicken requires very hot water. Consequently, the construal of the antonym of *hiũ* (hot) or *hehu* (cold) will vary depending on the hearer, speaker and the context because the mere mention of either of the terms makes available in the mind of the hearer all the elements in the temperature domain as mentioned earlier.

### **Boundary effects**

When a hearer hears the terms *hiũ* (hot) or *hehu* (cold) he immediately opens the temperature frame in his mind and all the elements contained there. It follows that his search for an antonym of either of the terms without context makes all the elements in the frame compete for attention. Consider the following example as earlier discussed in sentence (185).

186) *Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ ma kũfuta ngũkũ.*

This water is hot (enough) to de-feather the chicken.

As noted earlier, *mahiũ* (hot) in this sentence elicits all possible antonyms without context but the use of the phrase ‘*ma kũfuta ngũkũ*’ (to de-feather the chicken) gives it the necessary context to clear the vagueness. This means that the antonym construed in the mind of the hearer will be *mahehu biu* (very cold) which comes from the meaning of *mahiũ* (hot) in this context which is *mahiũ biu* (very hot). The antonym will therefore attain sense boundary through the appropriate context and hence sense autonomy eliminating all the other elements in the frame.

Compositional autonomy is also possible when the term *mahiũ* (hot) is used in a composition with the preposition ‘ta’ (like). Consider the following examples.

187) *Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ.*

This water is hot.

188) *Maĩ maya nĩ mahiũ ta makũfuta ngũkũ.*

This water is hot like one for de-feathering.

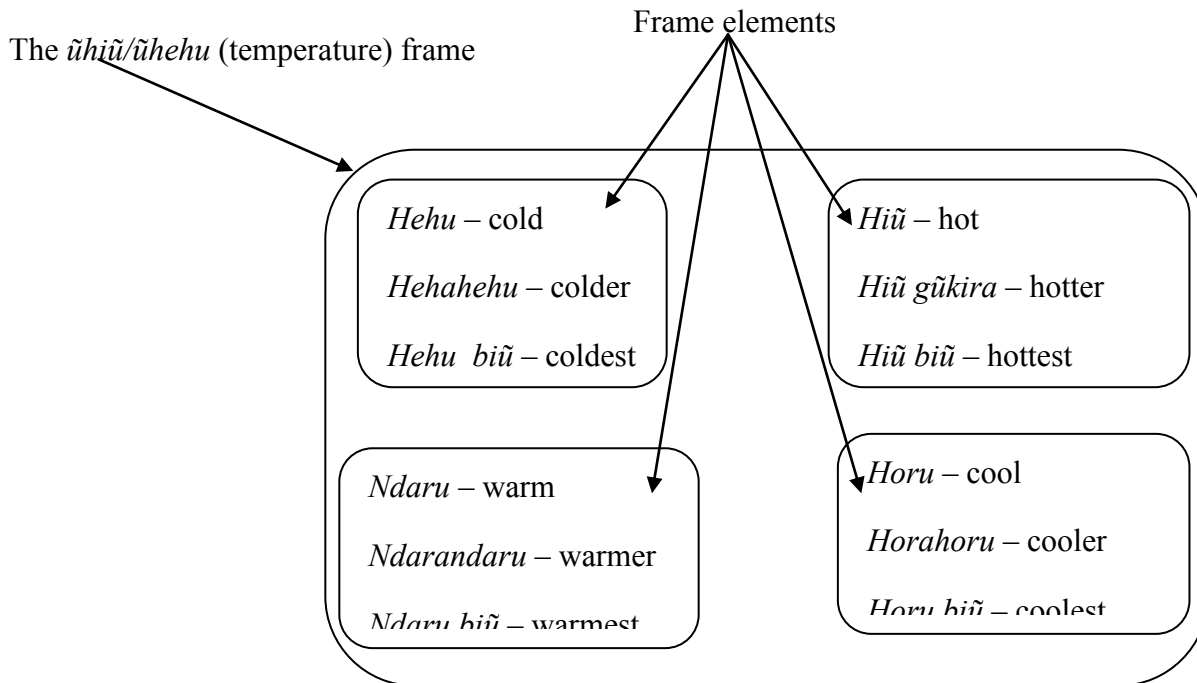
The term *mahiũ* (hot) in sentence (187) is open to all the elements which will be competing for autonomy. In sentence (188) the term *mahiũ* (hot) is used with the preposition ‘ta’ (like) which gives the context for its interpretation (very hot) therefore eliminating all other senses and creating a sense boundary with the antonym *mahehu biũ* (very cold) which attains autonomy.

#### **Frame and frame elements of *hiũ* (hot) and *hehu* (cold)**

The *ŨHIŨ/ŨHEHU* (TEMPERATURE) FRAME will be opened in the mind of a hearer with all the elements namely: *hehu* (cold), *hehahehu* (colder), *hehu biũ* (coldest), *ndaru* (warm), *ndarandaru* (warmer), (*hiũ* hot), *hiũ gũkira* (hotter), *hiũ biũ* (hottest), *horu* (cool), *horahoru* (cooler) *horu biũ* (coolest) and *ndaru biũ* (warmest) when he encounters any of the terms *hiũ* (hot) or *hehu* (cold) as illustrated below.

189) *Irio ciakwa nĩ hiũ kana nĩ hehu?*

Is my food hot or cold?



**Diagram 37 *Ūhiū/Ūhehu* (temperature) frame**

The above frame has four sub-frames embedded in it whose opening by the listener will depend on the context. For instance the *ndaru* (warm) frame will be opened when the hearer hears the negation phrase '*tihīū mūno*' (not very hot) as illustrated below.

- 190) *Maī maya timahiū mūno.*  
This water is not very hot.

The implication in the above sentence is that the water is warm but the degree of warmness is vague hence the need for clarity using context as discussed earlier.

**2. *-enu – -karu*                      happy – sad**

**57) *kenu – -karu*                      happy – sad**

This pair denotes the emotional feelings of a speaker or listener in a given conversation and it is gradable as shown below.

- a) *Kenu – kenakenu – kenu biū.* Happy – happier – happiest  
b) *Ndakarū – ndakandakarū – ndakarū biū .* Sad – sadder – saddest

The gradability of adjectives has been noted to be the source of vagueness in the analysis of the meaning and ultimately in identifying their antonyms since the quality expressed by the adjective is variable and is dependent on the speaker's position, the listener and the context they are in.

191) *Ũmũthĩ kĩmani nĩ mũkenu.*

Today Kimani is happy.

The word *mũkenu* (happy) evokes in the mind of a hearer possibilities of antonyms like *mũrakaru* (sad), *mũrakarakaru* (sadder), *mũrakaru biũ* (saddest), *mũrakaru mũno* (very sad) and *mũrakaru makĩria* (extremely sad). This calls for context as illustrated in the following sentence.

192) *Ũmũthĩ kĩmani nĩ mũkenu gũkĩra ira.*

Today Kimani is happier than yesterday.

The phrase *gũkĩra ira* (than yesterday) introduces the context that clears any vagueness (from the assumption that the hearer shares the knowledge of Kimani's prior happiness with the speaker) and therefore the antonym becomes *mũrakarakaru* (sadder) since *mũkenu* (happy) when used with *gũkĩra* (than) changes to *mũkenakenu* (happier).

### **Boundary effects**

When a hearer hears the word *kenu* (happy) or *ndakaru* (sad) in the absence of context, all the senses of their opposites as discussed above become available. This implies that all these senses will be competing for attention and it is only one that will be selected depending on the context, experience and knowledge of the hearer. Consider the following example as given earlier.

193) *Ũmũthĩ kĩmani nĩ mũkenu gũkĩra ira.*

Today Kimani is happier than yesterday.

We have noted that the phrase '*gũkĩra ira*' (than yesterday) gives the adjective *mũkenu* (happy) the requisite context that isolates its meaning and the antonym becomes *mũrakarakaru* (sadder). A sense boundary is thus created and all other possible antonyms like *mũrakaru* (sad) and *mũrakaru biũ* (saddest) are eliminated when the antonym attains autonomy and it opens a relevant frame with the relevant frame elements as illustrated in the following section.

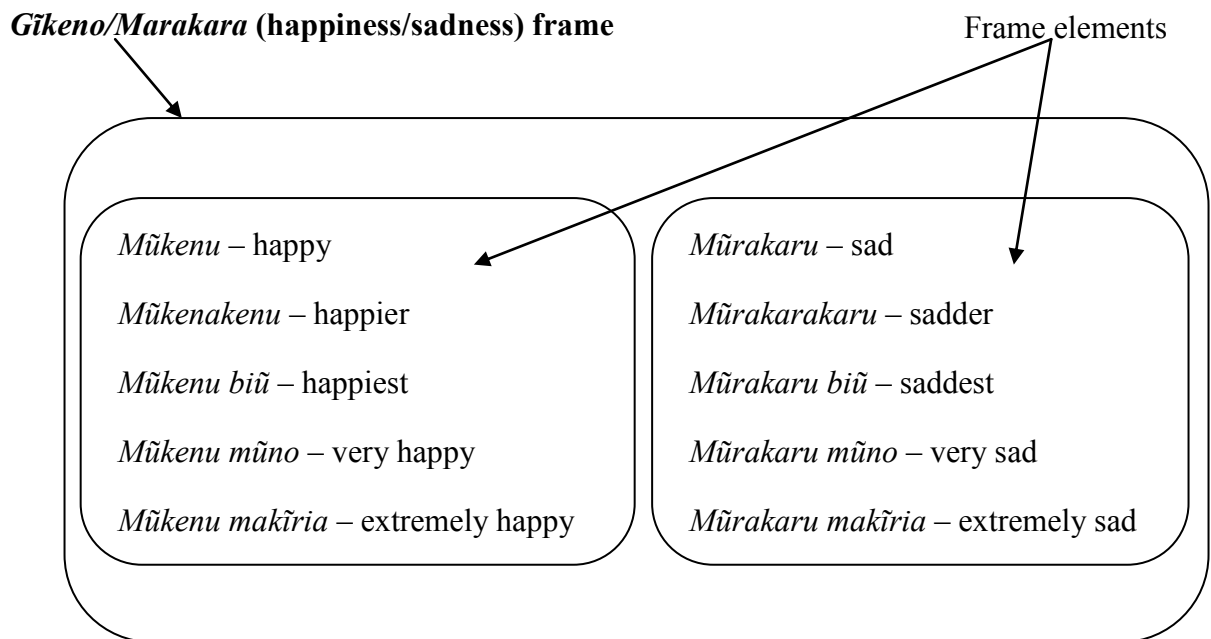


Apart from attentional autonomy, compositional autonomy is also present. Consider example (193) as discussed above. The use of the word *gũkĩra* (than) in the same sentence with the word *mũkenu* (happy) gives the context required to understand its meaning. This means that the word *mũkenu* (happy) used in isolation would elicit a different antonym from the one it does in the same composition with *gũkĩra* (than). Therefore, the antonym chosen is *mũrakaru gũkĩra* (sadder than) and it will get a sense boundary then attain autonomy with a frame and its frame elements as illustrated in the following section.

**Frame and frame elements of *kenu* (happy) and *-karu* (sad)**

The GĪKENO/MARAKARA (HAPPINESS/SADNESS) FRAME will be opened in the mind of a listener when he comes across either of the terms *kenu* (happy) and *ndakaru* (sad). All the elements therein namely: *mũkenu* (happy), *mũkenakenu* (happier), *mũkenu biũ* (happiest), *mũkenu mũno* (very happy), *mũkenu makĩria* (extremely happy), *mũrakaru* (sad), *mũrakarakaru* (sadder), *mũrakaru biũ* (saddest), *mũrakaru mũno* (very sad) and *mũrakaru makĩria* (extremely sad) will become available for choice depending on the context, the speaker and the listener.

- 194) *Mũthuuri wakwa ndamenyagwo emũkenu kana emũrakaru.*  
 My husband is never known when happy or sad.



**Diagram 38 Gĩkeno/Marakara (happiness/sadness) frame**

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The chapter has looked at the three types of antonyms namely: polar, overlapping and equipollent. It has also looked at the use of sense boundaries to give autonomy to a word plus the frames that are triggered after a word attains autonomy so as to assign meaning to it. The boundary effects that have been used in the analysis of the antonyms are attentional autonomy and compositional autonomy in the auspices of the Fillmore's frame theory.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

The study set out on a cognitive analysis of antonymy in Gīkūyū. It aimed to look at antonymy within the lexical level (following the traditional or structural classification) and beyond the traditional approach where it used the notion that antonymy is a matter of construal and is subject to cognitive, conventional, and contextual constraints rather than being mere comparisons. The study also aimed at looking at how lexical frames helped in explaining the choices of antonyms by lexical items.

The study was guided by the following objectives: To investigate the traditional categories of antonyms in Gīkūyū, to examine the classification of Gīkūyū antonyms from a Cognitive Semantics approach and to explore the mind processes involved in the cognition of antonyms in Gīkūyū like boundary effects and profiling. The analysis of Gīkūyū antonyms was done using Fillmore's Frame theory.

#### 5.2 Conclusions

The first finding of this study is that the traditional categorization of antonymy in Gīkūyū is inadequate since it gives only the lexical opposite of the word and fails to explain other possible choices of antonyms within the mind of the listener and the speaker and the mental processes involved.

A major conclusion of this study on antonymy in Gīkūyū is that some senses of a word are related to one another and one of the senses is prototypical and the others extensions of the prototype.

Secondly, it was observed that in the radial categories of the various senses in nouns, the prototype only matches in oppositeness with the corresponding prototype but not with the periphery elements. This proves the notion that the further an item is from the prototype the more the contextual evidence is required to explain oppositeness brought by semantic extensions.

The other conclusion is that context provided by culture, individual knowledge and experience plays a major part in the determination of antonymy in Gīkūyū.

It was also observed that the mental process of sense boundaries is very important in the assignment of sense autonomy to the antonyms. When autonomy is achieved by a word, it evokes frames and their frame elements which assist in the choice of appropriate antonyms. The sense boundary features used in the study are: attentional autonomy, compositional autonomy and relational autonomy.

The first research question of this study was how Gīkūyū antonyms could be classified traditionally. This question was answered since the study classified Gīkūyū antonyms into five categories namely: Complementary / simple / binary antonyms, Gradable antonyms, Relation or converses, Direction or reversives and Taxonomic sisters / multiple incompatibilities.

The second research question was how the traditional categories of antonymy fit into the new categories of antonymy based on cognitive semantics. The study concluded that cognitive linguistics has three classifications of antonymy namely: complementaries, antonyms and reversives. The traditional classification fitted into the cognitive classification in that complementaries remain as they were, gradable antonyms are absorbed into antonyms (polar, equipollent and overlapping) and relation antonyms are absorbed into the complementaries. However, the study concluded that taxonomic sisters do not entail any form of oppositeness since each member in any set of sisters has distinct characteristics and thus exists without any implied contrast to the others for instance in the colour spectrum where red exists distinctly from other colours like black or green and not in oppositeness to them.

The third research question was on the mind processes involved in the cognition of antonyms. The study concluded that the concepts of boundary effects and profile are core mental processes that are used by the hearer in determining meaning of various senses. This is done by sense demarcation which creates autonomy of the senses that then evoke frames and their frame elements in the mind of the hearer and which help the hearer construe the appropriate antonym.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This thesis was restricted to a traditional classification of oppositeness in Gīkūyū and then to a cognitive analyses of the same within Fillmore's Frame Semantics theory. The cognitive approach can be extended to other sense relations like homonymy and synonymy.

The research dwelt on two categories of oppositeness in cognitive semantics namely: complementaries and antonyms. Converses were not looked into because of time constraints and it is an area for further research.

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