TOPIC AND FOCUS IN DHOLUO NARRATIVE TEXTS

BY

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my father

CHARLES NJURA OGOYA

(1911-1999)

who taught me the value of education.

And my mother

DORCILLA NJURA

(1944-1993)

who taught me the value of patience.

I'm also grateful to all those who have contributed towards my education at various stages. My special thanks go to my late parents for laying the foundation of hard work and focus in my life. My sincere thanks also goes to my brothers Tom, George and Ben (the late) who stopped at nothing to ensure that I was in school. To my sister, Teresa, you took the role of mum, thank you. I must mention here my sister-in-law Jane who has been a wonderful mother to me and my niece Jacky and her husband Ben who offered me accommodation.I am very grateful. To my primary and secondary teachers, you always had faith in my ability. May God bless the work of your hands. To all my relatives and friends, may all of you accept my honest appreciation? I love you all.

And finally, I appreciate my typist, Angela, for working closely with me to ensure that this project was completed in time. Your professionalism in typing this work is unrivalled. Thank you 'Angie' for all the time you put into this work. May God bless you abundantly.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

NM   -Name

TNS   -Tense

PSN   -Person

FOC   -Focus

S   -Subject

V   -Verb

O   -Object

NP   -Noun Phrase

Pnt.   -Point

Depart   -Departure

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to describe how the two information structure categories; topic and focus, are coded in Dholuo narrative texts using the Relevance Theory as proposed by Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber (2008). Topic and focus are both syntactically and morphologically coded in Dholuo narrative texts hence the need to test these categories using the two principles provided by the relevance theory; that is, the communicative principle of relevance and the cognitive principle of relevance.

Information units, specifically topic and focus are coded in various ways in different languages. Word order and prosody are the most common. Some languages use the morphological method. Lambrecht (1998) tested these information units using the information structure theory. Following this, it is worth attempting this analysis using a different theory to see to what extent the two theories merge or differ.

The data for this study was collected from narrative books written in Dholuo and analyzed for topic and focus using the relevance theory. The main interest will be on how readers identify the clause/ sentence topic(s).

Chapter one introduces the topic under study, the background of the language, the research problem , objectives, hypotheses , the rationale ,scope and limitation, the literature review , the methodology and the significance of the study.

Chapter two focuses on the analysis of topic definition, topic identification at the sentence level, topic and word order, topic in discourse and finally topic cohesion and coherence. This chapter aims at describing how the topic is coded in Dholuo narrative texts.

Chapter three turns its attention to focus analysis. This chapter defines focus, discusses the various focus structures in general, describes the information focus in discourse and finally explains how focus is marked in Dholuo narrative texts.

Chapter four discusses the applications of the relevance theory. Various principles of the relevance theory are applied and tested for their accuracy at identifying the two information units.

Finally in chapter five, the summary and conclusions of the study are presented. In addition, the suggestion sand recommendations for further research are also outlined. This chapter also tries to relate the findings to the objectives outlined in chapter one.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general background of the study. The issues discussed here include background to the problem, that is, related works that have so far been done with an aim of identifying where there still exists a gap. Included here too are statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses ,rationale for the study, scope and limitations , theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology and finally, significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Introduction to the Language of Study

The language under study is Dholuo. Dholuo is a Western Nilotic language spoken by the Luo people who live in Western Kenya and in the Northern part of Tanzania. Tucker and Byan (1956) state that Dholuo belongs to the Southern group, of the Lwo languages. This group includes: Acholi; Lan'go; Kamanum; Labwor; Alur and Adhola in Uganda as well as Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk in Sudan.

The majority of Dholuo speakers live in Kenya and is found in the following administrative districts: Kisumu, Nyando, Nyakach, Rachuonyo, Homabay, Migori, Bondo and Siaya. These districts form the larger part of Nyanza province which falls to the South –West of Kenya around Lake Victoria.

The Kisumu –South Nyanza dialect is spoken in Kisumu, Nyando, Nyakach, Rachuonyo, Homabay, Migori and Suba districts. The Boro-Ukwala dialect is spoken in Boro and Ukwala divisions; Imbo and parts of Yala divisions; all of Siaya and Bondo districts.

The Kisumu –South Nyanza dialect is spoken in a wider geographical area and because of this, it is regarded as the standard form (Tucker and Byan1956). It is the one used in broadcast media, in the Bible and as a medium of instruction in lower primary school. This study will use data collected from the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect.

1.1.2 Background to the Problem

Topic and Focus are categories of information structure. Lambrecht (1998:117) defines topic as 'the relation of aboutness between a proposition and a discourse entity', that is, the topic of a sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about.

What does it mean for a proposition to be about a topic? Statements are normally statements about "what is a matter of standing current interest or concern" This is the principles of relevance. If a topic is seen as a matter of standing interest or concern, a statement about a topic can account as informative only if it conveys information which is relevant with respect to their topic.

Lambrecht (1998) identifies four independent but inter-related categories; presuppositions and assertion; identifiability and activation; topic and focus. He states that different grammars tend to separate topic and focus functions by coding them differently. The topic of a proposition may be

coded with lexical noun phrases, with unstressed pronominal, by use of passive voice, through periphrastic or by use of cleft or pseudo-cleft constructions.

The relation between a topic and a preposition is taken to be pragmatically recoverable at the time of an utterance, that is, for an entity to serve as a topic; it must be taken for granted as a point of relevance for a given proposition.

A proposition is interpreted as being about an entity if:

- It is understood as conveying relevant information with respect to this entity, that is, as increasing the hearers' knowledge of it.

- It exists in the universe of discourse independently of what is being predicated of it in a given proposition, that is, it must be a discourse referent.

- It must also be taken to be presently under discussion; that is, it must not only be identifiable for the addressee but also have a certain degree of activeness 'in the discourse (Lambrecht 1996:335).

Look at sentence (1);

Topic   Comment

(1) Anyango   en nyako ma jaber

    NM   is girl who beautiful

    Anyango is a beautiful girl

The phrase *"en nyako ma jaber* "in the above sentence is taken in its context to be conveying relevant information about the topic *"Anyango"*

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Focus is defined as the general term for 'any device whatever which gives certain events, participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context' (Callow 1974:50). . The relation between a focus denotatum and a proposition is taken to be non-recoverable and unpredictable at the time of an utterance.

Okoth (1986:174-177) discusses the Pragmatic Functions (PFs) of sentences in Dholuo using the Functional Grammar approach. He discusses the marking of theme and tail as external pragmatic functions, then topic and focus as the internal ones. This study exemplifies topic and focus using isolated sentences. Dik (1978:19) suggests that these pragmatic functions are only assigned after syntactic function such as agent; goal and recipient have been stated.

In this research topic will be treated as what the sentence is about. Focus on the other hand will be treated as the argument which provides the most salient piece of information, (Bhat, 1991:52). It is worth noting that sentences in isolation are sometimes said to have a 'topic comment' structure ; the first noun phrase being taken to be the 'topic' of the sentence , and what follows to be a 'comment' on that topic ; thus we can say that in the sentence;

(2) Nyithindo   nego   kwach

    Children   kill-IMP Leopard.

    Children are killing a Leopard

Is typically construed as a comment on the activities of "children" and the corresponding passive,

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(3) Kwach   nyithindo nego

   Leopard children   kill-IMP

   The leopard is being killed by the children, as a comment on the fate of the leopard

While this may be true of sentences in isolation, it is not necessarily true of sentences in context. Consider a sentence like;

(4) Boche   rachar

   Cloud   white

   Cloud is white

In the context of an implicit question, "Tell me something about cloud?" the above example can be held to have a 'topic-comment' structure, since the question can be held to establish '*boche*' as a topic.

However in the context of an implicit question "Give me an example of something that is white?" which might be held to establish "whiteness" as a topic, the example will need to be construed as having a "focus", structure.

Examples of this sort which multiply as soon as we begin to consider examples from text rather than contrived sentences in isolation, suggest that we can only establish what a topic is by considering the sentences in relation to its context, and that topic need not correspond either with

the grammatical subject or with the item that is thematized. However, sentence structure and topic can coincide, notably in the topicalized sentences.

Okoth (1986:176) states that "Dholuo does not formally (morphologically) mark all the various types of focus. However, this research by Okoth identifies the focus marker as e, as shown below:

(5) Otieno   e   wuoyi

    NM   Foc   boy

    Otieno IS the boy (with stress on IS)

The ordinary parallel of the above sentence is;

(6) Otieno wuoyi

    Otieno is a boy

While (6) merely states the sex of Otieno , (5) asserts that Otieno as opposed to some other boy or boys , is the one who has real quality of what is expected of a boy.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study attempts an analysis of topic and focus as encoded in Dholuo narrative texts. The study will investigate how topic and focus change in successive sentences within the same text.

The relationship which holds between topic and focus as envisaged in this study is the concepts of 'old' and 'new'. Topic can be held as the 'old' or 'given' information while focus is the 'new' information.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The research aims to:

1. Identify 'topic' as manifested in Dholuo narrative texts.

2. Explain how topic is encoded in clauses/sentences in the narrative texts.

3. Describe the form in which topic is retained in Dholuo narrative texts.

4. Explain focus marking in Dholuo narrative texts.

1.4 Hypotheses

This study aims to test the following hypotheses;

1. Topic is exhibited in Dholuo narrative texts sentence initially.

2. Topic is coded through word order and lexical referencing in the narrative texts.

3. Topic is retained in successive sentences in the form of bound and unbound pronouns.

4. Focus is highlighted syntactically.

1.5 Justification of the Study

Okoth (1986) analyzed the functional categories in Dholuo using the functional grammar approach. This study will analyze the very functional categories; have the pragmatic categories of language using the relevance theory. To this extent, the study will shed light on how information is structured in the narrative texts.

This is in view with the school of thought which puts the speaker/writer at the centre of the process of communication. The research insists that it is people who communicate and people

who interpret. It is speakers who have topics, prepositions, and focus who assign information structure and who make reference. It is hearers/ readers who interpret and who draw inferences.

This view is opposed to the study of these issues in terms of sentences considered in isolation from communicative context.

This research therefore attempts a pragmatic, which suggests that discourse analysis includes the study of linguistic forms and the regularities of their distribution and involves a consideration of the general principles of interpretation by which people normally make sense of what they hear or read.

This study will therefore provide valuable information; to linguists, communication specialists, teachers and scholars interested in the study of the information structure of Dholuo language.

The research will lay a foundation for future researchers in either Dholuo language or other Kenyan indigenous languages interested in the same topic. For this reason the research contributes immensely to the study of discourse and pragmatics.

Lambrecht studied the information structure of English using the information structure theory. The use of relevance theory here adds a new twist to the already existing literature on topic and focus.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

In this paper, we will restrict our attention to sentence topics or clause topics. We will not go into the notion of discourse topic; which according to Lambrecht (1996:117) has more to do with discourse understanding and text cohesion than with the grammatical form of sentences.

The research will also focus on written sentences. The study will also emphasize that the concept of topic developed here does not coincide with that of topic (or "theme") as the element which comes first in a sentence." In the framework adopted here, sentence–initial elements may either be topics or foci; hence the sentence initial elements cannot be identified with either of these categories.

The research chooses texts, rather than solely elicited material for this research for two reasons. First, when elicited material is used to analyze the grammar of a language then we will often be misled -this specifically happens with translation from one language to another. The end product tends to reflect the first language; especially the order of constituents and the way they are arranged in clauses. A second problem with elicited material is that it is usually obtained without any reference to a specific context (Levinson 2004). This leads to two major problems; the analyst can only surmise any context that the motive speaker may supply in order to make sense of the expression that is being elicited and secondly, many features of language cannot be studied in isolation. Such features include background information; devices that signal topic continuity or a change of topic, devices that give prominence to certain events or participants over against others etc.

To accomplish our objectives; we need to analyze texts. The text genre under study in this research is the narrative. A narrative is defined as; a spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening." Narrative is a text genre, which means that it is "an indefinable category of literary composition with "several identifiable characteristics… notably in relation to subject –matter purpose …... textual structure, form of argumentations, and level of formality'' (Crystal 1977:168).

1.7 Theoretical framework

Due to the nature of the research problems, this study adopts Relevance Theory as its theoretical framework. This theory is a development of Grice's theory of implicatures. This theory was developed by Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber through the years 1986, 2002, and 2004 and is still currently under revision.

The theory is so called because it has to do with relevance. Relevance is not used here as it is used in ordinary language use; rather relevance in RT (Relevance Theory) has to do with the activation of thought that is worthwhile thinking or talking about.

Relevance theory is a development of Grice's theory of implicatures. The key ideas were proposed by Grice in the William James lectures delivered at Harvard in 1967. The proposals were relatively brief and suggestive of how future work might proceed.

This theory by Grice developed the concept of implicature. It is essentially a theory about how people use language. Grice's suggestion is that there is a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation. These arise, it seems, from basic rational considerations and may be

formulated as guidelines for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation to further co-operative ends. Grice identifies as guidelines of this sort four basic maxims of conversation or general principles underlying the efficient co-operative use of language which jointly enforces a general co-operative principle. These principles are expressed as follows;

i. The co-operative principle

Make your contribution such as required, at the stage which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

ii. The maxim of quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically;

a. Do not say what you believe to be false.

b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

iii. The maxim of quantity

a. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

b.Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

iv. The maxim of relevance

Make your contributions relevant.

v. The maxim of manner

 Be perspicuous, and specifically;

a. Avoid obscurity

b. Avoid ambiguity

c. Be brief

d. Be orderly

In short, these maxims specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way; they should speak sincerely, relevantly, and clearly, while providing sufficient information.

To this view of the nature of communication there is immediate objection' the view may describe a philosopher's paradise, but no one actually speaks like that the whole time.

Relevance Theory while still based on Grice's two foundational principles: that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non verbal, is the expression of intentions and the recognition of those intentions by the listener. It departs from Grice's framework in two important aspects. First, while Grice was mainly concerned with the role of pragmatic inference in implicit communication., relevance theorists have consistently argued that the explicit side of communication is just as inferential and worthy of pragmatic attention as the implicit side (Sperber and Wilson 1981).

Relevance theorists have argued that inferential processes are efficient enough to allow for a much greater slack between sentence meaning and speaker meaning with sentence meaning being fragmentary and incomplete , and speaker's explicit meaning going well beyond the minimal proposition arrived at by disambiguation and reference assignment.

Relevance theory also departs from Grice's account of the expectations that guide the comprehension process. For Grice, these expectations derive from principles and maxims, that is, rules of behavior that speakers are expected to obey but may, on occasion, violate. For Relevance

Theorists ,every act of communication raises precise and predictable expectations of relevance which are enough on their own to guide a hearer towards the speaker's meaning . Speakers may fail to be relevant, but they cannot, if they are genuinely communicating, produce utterances that do not convey a presumption of their own relevance. Relevance theory took the idea of Grice that communication has intention and that communication has expectations. The basic idea was that communication be sensible, reasonable rational and purposeful. However, relevance theory collapsed everything into one principle: the principle of relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995, and 2004). The question is, "why do Sperber and Wilson collapse everything into one principle?" According to them a hearer filters out according to what he or she thinks is relevant. Therefore, this principle makes sense because both communicator and hearer operate on the principle of relevance.

Relevance Theory starts from a detailed account of relevance and its role in cognition. Relevance is defined as a property of inputs to cognitive processes. An input is relevant to an individual when it connects with available contextual assumptions to yield positive cognitive effects that is, a stimulus leads to context and cognitive effects.

Input

[Stimulus] → [Contextual assumptions] → [Cognitive effects]

- Observation
- Utterance
- Gesture

Everything else being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved and the smaller the mental effort (processing effort) required (to represent input, access context, and derive cognitive effects) the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.

Relevance Theory is based on two general claims about the role of relevance in cognition and communication.

1. *Cognitive Principal of relevance:(Sperber & Wilson:2004)*

"Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance". According to Sperber and Wilson, "an input (such as sound, sight, utterance or memory) is relevant to an individual if it connects up with background information to yield conclusions that matter to him.

2. *Communicative principle of Relevance:(Sperber & Wilson: 2004)*

"Every act of overt communication conveys a presumption of its optimal relevance."

The cognitive principal of Relevance yields a variety of predictions about human cognitive processes. It predicts that our perceptional mechanisms tend to pick out potentially relevant stimuli, our retrieval mechanisms tend to spontaneously activate potentially relevant assumptions, and our inferential mechanisms tend to spontaneously process them in the most productive way. This principle has essential implications for human communication. In order to communicate, the communicator needs her audience's attention. If attention tends to go automatically to what is relevant at that time , then the success of communication depends on the audience taking the utterances to be relevant enough to be worthy of attention. Wanting

her communication to succeed, the communicator by the very act of communicating, indicates that she wants the audience to see her utterance as relevant, and this is what the communicative principle states.

According to the Relevance Theory, the presumption of optimal relevance conveyed by every utterance is precise enough to ground a specific comprehension heuristic that hearers may use in interpreting the speaker's meaning.

Presumption of Optimal Relevance

1. The utterance is relevant enough to be worth processing.
2. It is the most relevant one compatible with the communication abilities and preferences.

Relevance guided comprehension heuristic

1. Follow a path of least effort in constructing an interpretation of the utterance.
2. Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.

A hearer using the relevance theoretic comprehension heuristic' should proceed as follows;

- The aim is to find an interpretation of the speakers meaning that satisfies the presumption of optimal relevance, to achieve this;
- The hearer must enrich the decoded sentence meaning at explicit level, and complement it at the implicit level by supplying contextual assumptions which will combine with it to yield enough conclusions (cognitive effects) to make the utterance relevant in the expected way.

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1.8 Literature Review

This section will discuss the literature review of topic and focus. It begins with the literature of Dholuo studies, and then it discusses the literature on topic and focus in language studies in general. The summary of the literature on topic and focus is finally presented.

Presented here is a brief overview of the relevant research that has so far been done in Dholuo language, a brief discussion of the major areas of concern of this research paper, topic and focus; and finally the theoretical literature.

1.8.1 The literature on Dholuo Studies

A lot of literature in Dholuo grammar exists today. Some of the books written on Dholuo grammar have been of a pedagogical nature (Okoth, 1986).

These were books written for the non –native speakers, missionaries and foreigners, who wanted to acquire a working knowledge of the language. Examples of these include *An Elementary Luo Grammar* (Stafford, 1967); *Dholuo without Tears* (Malo, 1952); *Elementary Lessons in Dholuo* (Huntingford, 1959); *A grammar of Kenya Luo with Vocabulary* (Tucker, 1960); *Luo: a Grammar* (Gregerson, 1961) and *Luo-English Dictionary* (Bount, 1971). These sources are useful as data sources for this study even though they are more of prescriptive in nature, based on the English grammars of the traditional school.

Other descriptions of Dholuo grammar include studies in phonology, syntax and morphology by various scholars. Included here are; Adhiambo (1981) on Dholuo phonology, Okoth (1971) also on phonology, Okoth (1982) morphophonemic processes in Dholuo and Omondi who discussed

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a lot of Dholuo syntax in her various works. These studies on Dholuo grammar will be helpful in the analysis of my data.

A more relevant source to this research paper is Okoth (1986), "The Functional Paradigm and Dholuo Constituent Order". Here, Okoth examined the various grammatical categories and functions (syntactic; semantic and pragmatic) that are found in Dholuo. This work explores the nature of Dholuo phrases and the major clause patterns of Dholuo language. A number of syntactic configurations that will be used here are lifted from this work.

1.8.2 Literature Review on Topic and Focus

Topic and Focus are information structure categories found in all natural languages. However, different languages encode them differently. Topic, as the part of a sentence /clause that the rest is about is an important information structure role that is marked in many natural languages. Topic is defined in various ways though the core idea of "aboutness "is retained.

Dik (1978) develops a theory of Functional Grammar with the following min distinguishing properties: i) it is conceived from a functional point of view on the nature of language: that is, one in which a language is regarded as an instrument of social interaction; (ii) it makes crucial use of functional notions of three different levels; the semantic, the syntactic and the pragmatic levels; (iii) it starts with the construction of abstract underlying predictions on the basis of predicate-frames contained in the lexicon;(4)these underlying predications are mapped onto linguistic expressions by means of expression rules which specify the form and the order in which constituents with given functional and categorical properties can or must appear; (v) it avoids the use of transformation's in the sense of structure- changing operations.

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Dik (1978:19) defines topic as, the entry about which the predication predicts something in the given setting. This alludes to the "topic-comment" structure found in English and many their languages.

This definition s relevant to this study since it will help the researcher in finding out the sentence and clause topics.

Bhat (1991) discusses the grammatical relations like subject, direct object and indirect object. He regards them as either overtly or covertly universal entities of language. Even those who do not regard them to be language universals do claim that the notion of transitivity or transference which forms the basis of the notion of grammatical relations; plays the central role in the clause structure of all language. Bhat (1991) goes ahead to give the evidence against their necessity and university.

He postulates grammatical relations as intermediary 'abstract' entities whose primary function is to relate semantic roles like agent, patient, experience etc with their formal representations like case markers (nominative, dative, and accusative) or distinct positions in the sentence.

Bhat (1991:52) states that Topics is," the argument which relates the sentence with the previous utterance or with the external speech context and also the one about which to rest of the sentence can be regarded as providing the comment"

This definition will be helpful in this research since it will help the researcher in relating the grammatical relations (such as subject, object) with the information structure categories (such as topic and focus).

Brown (1984) asks a very important question s; is language a neat, independent system, detachable from the rest of human behavior? Or is it pointless to study language away from the social, customs of its users?

He defines topic as," what the sentence is about." This book is relevant to the study since it analyses language use in context. The study analyses topic and focus from this prospective.

Lambrecht (1998) discusses the information structure categories. He identifies four independent but inter-related categories: presupposition and assertion; identifiability and activation; topic; focus. Lambrecht explores the relationship between the structure of the sentence and the linguistic and extra –linguistic context in which it is used. This analysis is based on the observations that the structure of a sentence reflects a speaker's assumption about the hearer's state of knowledge and consciousness at the time of the utterance.

Lambrecht (1998:335) defines topic as the relation of aboutness between a proposition and a discourse entity. This work by Lambrecht will form the core insight to the research in realizing the objectives of this study.

Hocket (1958) looks at the various syntactical construction types: exocentric. He identifies three major classifications directive, connective and predicative. He says that all known languages

have constructions of each of the above three types; a few language have constructions of major importance which escape the classification (Hocket 1958: 191)

Hocket defines topic as the general idea among participants of what the current topic of discussion is. (Hocket 1958:192)

Hocket being a structuralist and not a functionalist will not be of much use in this research. However his views about topic and focus will be of much use to this research.

The above –mentioned books also define focus. Focus is another information structure category that is coded in various languages differently. Its definition varies in various texts though it basically refers to how information in one phrase relates to information in one phrase relates to information that has come before.

Callow (1974) defines focus as the general term for nay device whatever which gives certain events participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context.

According to Bhat (1991:52), focus refers to the argument which provides the most salient (noticcable and also projected) piece of information.

Dik (1978:19) defines focus as what is relatively the most important or salient information in the given context/setting.

All the above definitions of focus allude to the newness of a piece of information in a particular context. They all provide an important insight upon which this research rests.

1.8.3 Summary of the literature on topic and focus

From the above literature review, it is evident that topic and focus are important categories of information structure. A speaker packages his intended information with an intention that the listener /audience will and should unravel the piece of information.

Such discourse topics are maintained in a text by a battery of conversation devices, including anaphora, using related lexemes , repetition of lexemes , all of which create a cohesion to discourse that make them more than a mere collection of unrelated sentences.

Many of the features of Topic are typical of subjects in languages such as English and Dholuo. For example, they are typically given information, often activated elements. They also tend to occur at the beginning of sentences and finally they are in some sense what the sentence is about.

Consider the sentences below in English:

(7) As for the referendum, it's a foregone conclusion.

(8) Me, I've been an arsenal fan all my life.

In such sentences, the first part, before the coma, seems rather like a Topic. These though are rather marginal constructions in the language and speakers tend to avoid using them in writing.

Li and Thomson (1976) argue that languages differ systematically in their use of sentence topics and subjects. They identify three types;

1. Subject –prominent languages, such as English.

2. topic prominent languages , such as , Chinese

3. languages where both topic and subjects are important ,such as Japanese

Traditionally, observers speak as the first type as having a subject –predicate structure to their sentences, while the second type as having a 'Topic comment' structure. In each case, the claim is that the basic organization of the sentence is related to the speaker's decisions about its information structure.

The Focus of an utterance or sentence /clause is that part which indicates what the speaker intends as the most important or salient change to be made in the hearer's mental representation. Materials in focus typically:

- Add new information

- Changes what is already present in an activated propositional network.

The change is done either by replacement or by selecting between alternatives. This means that Focused material is generally;

- new or

- Contrastive.

The scope of focus for a given sentence can vary with the context. For example.

(9)   a. Did HARRY take the car?

b. No, GEORGE did.

In (9) above, both nominal may be activated in a conversation and the focus here has a contrastive function.

Focus is analyzed in various ways in Linguistics: Generative approach or Functional approach. In the generative approach, the term FOCUS is used to refer to WORDS or expressions that are either prosodic /syntactically prominent, generally because they introduce new information. In the functional approach, the term FOCUS is used to refer to words or expressions that establish coherence in the text or conversation. Here we deal with the generative approach. Example;

(10)   A. HENRY cleaned the kitchen.

        B. Given: Someone cleaned the kitchen

        C. New: It was Henry.

And;

(11)   A Henry CLEANED the kitchen.

        B. Given: Henry did something to the kitchen

        C. New: He cleaned it.

1.8.4 The Theoretical Literature

Relevance Theory may be seen as an attempt to work out in details one of Grice's central claims: that an essential feature of most human communication; both verbal and non-verbal is the

expression and recognition of intentions (Grice 1989). In developing this claim, Grice laid the foundation for an inferential model of communication; an alternative to the classical code model. According to the code model, a communicator encodes her intended message into a signal, which is decoded by the audience using an identical copy of the code.

According to the inferential model, a communicator provides evidence of her intention to covey a certain meaning, which is inferred by the audience on the basis of evidence provided. An utterance is, of course, a linguistically coded piece of evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of decoding. The goal of inferential pragmatics is to explain how the hearer infers the speakers meaning on the basis of evidence provided.

The relevance –theoretic account is based on another of Grice's central claims: that utterance automatically create expectations which guide the hearer towards the speakers meaning. Grice described these expectations in terms of a co-operative principle and maxims of quality (truthfulness), quality (information), relation (relevance), and manner (clarity) which speakers are expected to observe (Grice 1961:1981:368-372); the interpretation a rational hearer should choose is the one that best satisfies these expectations . Relevance theorists share Grice's intuition that utterances raise expectations of relevance but question several other aspects of his accounts, including the need for a co-operative principle and maxims, the focus on pragmatic processes which contribute to implicatiures rather than to explicit, truth conditional content, the role of deliberate maxim violation in utterance interpretation, and treatment of figurative utterance as deviations from a maxim or convenient of truthfulness.

The central claim of relevance theory is that expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough, and predictable enough to guide the hearer towards the speakers meaning. The aim is to ex plain in cognitively realistic terms what these expectations of relevance amount to, and how they might contribute to an empirically plausible account of comprehension.

The theory has developed in several stages. A detailed version was published in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 1987 a, b) and updated in Sperber and Wilson 1995, 1998a, 2002; Wilson and Sperber 2002).

1.9 Research Methodology

This section will mainly deal with the methods of data collection; sources of data, and data analysis and presentation.

1.9.1 Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected from ten narratives compiled by various authors in different collections of narratives in Dholuo. These include;

1. Amuka, Peter, Sumba – "*Ngero*" *as a social object*

2 Odera, Leo Omolo (1967) *Wasomuru Sigana Mamit.*

3. Worthington, F, *Apwoyo ja Oledhi*

4. Alloo, C.K (1966) *Otieno Achach*

5. Odaga, B.A (1980) *Sigendini Luo*

These narratives will be subsequently coded by the researcher for the various features of the research, such as, the presence of topic and focus. The primary goal of the study is to determine how/where these features are coded in various sentences/clauses that make the next.

The study chooses the secondary sources of data for three major reasons; firstly, the resources available to the researcher in terms of time; secondly and most importantly, the information structure categories such as topic and focus are context dependent. One can identify the topic or focus of a preposition only when context is considered. This context is provided for by the text as opposed to contrived sentences that would lack context.

Thirdly, the great advantage of narrative analysis is that the researcher can provide excerpts from the narratives to illustrate important conclusions in addition to reporting more standard quantitative analyses from the coded variables.

Judgment will be used- the researcher being a native speaker of the language under study-to elicits sentences that code the two categories –topic and focus.

The narratives under study were recorded between the year s 1964-1980. All the stories were narrated to the editors by old men and women who used them to entertain the young in the evening. Of course, a few changes must have been made by the editors.

1.9.2 Data Analysis and Presentation

The narratives will be coded for the variables under discussion; topic and focus .The sentences will be written down and analyzed to identify topic and focus. Context will be considered to qualify the identified variable. As mentioned earlier, excerpts from narratives will be quoted to make points or illustrate important conclusions.

To perform such analyses, the qualitative narratives must be translated into quantitative information using a content analysis. Content analysis is the process of extracting desired information from a text by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of the text (Smith, 2000). Content analysis takes one or both of two major approaches; coding the narratives according to discrete themes or categories and rating the narratives on continuous dimensions. Using a limited number of coded variables, the hypothesis in chapter one will be tested.

1.10 Significance of the Study

Four independent but related categories of information structure are identified. These are; presumption and assertion; identifiability and activation; topic and focus. The study focuses on the last two; topic and focus and how they are signaled in Dholuo language.

The study was motivated by the realization that speakers of all natural languages use different grammatical structures under different communicative circumstances to express basically the same idea. The structure chosen for use in a particular context reflects the speaker's assumption about the hearer's state of knowledge and consciousness at the time of the utterance. Therefore, the research paper sheds light on this structuring in Dholuo language.

CHAPTER TWO

TOPIC ANALYSIS

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will begin with a more elaborate definition of topic as presented by Lambrecht (1998). This will be followed by the identification of topic at the clause and sentence level which then will lead to topic at discourse level. Finally an analysis and description of how topic is coded and retained in Dholuo narrative texts will be handled.

2.1 Topic Definition

In this study the topic is treated as what the sentence is about, that is, the topic of a clause/sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about. Every sentence is usually about something or someone.

According to Lambrecht (1998) a sentence is about something if it is 'what is a matter of standing current interest'. If a topic is seen as a matter of standing interest, then a statement about a topic can account as informative only if it conveys information which is relevant with respect to this topic.

This "aboutness" relationship is usually context sensitive, i.e. what precedes a clause/sentence dictates what the topic of that clause/sentence is. A narrative is basically made up of various kinds of sentences; declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives etc. These sentences may be about a single entity or may introduce various entities or participants, both major and minor. Consider the following sentence;

(12) Otieno Achach ne   en wuod Kowak ma Tanganyika modak North Mara

      NM   TNS   he son of Kowak   NM   lives   NM

Otieno Achach was a son of Kowak of Tanganyika who lives in North Mara

(Source; Alloo, C.K (1966) Otieno Achach)

In this clause, *Otieno Achach* will be taken to be the topic of this proposition while *"ne en wuod Kowak ma Tanganyika modak North Mara"* will be taken to be a comment about the topic, *Otieno Achach*.

At the discourse level the whole sentence is consider to be the participant introductory clause. This sentence (12) introduces the major participant of the narrative as *Otieno Achach* which is later developed further with the subsequent sentences.

The clause introduces a noun phrase *Otieno Achach* which according to Lambrecht (1998) maybe considered a non-topic at this level. This is technically known as a presentational articulation; it introduces an entity (Lambrecht 1994: 144).

Notice that the above sentence is a complex sentence made up of two clauses ; the main clause , *"Otieno Achach ne en wuod Kowak ma Tanga*nyika" and the sub-ordinate clause *"modak North Mara "*. This clause can be expanded to read;

Topic

Ma	o-dak	North Mara
Who	live	North Mara

Who lives in North Mara

The main clause introduces the non-topic and the sub-ordinate clause qualifies the non-topic to become the topic by the use of an embedded morpheme *"o- "* , hence the assertion that, *"o- "* is the topic, referring back to *"Otieno Achach"* . This supports the claim by Lambrecht (1998) that topics not necessary have to be the initial elements in a sentence /clause. Sentence initial elements may either be topics or foci. Since the rest of the proposition is taken to convey relevant information about *"Otieno Achach,"* it will be considered to be the topic of this proposition at sentence level.

At discourse level, the function changes. Lambrecht (1998:129) observes that it often happens that a referent which is topical on a discourse level is coded as a focus expression upon its first mention. It becomes a topic expression in subsequent clauses or sentences.

This situation arises regularly in most bi-clausal topic-introducing constructions such as (12) above. For this reason the phrase *"Otieno Achach ne en wuod Kowak ma Tanganyika"* can be treated as a focus expression while the subordinate clause *"modak North Mara"* has a topic morpheme *"o-"* embedded within the verb *"-dak"* and the relative pronoun morpheme *"ma"*.

Topic can also be seen to be in close relationship with the subject in a sentence. In Dholuo, it is not possible to equate topic with a single grammatical category like subject. The context of a

clause/sentence dictates what the topic would be. Consider the following sentence which is a continuation of (12) above;

(13)   Wuon mare Odipo, gi   min mare Agumba, nene ok onwan'go hawi

      Father his   NM   and mother his   NM   TNS   not get   luck

      mar nyuolo nyinthindo moko to mana Otienoni   kende.

      to beget   children   other but   NM this   only

His father Odipo and his mother Agumba were not lucky to beget other children but

this Otieno only.

In sentence (13) the subject is "*wuon mare Odipo gi min mare Agumba*", however the topic is "*Otienoni kende*". It is therefore very important to note that not all subjects are topics. Example (13) shows that it is not a must that the initial elements in a sentence be necessarily subjects. They can either be topic or foci. This example (13) confirms the claim that "the syntax of English and other SVO languages, like Dholuo, is unmarked with respect to its information structure. Nevertheless the correlation between topic and subject is extremely strong on the level of discourse and has important grammatical consequences in languages. In the absence of context, the subject of a sentence/clause is always taken to be the topic. Lambrecht (1998:132) asserts that, "since sentences are primarily used as units of information in coherent discourse, and since information relies on presuppositions, language, users have an unconscious inclination to impose presupposition structure on isolated sentences in order to be able to conceive of them as pieces of information".

2.2 Topic Identification at the Clause/Sentence Level

The information conveyed by a sentence may be presented in several different ways. Examine the following sentences;

(14a) Achien'g   e nyinge

    NM   her name

  "Achien'g is her name"

(14b) Nyinge   Achien'g

    Her name Achien'g

    Her name is Achien'g

These two sentences convey the same information, in that they all talk about "*Achien'g*" and describe something about her. However this information is not presented in the same way to the reader. According to Levinsohn (2004) the two sentences have different articulations but according to Lambrecht (1998) the two sentences have different information structure. Sentence articulation refers to the way that information in a sentence is presented. Below is a brief review of the various information structures that are found in different language by Lambrecht (1998).

2.2.1 Topic-Comment Structure

In this kind of structure, the speaker says something about an established entity. The entity is called the 'topic" of the sentence and what is said about the entity is called the comment .sentence (16) thus has a topic –comment structure.

Topic	Comment
(15) Dog and hare	made an agreement

A referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation /context when the proposition is construed as being about the referent, i.e. as expressing information which is relevant to and which increases the addressee's knowledge of this referent.(Lambrecht 1994; 131)

Comment on the other hand refers to the information about the topic. Levinsohn (2004) makes three useful observations about (propositional) topics. These are;

- The topic is usually the subject of the sentence.
- The topic must be either already established in the text or easily related to one that is already established.
- Care must be taken not to confuse the term propositional topic with the topic of a paragraph or longer stretch of speech or writing.

2.2.2 Focus –Presupposition (Identificational) Structure

Consider sentence (16) below;

Focus				Presupposition		
(16) Ne	en	Liech	gi	Apwoyo	mane	oketo kwe.
TNS	Elephant	Hare		who	bring	peace

It was elephant and hare who brought peace

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In this kind of structure the writer and reader must already know that some participants did something. The writer then highlights the fact that it was "*Elephant and Hare*" who did so. Elephant and hare are the focus of this sentence where as "*someone made an agreement*" is the presupposition. Presupposition refers to a proposition that except for one thing /element, is assumed to be known. Focus refers to the element that was lacking in the presupposed proposition.

2.2.3 Presentation Structure

This is the third category of topic structures that Lambrecht discusses. When a sentence has a presentational articulation it "introduces an entity" (Lambrecht 1998: 144) for example;

(17) Once there lived Dog and Hare.

In (17) Dog and Hare are presented without saying anything about them. Such a sentence has a presentational structure because it does not make a comment about an established topic.

2.2.4 Event –Reporting Structure

Lambrecht (1998:223) uses the terms "event reporting" for sentences of "an all–new character "that report an event ". Such sentences might respond to a question like;

(18) An'go ma timore? (What's happening?)

Koth chwe. (It's raining)

An event –reporting sentence is one that introduces a new event into a text without linking its introduction to an established topic or to some presupposed proposition (Levinsohn 2004:3)

Event reporting sentences are similar to sentences with presentational articulation, in that both introduce a new element into the text without linking this element either to an already established topic or to some presupposed proposition. The difference between the presentational and the event –reporting type is that in presentational sentences the newly introduced element is an entry while in event –reporting sentences, it is an event which necessarily involves an entity. Lambrecht uses the term thetic to designate the category that includes both presentational and event –reporting sentences.

A thetic sentence is one that introduces a new element (be it an entity or an event) into a text without liking its introduction to an established topic or to some presupposed preposition. (Levinsohn 2004; 3)

Cross-linguistically, event –reporting sentences are very infrequent in narratives. This is because the introduction of nearly every new event in a narrative is linked "either to an already established topic or to some presupposed proposition" (Lambrecht 1994:144)

In Dholuo the topic of a clause/clause is usually the initial element or the noun phrase that appears sentence initially if it is an overt NP, that is, Dholuo sentences can generally be analyzed as consisting of a set of arguments (Noun Phrase) and a predicate. Dholuo, just as English is an SVO language with an optional object as shown in the sentences below;

(19) Otieno   o – dhi   chiro

     NM   PSN   go   market

     Otieno went to the market

In the above sentence (19) Otieno is both the subject and Topic while, *"odhi chiro"* is the comment about the topic.

The noun phrases within a sentence usually represent two main types of relations called "syntactic relations" and "pragmatic relations"; of which the former relate the arguments with the predicate and the latter with the speech context.

In sentence (19) *"Otieno* "is the subject while *"chiro"* is the object. This is a syntactic relationship. Pragmatically, *"Otieno"* is the topic while **"odhi chiro"** is a comment about *"Otieno"*.

2.3 Topic and Word Order

It has often been claimed that there is a universal principle or at least a strong cross linguistic tendency, for topic expressions to be the first constituents in a sentence. This is true of Dholuo sentences that always either have a lexical NP as the sentence–initial or an embedded morpheme "o-" as shown in the following examples;

(20a) Onyango en jatich matek

     NM   is worker strong

     Onyango is a strong worker

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(20b) O-   dhi   chiro

   PSN   go   market

"He is going to the market"

Sentence (20a) would be interpreted as being about "*Onyango*" and sentence (20b) as about "*o-*

"which is always clarified under context. However, it should be noted that, focus constituents

can also freely occur as sentence initial subjects. This is usually the case during the first mention

of a participant in a text. Any subsequent mentioning of the same referent would code the subject

and topic word initially. Consider the first paragraph of this novel.

(21) Otieno Achach ne en wuod kowak ma Tanganyika modak North Mara. Otieno ne timbege

OtienoAchach   TNS   son   Kowak of Tanganyika live   North Mara Otieno TNS behaviour

richo ahinya.

Bad very

Otieno Achach was a son of kowak of Tanganyika who lives in North Mara. Otieno was a very

bad behaved boy

In the first sentence the sentence–initial NP is coded as a focus since it introduces the character.

The second mention of '*Otieno* "is coded sentence- initially as the subject and the topic of this

sentence.

In summary, it is right to claim that Dholuo codes the sentence topics word-initially after its

introduction in the beginning of discourse as a focus element.

2.4 Topic in Discourse

There have been numerous treatments of topic in syntactic and discourse studies. For the most part they focus on the notion of "aboutness" in the sentence and larger units.

Sentence syntacticians have generally associated topic with an NP, usually the first one in the sentence .Therefore, the topic might be the subject of the sentence as in;

Topic   **Comment**

(22) Mary   was in a car accident.

Or even a left–dislocated constituent that does not refer to the subject of the next clause for example;

Topic

(23) This girl, her name is Mary

This firstness property of topics is also reflected in larger units, as a consequence of "aboutness". Where topic is associated with early NP referents which recur as subjects within the discourse unit, the firstness properly is clear .However, some studies adopt a more specific notion of topic as a preposition linking at least one NP (something) with an event or state of affairs (happening) presented in the expanded form of a discourse unit. Thus Keenan & Schieffelin (1976) characterize the topic of conversation or a sentence or clause as "a proposition (or set of propositions) about which the speaker is providing or requesting new information (ibid). Adopting this definition to the present research, a topic as a proposition has the general form 'something happens to someone' in the case of narratives. Keenan and Schieffelin suggest that

once the general conditions for a communicative exchange have been satisfied , the first work in establishing a discourse topic is the introduction of the referents of the proposition ,such as;

(24) Nene nitie wuowi moro e piny Sidho ma Kano mawuok chien'g.

    TNS there boy certain in land NM of NM East

    Wuowi no nene nyinge iluongo ni Ochome wuod Agulu.

    Boy that TNS name called NM son Agulu.

There was a certain boy in the land of Sidho of Kano East. That boy was called Ochome son of Agulu

(Omollo, L.O; *N'gat Manene Oromo gi Makolwer)*

These two sentences introduce / establish the topic of discussion for this narrative. At this particular instance it has the focus status. In a text, the topic usually expands throughout, incorporating all new information.

Narratives can be described in terms of topic by use of their own internal structures as proposed labov and Waletzky (1967). Discussion of this approach suggests a use of the concept of propositional topic of a multi sentence discourse unit.

2.4.1 Topic and Participant Introduction

In narratives, the first paragraph contains a few sentences that normally introduces the participants .This paragraph usually sets the stage in terms of time, place and characters. Let's consider an example here.

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(25) Chien'g more achiel Apwoyo nene oluwo ndara karingo matek e kinde mag odhiambo.

One day   Hare TNS follow road ran fast in the   evening

Ban'g ringo kuom kinde matin, nene oneno Nyakech ka biro ire kendo Nyakech nene ringo

After ran short,   TNS see Impala approach him and Impala TNS run

matek ahinya ma ok on'gi kata mana bathe.

Fast very without glancing sideways.

"One day Apwoyo followed the road as he ran very fast in the evening. After a short run, he saw Nyakech approaching him and Nyakech was running so fast that he (Nyakech) never glanced sideways".

(Leo Odera Omollo (1967) Dhaw e kind Apwoyo gi Sibuor)

This paragraph has two sentences. The first sentence introduces the first participant as "*Apwoyo*" and makes a comment about him" *that he followed the road running very fast*". I suggest that the sentence also introduces a spatial frame as "*one day* "which is technically known as the "point of departure "in discourse analysis. The place, where the events are taking place is also introduced as being a "*long the road*".

The second sentence of this paragraph introduces the second participant "*Nyakech*" and makes a comment about him. It is very convenient to term "*Apwoyo*" as the topic of sentence one and "*Nyakech*" as the topic of sentence two. However, at this stage in discourse structure, the two lexical NPs have a focus status. The entire two sentences do introduces the participants. This is the case with almost every narrative text that the first paragraph usually introduces the participants.

The second paragraph of the story begins like this.

(26) Apwoyo nene   okok   ka   luong   -e..........

    Hare   TNS   shouted   as   he calls   him ....

    Apwoyo shouted calling him..........

At this point, "*Apwoyo*" is now the topic of the clause and is coded with a lexical NP sentence–initially. It is coded with a lexical NP and not with a pronoun to avoid any confusion between the two participants that had earlier been introduced. The object NP is embedded within the verb root as "-e" (him). This pronominal refers back to "Nyakech".

2.4.2 Topic, Comment and Point of Departure

We saw in section 2.3.1, that in a sentence with topic-comment articulation, the speaker talks about something-the propositional topic-and makes a comment about that topic. For example:

Topic   **Comment**

(27) Apwoyo nene okok   ka   luongo   Nyakech.

    Hare   TNS   shout as   call   Impala

    Hare shouted as he called the impala

A problem arises however if the sentence in a narrative text are analyzed. Not all sentences fit this kind of articulation. Consider the sentence below.

Point of departure   **Topic**   **Comment**

(28)   Chien'g moro achiel   Apwoyo   nodhi limo Liech.

   One day   *Hare*   *went out to visit elephant*

The sentence can be divided into three parts; point of departure, topic and comment. Points of departure are described taking context into consideration; that is what precedes them. Thus Chafe (1976:56) says that such constituents set a "spatial, temporal or individual domain within which the main predication holds". In other words a point of departure establishes a setting for what follows. In example (28) the point of departure sets the spatial domain.

Points of departure are as much backward –as forward –looking. In other words such constituents have a bi-directional function:

- To serve as a starting point for the communication and

- To provide the primary basis for relating a sentence to its context or mental representation(Levinsohn 2004:3.1)

In sentence (28) the point of departure, "*chien'g moro achiel*" is forward-looking and backward looking. It relates the previous events with the current events, i.e. "*chien'g moro achiel*" in relation to the time that is past and the events of the day described by the comment "*Apwoyo nodhi limo Liech*".

According to Levinson (2004:3.1) "topics and point of departure make reference to something which is currently accessible to the hearers, so as to anchor the clause at that place in the mental representation". In this study, focus is on the referential point of departure.

2.4.3 Referential Point of Departure

Besides temporal and spatial points of departure there is the referential point of departure. These are prepositional or postpositional phrases which establish the theme for a paragraph or longer section.

They typically relate the communication to the context by switch from a previous paragraph theme. Consider sentence (29);

Point of departure   Topic   Comment

(29) Ban'ge matin,   Sibuor   ne ochiewo nikech ne owinjo rem ahinya.

   After short   Lion   TNS wake up because TNS felt pain serious

After a short while the lion woke up because he felt a serious pain

(Worthington (1964) *Apwoyo gi Sibuor*)

The initial phrase signals the new theme for the paragraph. It also relates what follows to the context by a switch from the theme of the previous section.

Referential points of departure may also be nominal constituents. In such instances, the point of departure may also be the subject and propositional topic of a topic- comment sentence as shown in sentence (30) below.

   Topic/pt. of departure   Comment

(30) Apwoyo   nodhi machiegni kod Sibuor

   Hare   went closer to   Lion

Hare went closer to Lion

(Omollo, L.O. (1967) *Dhaw e kind Apwoyo gi Sibuor)*

In the above example *"Apwoyo"* is both the point of departure and the propositional topic of the sentence.

Subject –initial languages, such as Dholuo, typically use a spacer (Dooley 1990:477) or left dislocation to separate the subject from the rest of the sentence and indicate that it is the point of departure.

2.4.3.1 Spacers

Spacers tend to be short expressions with little or no stresses, whose lexical meaning has sentence scope. They may have a default grammatical position in the sentence, but can alternatively be placed between constituents with distinct discourse –pragmatic roles. (Dooley & Levinsohn 2001:73). Consider example (31)

	Point of departure	Topic	Comment	
(31a)	Kata kamano	Apwoyo	nene	owuotho matin, ban'ge...............
	However		hare	TNS-PAST walk briefly, then..........

However hare walked briefly, then............

In the above example, *'kata kamano"* functions as a spacer. Its default grammatical position is at the beginning of the sentence. When it occurs after the subject as (32b), the spacer separates subject from the rest of the sentence, and signals that it is also a point of departure.

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(31b) Apwoyo, kata kamano, nene   owuotho matin…….

    Hare,   however,   TNS   walk   briefly…..

    Hare however walked briefly……..

2.4.4 Discourse Topic Retention

In Dholuo   narrative texts, there are certain linguistic markers that show that a speaker is introducing a topic or he is retaining the already existing topic. These formal markers appear in other discourse types like speeches. Let us examine the ways through which topic can be retained in a text.

2.4.4.1 Bound Morphemes

As shown above, the topic of a sentence can be retained in Dholuo narrative texts through the use of bound morphemes. Another example will suffice :(Omollo, L.O (1967) *Dhaw e kind Apwoyo gi Sibuor);*

(32)   **Topic**   **Comment**   **Topic**   **Comment**

    Apwoyo   nene owuotho…Ne ˈ o-   dhi nyime kod wuoth….

                                          TNS   PSN goes ahead with walk

    Hare walked ………..He went ahead with the walk

Note that Dholuo exhibits the pronouns in the form of bound morphemes that are fused with the verb.

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2.4.4.2 Free Morphemes

The topic of a clause or sentence can be retained by use of free morphemes too. This happens in two ways:

i.   through repetition ,where the topic is repeated in subsequent sentences as shown in example (33)

ii.   through the use of synonyms, here words with similar senses are used as shown in example (34)

        Topic   **Topic**

(33) Omiyo Apwoyo ne odhi ir Sibuor. Ban'ge   Apwoyo nodonjo ……..

    So   Hare   TNS go to Lion   Thereafter   Hare   entered……

So hare went to lion. Thereafter he went in…………

          Topic   **Topic**

(34)   Kiny,   Apwoyo noparo e chunye………..Ogila ne oyudo…….

    Following day   Hare   thought……   Hare TNS find

The following day, hare thought…….Hare went and found…….

(Worthington, F (1964) *Apwoyo gi Sibuor*)

From the texts under discussion, the topic is mainly retained through repetition of the name of the subject. This is perhaps because they are children's books and their attention span is very limited. So, the author is under obligation to make the reading simple and comprehensible to the young readers.

2.4.5 Topic Switch

In narratives, when an author introduces a new discourse topic on sentence level, he must announce it. This is done through overt lexical items. That being the case, the author makes sure that he signals to the readers when he is moving to a new sentence or clause topic. In this way, the common subject who is also the topic becomes part of the shared information of the topic framework which the readers use to respond and interpret whatever follows. Consider the sentence below.

	Topic				Topic
(35) Ban'ge	ka Apwoyo	nene	osewuok …	Oyieyo kod Lange…….	
After	Hare	TNS	leave ….	Rat and his followers….	

After hare had left……Rat and his follows…

The first clause in sentence (35) has "*Apwoyo*" as its topic. In the following clause, the topic shifts from "*Apwoyo*" (hare) to "*Oyieyo kod Lange*" (rat and his followers).

This must be clearly stated for ease of understanding and comprehension of the text.

2.5 Topic, Cohesion and Coherence

A text is said to be coherent if, for a certain reader /hearer on a certain reading /hearing; he or she is able to fit its different elements into a single overall mental representation. When a text fails to cohere, the reader /hearer fail to construct an overall mental representation for it (Dooley & Levinsohn 2000:11)

Writers of texts usually attempt to help the reader /hearer to perceive the coherence of the text by organizing it the way in which the meanings are expressed .This is usually achieved in different ways- such as theme choice, which directly affects the structure of the clause itself and use of cohesive ties.

Cohesion refers to the linguistic devices by which the speaker can signal the experiential and interpersonal coherence of the text and is thus a textual phenomenon (Thomson 2004: 179). This means that we can point to features of the text which have a cohesive function. Below is a paragraph from a narrative text by Worthington, F. (1964) *Apwoyo ja Oledhi.*

(36) Chon gilala ne nitie Sibuor moro maduon'g .Ne oduon'g moloyo kendo ne oratego, mi ne o-bedo ruoth mane oriwo piny misdoing. Le duto bende ne oluore.
Once upon a time there was a huge lion. It was very huge and strong, therefore it *became a king that brought everyone together. All the animals respected him.*

The first two sentences are about the lion .The sentence introduces the discourse topic and the subsequent sentence builds on the already established topic. The topic of these sentences is maintained by the use of bound pronouns o- that refers back to lion. The last sentence introduces another topic, "*Le duto* ". A lion being an animal, there is no confusion whatsoever on the relationship between the first and second 'topics'

Coherence, on the other hand, is in the mind of the writer and reader: it is a mental phenomenon and cannot be identified or qualified in the same way as cohesion. Cohesion and coherence are in

most cases linked, in that a text that exploits the cohesive resources of the language effectively should normally be perceived as coherent.

In the above example (36), the paragraph employs the use of referential pronouns and sentence connections such as *mi* (therefore). This paragraph is therefore interpreted as being coherent since it has employed the use of cohesive ties.

Nevertheless, cohesion is a crucial linguistic resource in the expression of coherent meanings; and the analyst may gain equally important insights into how it works from cases where a lack of cohesive devices in a text does not lead to the interactants perceiving it as coherent.

Topic and coherence are closely intertwined. In that text where several participants are involved, they must be introduced and developed in a way that does not confuse the reader or hearer. Let's consider instances where the topics cohere in various sentences.

2.6 Means of Coherence

A text must cohere if it is to make sense to the reader. Text writers employ various techniques to guide the reader. The following were the methods encountered in the texts analyzed.

2.6.1 Reference and Ellipsis

One of the main cohesive resources can be broadly described as repetition. This term would be understood to include repetition of meaning not just of words, but also grammatical as well as lexical repetition.

Grammatical repetition consists of two types: reference and Ellipsis. Reference is the set of grammatical resources that allow the speaker to indicate whether something is being repeated from somewhere earlier in the text or whether it has not yet appeared in the text (i.e. it is new to us). Consider a paragraph from Leo Odera 1967: *Dhaw e kind Apwoyo gi Sibuor.*

(37)   Chien'g moro Apwoyo nene oluwo ndara koringo matek e kinde mag odhiambo.Ban'g

        ringo kuom kinde matin, nene oneno Nyakech ka biro ire, kendo Nyakech nene ringo

        matek ahinya ma ok on'gi kata mana bathe.

One day Apwoyo followed a road as he ran very fast in the evening. After a short run, he saw Nyakech come his way and Nyakech was running without glancing   backwards or sideways

In the above example (37) two participants (topics) are introduced. To avoid any confusion, the writer resorts to repetition of the name of the second participant (*Nyakech*). This is reference through repetition, a frequently used cohesive resource in Dholuo narratives.

Ellipsis is the set of resources which full repetition of a clause or clause element can be avoided, and by such it can be signaled to readers that they should repeat the writing from a previous clause in the mind.

The other method of ellipsis is substitution. In substitution, a linguistic token is put in the place of the wording to be repeated from elsewhere.

(38) Chon gilala nene nitie winy ariyo ma iluongo ni Ongo. Nene gin osiepe matek ahinya.

Once upon a time TNS there birds two called Ongo.   TNS they friends   great

Osiepe ariyogi....

Friends two these....

Once upon a time there we two birds called Ongo. They were great friends. These two friends ...

The first sentence introduces the topic as "*Ongo*". The second sentence comments about them. It informs us that they were great friends. The third sentence substitutes the topic Noun phrase with a descriptive Noun phrase that refers back to the established topic. The description "*Osiepe ariyogi* (these two friends) is the topic and subject of this third sentence.

It should be remembered that both reference and ellipsis can operate within the clause or clause complex or across clause complexes.

2.6.2 Conjunction

This section gives a brief overview to indicate some of the important features of the role of conjunction in creating coherence.

Conjunction refers broadly to the combining of any two textual elements into a potentially coherent complex semantic unit (Thompson 2004: 129)

The example below explains this;

Pt of departure	Topic	Comment
(39) Chon gilala,	Oliktiga kod Oyieyo, kod·Winyo	nene gin osiepe.

Long ago, Oliktiga and Oyieyo and Winyo were friends

To use of the conjunction *"kod"* makes three participants, the sentence topic. The comment made concerns all of them; that they were friends.

The use of conjunctions in texts to create cohesion is an important resource for creating coherence in a text.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter topic is defined as what a clause or sentence is about. What a clause or a sentence is about can either be something or someone. Topic in Dholuo narrative texts is also said to coincide with the sentence subject.

Topic-comment structure is the one that has been found to be frequently employed in the narratives that were analyzed.

The study also realized that topic in narratives is coded sentence initially when it is a lexical NP but after the tense marker *"nene"* if it is coded by the use of a pronominal.

Repetition of a lexical NP is one way of topic retention in texts. This is frequent when the topic is contrastive or identifies a participant out if a group.

The use of the morpheme "o-" is another method through which an already established topic is retained.

Finally Dholuo narrative texts also employ the use of synonyms to retain the topic under discussion. This can be through the use of one lexical item or a descriptive statement.

CHAPTER THREE

FOCUS ANALYSIS

3.0 Introduction

In chapter two the study defined topic, identified topic at clause/sentence and discourse levels, explained and described the topic marking in Dholuo narrative texts. The study also looked at the various articulations of sentences that lead to the various categories of topic structures. We found out that in Dholuo, the subject in many cases coincide with the topic of a sentence or clause.

In this chapter the study presents an analysis of how focus is highlighted in Dholuo narrative texts. The study also discusses the various focus structures found in Dholuo narrative texts and an analysis of how the focused element is coded within these texts. This chapter begins with the definition of focus.

3.1 Definition of Focus

In chapter two, the term focus was used to refer to the elements of a sentence which differed from the topic propositions in their pragmatic function. Following this, focus can be defined as the "complement of topic" (Lambrecht 1998:206). Using Chafe's definition of the topical subject as the "hitching post for the new knowledge "(Chafe 1976), we might then conclude that the focus of a sentence is the "new knowledge hitched to the topic post" (Quoted in Lambrecht 1998:206), that is, the new information conveyed about a topic. Consider the sentence below;

	Topic	Focus	
(40)	Otieno	en	jalupo

NM   is   fisherman

Otieno is a fisherman

In sentence (40) if Otieno is taken to be the topical subject and following the above argument, then "*en jalupo*" is the focus as the phrase conveys new information about the topic "*Otieno*".

In this study, the focus of a sentence / clause, or more precisely the focus of the proposition expressed by a sentence in a given context, is seen as the element of information, whereby the presumption and the assertion differ from each other as mentioned already before. The focus is that portion of a proposition which cannot be taken for granted. It is the unpredictable or pragmatically non-recoverable element in a sentence. The focus is what makes an utterance/sentence into an assertion, (Lambrecht 1998:207). Let us examine sentence (41) below;

(41) Chon gilala ne nitie n'gato   moro mane iluongo ni Nyamgondho wuod Ombare.

   Long ago   TNS there somebody certain who call   Nyamgondho son of Ombare

   Nyamgondho ne en jalupo   mane odhier   malich.

   Nyamgondho TNS   fisherman who poor   very

   Once upon a time there lived a man called Nyamgondho the son of Ombare.

   Nyamgondho was a very poor fisherman.

In example (41) above, we are justified in saying that the phrase "*ne en jalupo mane odhier malich* " in the above context indicates the point where there is the greatest concentration of information , or that this is the phrase whereby the writer marks out as the message block and

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which he wishes to be interpreted as informative. Thus we say that the phrase "*ne en jalupo mane odhier malich*" is the focus 0f sentence (41). The denotatum of this phrase stands in a pragmatically construed relation to the proposition such that its addition makes the sentence a piece of new information.

3.1.1 General Overview of Focus Types

Dik (1980:59) identifies what he calls the six "etics" of focus. Okoth (1980:66-68) also mentions them. The common factor in all these types of focus is that they are all assigned to information bearing elements. These six "etics" of focus can thus be seen as specifications of conditions under which an element in a predication can be regarded as information –bearing or more strictly, as bearing the most salient piece of information in a given set of pragmatic conditions.

According to Okoth (1986) Dholuo does not formally (morphologically) mark all the above-mentioned types of focus. He states that "the focus marker per excellence in Dholuo is the element e" as in;

    (42)   Anyango   e   nyako

            NM   Foc.   Girl

       Anyango is the girl (with stress on e)

This sentence asserts that *Anyango*, as opposed to some other girls, is the one who has the real qualities of what is expected of a girl.

Okoth (1986) also examines the juxtaposition that exists between the focus element *e* and the relativizer *ma* and concludes that in Dholuo "the head term in a relative clause can be left out" as shown below;

(43) Otieno e ng'at ma nyalo konyowa

NM Foc PSN Rel. can help-us

Otieno is the person who can help us

Sentence (43) can be expressed as follows:

(44) Otieno e ma nyalo konyowa

NM Foc. Rel. Can help-us

Otieno is the one who can help us

While in cases such as (43) and (44) the separate functions of *e* and *ma* are clear, there are cases where ma may be said to support e in focus marking. Thus for example, in the focus construction:

(45) Chunya e ma rach

My spirit Foc. Foc. Bad

It is my spirit that is low

Okoth (1986) concludes that focus is formally marked in Dholuo by the elements *e, ma* or the combination of *ema*.

As stated in chapter one, this may be true when analyzing isolated sentences but when analyzing texts, any constituent within a sentence/ clause can be focused. The determining factor is the context of the utterance/clause/sentence.

3.2 Focus Structure

Just as various articulations of sentences gives various topic structures, the focus structures also come out in various articulations of sentences. Lambrecht (1994:222) states that utterances with topic-comment articulation have predicate-focus structure. The focus of such sentences is all the non-established information in the comment (predicate) unless marked to the contrary. Consider the sentence;

(46)   **Point of departure   Topic   Comment**

Chien'g moro achiel, Apwoyo nodhi limo Liech.

One day hare went to visit elephant

I argued in chapter two that sentence (46) has a topic- comment articulation; "*Apwoyo*" is topic and "*nodhi limo Liech*" is the comment about "*Apwoyo*". An adverbial point of departure, "*chien'g moro achiel*" precedes the topic. The focus of the sentence is all the non-established information in the comment. From sentence (46) it appears that the only piece of established information is "Apwoyo". This means that "*nodhi limo Liech*" is the focus of sentence (46).

Notice that in the above description, the topic and the focus of sentence (46) are different elements. Topic and focus are not synonyms in linguistic circles. In a sense they are opposites. More exactly, propositional topics-and points of departure differ from focal constituents in that;

- A propositional topic or point of departure must either be already established in the text or be easily related to one that is already established.

- Information that is focal either has not been established in the text or needs to be re-established.

If we apply this distinction to sentence (46), we find the following;

- The point of departure *"chien'g moro achiel"* is to be related to the time that has already been established in the text. It is understood to mean 'one day after the events of the previous sentence".

- The topic *" Apwoyo*" is a participant who has already been established in that context.

- The focal information of the comment *"nodhi limo Liech"* is information that has not already been established in the text.

The approach to the study of focus in discourse analysis adopted here is based on the idea that the focus can be divided into a number of distinct types which correspond to different kinds of pragmatically structured propositions. These focus types are used in different communicative situations and are manifested across languages in distinct formal categories.

The following sections set out to establish the existence of various categories of focus by analyzing various sentences that appear in the narrative texts under discussion.

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It is imperative to mention here that focus types, as used here, implies the conventional association of a focus meaning with a sentence form. The idea developed here borrows from Lambrecht (1998) in that the unmarked subject –predicate (topic –comment) sentence type in chapter two in which the predicate is the focus and in which the subject (plus any other topical elements) is in the presupposition, will be said to have predicate-focus structure; and the event reporting or presentational sentence type in which the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate will be said to have sentence-focus structure.

3.2.1 Predicate –Focus Structure

Consider the following paragraph;

(47) Otieno Achach ne en wuod kowak ma Tanganyika modak North Mara.

Otieno Achach TNS son Kowak of Tanganyika lived North Mara.

Wuon mare Odipo, gi min mare Agumba, nene ok onwan'go hawi mar nyuolo Father his

Odipo, and mother his Agumba TNS not get luck to beget

nyithinndo moko; to mana Otieno ni kende ema nochun'g kar kayo to gichogo.

Children other; but just Otieno this only who stood , in place of first and last.

Otieno Achach was a son of Kowak of Tanganyika who lives in North Mara. His father Odipo and his mother Agumba were not lucky to have other children; but Otieno alone who was their first and last born".

(Alloo., C.K (1966) *Otieno Achach)*

The above paragraph is made up of two sentences. The first sentence can be called a presentational sentence where the participant(s) is/are introduced. The participant, as discussed in chapter two, is introduced as *Otieno Achach*. In the second sentence, further participants are

introduced and are coded sentence –initially as "*wuon mare Odipo gi min mare Agumba*". The use of the lexical pronouns "*his father* "and "*his mother*" indicates that the writer assumes that the topic earlier introduced in the preceding sentence is still available in the memory of the reader. The focused elements in this sentence are *nene ok onwan'go hawi mar nyuolo nyithindo moko; to mana Otieno ni kende ema nochun'g kar kayo to gichogo.*

In the predicate-focus structure above, the relevant presupposition evoked in sentence two is that *Otieno Achach* is pragmatically available as a topic for discussion; i.e. that the proposition can be construed as a comment about this topic; the assertion is the establishment of an aboutness relation between the topic referent and the event denoted by the predicate; and the focus is the predicate.

The focus structure of the sentence is also expressed by the fact that the subject is marked as a topic; hence as being excluded from the focus domain; this topic appears either in the preferred form, i.e. as a pronominal, or ass a lexical NP, or as both. This is further elaborated by the following example.

Topic   **Focus**

(48) Odipo ma wuongi   ne   en japith ahinya.

   Odipo who father   TNS   livestock keeper

Odipo who was his father was a famous livestock keeper

Sentence (48) has the lexical NP *"Odipo"* and the pronominal" *his father"*, which are co-referential and have a relationship with an earlier established topic *Otieno Achach*. The new information given here is that Otieno's father was a famous livestock keeper. We see in these two examples that the focus is the predicate part of these sentences.

3.2.2 Argument-Focus Structure

The analysis of the argument focus structure here is pegged of the below sentence:

(49a) Did Mary wash the clothes?

(49b) No. PAUL did.

The relevant presupposition evoked in the reply is that somebody did the washing; the assertion is that this somebody is not Mary but Paul; and the focus is Paul. This structure is hard to find in narratives but very common in speech contexts in Dholuo.

3.2.3 Sentence –Focus Structure

In narrative texts the initial sentence where the participants are usually introduced can be considered as having the sentence –focus structure. Let us consider the following opening sentence in a narrative.

Point of departure   Focus

(50) Chon gilala   Apwoyo   nene   dwaro loso baranget

  Once upon a time NM   TNS   want make blanket.

  *Once upon a time, Apwoyo wanted to make a blanke*t

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In sentence (50) the whole structure, apart from the point of departure, the rest can be considered as focus of the sentence. This is the stage where the participant is introduced as "*Apwoyo*" and a comment made about him. At this instance "*Apwoyo*" cannot be called the topic of this proposition instead it is part of the focus.

3.3 Information Focus in Discourse

Information focus relates each information unit to the preceding discourse by assigning to it a structure whose elements may be called 'given' and "new". The terms 'given' and "new" are to be interpreted not as "previously mentioned" and "not previously mentioned" but as "assigned or not assigned by the speaker or writer, the status of being derivable from the preceding discourse".

Thus what is treated by the speaker /writer as given may not in fact have been said, and what is treated as new maybe contrastive or contradictory. It is in this sense that the element to which information focus is assigned can be said to have the value "new" in the structure. Whether the remaining elements have the value "given" however, depends on whether the focus is marked or unmarked. The following paragraph highlights this:

Otieno Achach ne en wuod Kowak ma Tanganyika modak North Mara. Wuon mare Odipo, gi min mare Agumba, nene ok onwan'go hawi mar nyuolo nyithindo moko.

Otieno Achach was a son of Kowak of Tanganyika living in North Mara. His father Odipo, and his mother Agumba, were not blessed with other children.

(Alloo, C.K (1966) *Otieno Achach)*

The above paragraph is composed of two sentences. The first sentence introduces the major character of the narrative as *Otieno Achach*. The whole sentence can be treated as sentence focus or participant introductory sentence. The second sentence introduces other participants, which are Otieno's father and mother. My analysis of the second sentence is as follows:

(51)   **Given   Focus   Given   Focus   Focus**

Wuon mare Odipo gi min mare Agumba nene ok onwan'go ....

Father his   NM and mother his NM   TNS not gotten........

His father Odipo and his mother Agumba were not blessed.

The phrases "*wuon mare* "and "*min mare*" are given even though they were not mentioned in the initial sentence. This is so because *Otieno Achach*, having been introduced, presupposed the existence of his parents. Hence what are new in this sentence are their names "*Odipo and Agumba* "and the comment about them.

Normally in narratives, what is given is coded sentence –initially and then followed by the new information. This is the unmarked focus structured as shown by the previous example (51). But the focus may also appear at any point in the information unit; and if it is elsewhere than final position, the remaining elements are thereby specified as given. This can be seen from the fact that an information unit with unmarked focus does not imply a specific WH –question where as one with marked focus does. Thus;-

Foc.

(52a) Otieno   nohero   kwath ahinya

Otieno loved grazing very much

Implies "who loved grazing very much?"

Topic	Focus

(52b) Otieno   nohero kwath ahinya

Does not necessarily imply "what did Otieno love? It may imply no more than "what happened? For this reason, the initial information unit in a discourse has unmarked information focus. Thus if the system of information focus structures the information unit into two elements that may be labeled 'given' and 'new' , we must make clear.

i.   That "given" and "new" represent the speakers / writers interpretation of the relation of what is being said to the preceding discourse- the " given" may but will not necessarily ,be overtly anaphoric ,and

ii.   That in the case of unmarked focus "given" is to be interpreted as "unspecified" as regards any relation to the preceding discourse. Furthermore, while the element "new" is obligatory, the element "given" is optional: the information may contain only the element having information focus as shown below.

(53a) where did John go to?

(53b) church

Sentence (b) is a response of (a) .It only gives what is considered in this context to be the focus of that utterance /sentence.

According to Hopper (1979) a canonical sequence is one in which the subject is given information and the predicate is new information and the focus of attention. Conversely, a canonical no-sequenced clause is one in which the subject is NOT give information, but is itself the new information and hence focus of the clause. Therefore, narratives with the exception of the first sentence, is canonically sequenced, assigning all .the initial subjects the given status while assigning the predicate, the new/focus status. Whenever this is not the case, the clause may be presenting a focus of contrast.

3.3.1 Focus of Contrast

An NP is called the focus of contrast when its referent stands in opposition to a closed number of alternatives that are clearly identifiable as members of the same semantic set. Focus in contrast means a notion of alternatives in opposition, not just a list of alternatives in that only one of the alternatives may be chosen as the right one with respect to a contrasting situation is very crucial. Consider the following passage:

Chon gilala, nene nitie osiepe moko adek ma nene odak e piny Milambo, kendo nene gin

Long ago TNS there friends some three who TNS live land Milambo, and TNS they

jogo mariek ahinya motegno korka tij ohala. Osiepe adekgi nene gin jogo mose nyombo

bright very and strong in   business .Friends three these TNS already married

man kod mondegi kod nyithindgi. Nene gitiyo ka giriwore kanyakla achiel. Achiel nene

With   their wives and   kids. TNS they worked together .One was called

nyinge Ochola wuod Okoyo; machielo nene iluongo ni Opondo wuod Ojwok, to mogik

Ochola son of Okoyo; the other was called Opondo son of Ojwok; and the last was called

nene nyinge Kibare wuod Joru.

Kibare son of Joru.

Once upon a time, there lived three friends who live in the Northern lands and they very bright fellow who were staunch businessmen. These three friends were married people with kids. They worked together. One was called Ochola son of Okoyo; the other was called Opondo son of Ojwok and the last was called Kibare son of Joru.

(Omolo, L.O. *Wasomuru Sigana Mamit*)

The above paragraph introduces three participants in a narrative. The names of these three participants are given as *Ocholla wuod Okoyo, Opondo wuod Ojwok and Kibare wuod Joru.* This is not just a list of alternatives but is a list that is strictly in oppositions since the author only singles one of them and makes a comment about him in example (54).

(54). Kibare nene onyiso owetene ni oonge pesa

   NM TNS   tell brothers that not have money

   Kibare told his brothers that he didn't have money

Sentence (54) makes a comment about a participant that had been previously mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Though "K*ibare*" in (54) can be considered to be the topic of this clause, the writer assigns it the status of new information. This is so since, it is Kibare as opposed to having two other friends and business associates. This is what is known as focus of contrast.

When NP is the focus of contrasts, then, there is always an element X which stands in relations to this NP and participates in the contrastive situation in opposition to another element Y which

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stands in relation to an NP2 , the alternative contrasting with NP1. In our example, Kibare is NP1 and the contrastive element is that *"he has no money "*. Ochola and Opondo is NP2 and the contrastive element 'is that *"they have money"*. There are, then, at least two contrastive elements in a contrastive clause and the elements with which they contrast are not explicit in the discourse, the information may be inferred.

3.4 Focus Marking

There are various ways of marking focus in various languages. Generally, they include; i) exclusively prosodic' (English) ii) prosodic and morphological (Japanese) iii) prosodic and syntactic (word-order variation in Italian) iv) constructional (French and Italian (Lambrecht 1998:224)

Because this study is dealing with texts, anything to do with prosody as a focus marker is beyond its scope. What is of more interest in Dholuo texts is the morphological focus- making by use of the morpheme *e* and *ma* as expounded by Okoth (1986) and by use in word –order (syntactic).

The morphemes *e-* or *ma* outlined by Okoth (1980) is commonly used in speech where a speaker is asserting something or distinguishing one item or person from the other, for example;

(55a) N'ga ma odhi chiro? (Who went to the market?)

(55b) Odhiambo ema   odhi chiro

    Topic   **FOC**   **go market** *(*Odhiambo is the one who went to the market.*)*

In narratives this kind of construction, where context is defined by the question; is not common .hence in narratives the morphemes *e/ma* or *ema* cannot be said to be focus- marker. Therefore, the focus marker in Dholuo narratives is the word order.

3.4.1 Syntactic Marking

Word order, that is predicate –focus structure or an element on the predicate usually marks the predicate as the focus domain in Dholuo narratives. This focus structure is also expressed by the fact that the subject is marked as the topic hence as being excluded from the focus domain. In texts, generally the unmarked structure is the predicate –focus structure. This is the unmarked pragmatic articulation. Any other structure that may be used to indicate the focus element or constituent is marked. Consider the below paragraph.

Nene nitie jathum moro marahuma ahinya ni Onyango wuod Ogola e piny Kanyamwa
TNS musician certain famous very named Onyango son of Ogolla in land Kanyamwa

ma Milambo. Jathum ni nene jagoch thum nyatiti. Nene en n'gat mon'gere ahinya kendo
South.   This musician TNS player of Nyatiti.TNS he a well known person and

ji man'geny nohero thume.
Many people loved his music.

There was a certain famous musician in the name Onyango son of Ogola in the village of South Manawa. This musician was a Nyatiti player. He was a well known person and majority loved him.

The first sentence is the above paragraph can be called as a sentence focus articulation. This sentence introduces the major character in the narrative. The second sentence, begins with a

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'topic "*jathumni*" and makes a comment about him. This comment is the focus as it gives new information about an established topic.

	Topic	Focus
(56)	Jathumni	nene jagoch thum nyatiti
	Musician this	TNS player music nyatiti
	This musician was a nyatiti player"	

The third sentence also begins with a tense marker followed by a pronominal. The pronominal is the topic and the rest is a comment about him. This comment is new information hence is focused.

	Topic	Focus
(57)	Nene en	n'gat mon'gere ahinya kendo ji man'geny nohero thume
	TNS he	person famous very and people many love his music
	He was a famous person and many people loved his music.	

The following paragraph takes this format, firstly mentioning the already established topic and making a comment about him. The second paragraph begins follow.

	Topic	Focus
(58)	Onyango	nene en jathum ma migosi................
	NM	TNS he musician who humble

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It is imperative to note that the material in focus typically i) adds new information or ii) changes what is already present in an activated propositional framework, either by replacement or by selecting between alternatives . This means that focused material is generally i) new or ii) contrastive (Dik et al 1981)

3.5 Summary

This chapter has defined focus as the part of a sentence or clause that is seen by the reader as the element of information, that is, the part that is considered to be informative in a given context. It is the part of a sentence that cannot be taken for granted.

The study also found that in Dholuo, three structures of focus exist; predicate-focus, argument-focus and sentence focus. Predicate-focus structure is the frequently used one in the narratives that were analyzed. Argument-focus structure can be found in instances where participants engage in a dialogue. Sentence-focus structure is to be found as the initial sentence in a discourse unit.

The study also found that the focused element in discourse is usually coded after the known information.

However the preverbal placement of an NP in a sentence with information contour appears to be reserved for NPs that convey older information than the other elements in the sentence or clause.

Word order co-occurs with an NP that is a centre of attention in the discourse, either because, it is the discourse topic, a focus of contrast, or a constituent that a speaker intends to highlight for reasons which are demonstrably specific to his discourse plan.

Old information NPs are referred to anaphorically by means of a lexical NP or a morpheme embedded preverbally.

When the speaker wants to signal an NP as a centre of attention, usually because its referent is the discourse topic or a focus of contrast, it will be expressed as a noun or as an independent pronoun in preverbal position.

CHAPTER FOUR

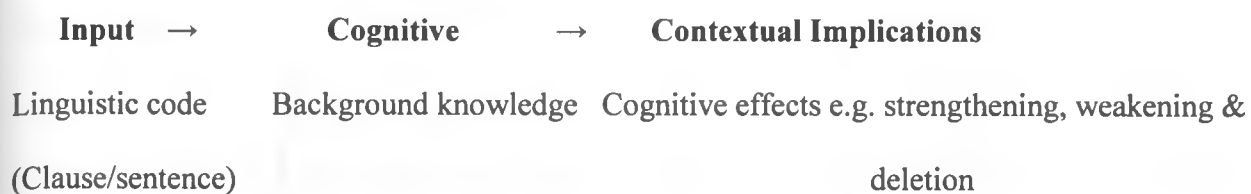## APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

4.0 Introduction

In chapters two and three, the study analyzed the coding of topic and focus respectively. In this chapter, aspects of the theoretical framework- relevance theory- will be examined. Initially the terms relevance and relevance theory will be defined. Thereafter the principles outlined in the theory will be examined viz-a-viz the process of communication. Finally the study will comment on the appropriateness of the term relevance in discourse analysis, especially, considering the role of context in discourse.

4.1 Defining Relevance and Relevance Theory

Relevance is characterized in cost-benefit terms, as a property of inputs to cognitive processes, the benefits being positive cognitive effects, and the cost, the processing effort needed to achieve these effects. Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input in a context of available assumption ; and the smaller the processing effort required , the greater the relevance of the input to the individual who processes it.(Wilson & Sperber 2004)

Relevance theory is a theory of communication and cognition which claims that human cognition is geared towards the maximization of relevance. New information is relevant if it interacts with old information to produce various contextual effects. This study treats new information as the focus while old information is treated as the hitching post for the new information. This means

that topic and focus should combine to convey relevant information to the reader. Now consider this simple representative diagram of the relevance theory;

Input → **Cognitive** → **Contextual Implications**

Linguistic code   Background knowledge   Cognitive effects e.g. strengthening, weakening &

(Clause/sentence)   deletion

In communication, the reader uses sentences as the linguistic input to be processed within a given set of conditions. These conditions are the contextual information that is/are available to the reader. They may include but not limited to the preceding sentences and/or the reader's world knowledge.

The aim here is to examine how this model aids the reader in acquiring meaning out of a clause/sentence. Related to the current study is how these principles guide the reader in identifying clause/ sentence topic and focus putting into consideration that a relevant topic or focus within a certain context may be fluid and context of the sentence may be called upon in disambiguation and/or enrichment.

What is relevant to a given person depends on that person's cognitive environment (context). A person's cognitive environment (context) is the set of facts that person has manifest to him/her. For a fact to be manifest to an individual at a certain time means that the individual is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true.

Therefore a reader of a text works on the assumption that the writer of a narrative has a piece of relevant information to convey to the readers and the reader has the task of trying to make sense of information presented in a printed page, basing his judgment on the context of that discourse unit.

The main objective of the reader is to extract meaning from a piece of discourse unit, in this case a clause or sentence. However this meaning cannot solely be derived through the coding and decoding of sentences. It requires the integration of both coding and decoding processes with inferential process. Thus Sperber & Wilson define linguistic communication as

> A mixed process implying both a coding and decoding device and an inferential
>
> process based on old and new information and that in isolation , neither can
>
> guarantee successful linguistic communication.(quoted in Moeschler 2004:52)

This means that to understand the writer's meaning, the code model and the inferential one, each make an important contribution. However, the difference between the code model and the inferential model can be seen on a functional way, that is, the decoded linguistic meaning of a sentence /clause serves as one of the inputs to a non-demonstrative inference process which yields an interpretation of the writer's meaning. This is so because there is always some meaning conveyed by a clause/sentence which cannot be recovered simply by relying on the semantic content.

This gap that exist between the semantic representation of sentence and the actual meaning communicated by the same sentence is referred to as inference and the process by which a reader

arrives at an interpretation of its meaning as, a non-demonstrative inferential process (Ramos 1998:314).

This discussion leads the study to the examination of how the principles of relevance guide a reader to identify topic and focus within a clause or sentence in Dholuo narratives. Examine example (59) which is an extract from a narrative by Worthington, F. *"Apwoyo gi Sibuor"*

(59) Chon gilala   ne nitie Sibuor moro maduon'g

       Once upon a time TNS there Lion certain big/huge

       Once upon a time, there lived a certain huge Lion

In discourse analysis and of course being consistent with my definition, the above sentence in the beginning of a discourse unit will be treated as new information hence focused. However, this new information interacts with the contextual assumptions to confirm this status, weaken or refute/delete it altogether. The contextual information may be that some readers perhaps have seen the above-mentioned animal or they have just heard about it. The kind of sentence, this study claims, is coded information which must be decoded by the reader. The decoded piece of information interacts with the reader's background knowledge to infer the meaning the writer of the narrative intended.

It is also stated that sentence (59) is a presentational sentence. This is so since it presents the participant of a discourse unit without making a comment about it. The participant is presented as *"Sibuor moro maduon'g"*. This NP is new information placed into the processing unit of the

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reader so that it can be processed and stored for later recovery as topic (and not new information any more).

In relevance-theoretic terms, it is incumbent upon the writer to make manifest his intentions to enable the reader to infer correctly, the intention of the writer's sentence.

Given the default SVO structure of Dholuo, the reader of sentence (59), basing his assumption on Dholuo default structure will suspect that "*Sibuor*" in this sentence might be the topic. The readers infer this from the knowledge that every sentence/utterance is about something or someone. Hence even though sentence (59) has a focus status, within it is a topic which is "Sibuor".

Within relevance theory is the claim also that human communication is intentional and involving some kind of cooperative task, where the interlocutors guide each other to optimal understanding. This takes us to the second basic assumption of relevance theory: ostensive communication.

4.3 Ostensive Inferential Communication.

In relevance theory, intention plays a significant role in communication .From a cognitive point of view , the theory claims that the communicator basically has two intentions : a) to inform the reader of something (the informative intention) and b) to inform the audience of this informative intention (the communicative intention) (Wilson & Sperber 2004:61).

The informative intention relates to the set of assumptions the writer intends to convey by the message, while the communicative intention, relates to the effects he intends the message to achieve in the reader. The informative and the communicative intentions are what the theory refers to as inferential and ostensive communication respectively.

Basing my argument on this assumption, the writer of a narrative makes manifest the assumptions of the message that he intends the reader to recognize ; while at the same time using relevant ostensions (or ostensive stimulus) that will guide the reader towards inferring the intended assumptions of the message as well as the writers intention in communicating the message. One of the methods of doing this in Dholuo narrative texts is word order.

In written communication, the current study points out that, the sentence or discourse unit is an overt stimulus that in itself is enough to signal to the reader the intention of the writer to communicate.

The informative intention about topic and focus in Dholuo is realized linguistically through word order, that is, the topic is coded word initially while the focus is manifested through the coded (written) word. This is shown in the below example which is a continuation of (59)

	Topic			Topic	
(60) Ne	o- duon'g	kendo	ne	o-	ratego
TNS	big	and	TNS		energetic

He was big and energetic

The topic that had been mention in (59) is retained in the form of a bound morpheme "*o-*" in sentence (60). Note that in Dholuo, when the topic is coded using an NP e.g. "*Otieno*", then the topic precedes the tense marker "*ne*", but when it is coded using a pronominal morpheme "*o-*" then the tense marker "*ne*" precedes the topic.

Any other element is (60) apart from the morpheme "*o*", the tense marker "*ne*" and the conjunction "*kendo*" has a focus status.

This is to say that ostensive inferential communication is achieved , on the one hand , by the communicator , who communicates his message ostensively with all necessary clues (word order, use of morphemes , topicalization) to convey his informative intention to the reader.

Since only one participant had been introduced in sentence (59), a reader of (60) knows that the morpheme "*o-*"can only refer back to "*Sibuor*" and no one else.

One vital question that emerges from the above argument is, if communication is understood as recognition by the readers of writers' meaning, what then makes it possible for the reader to successfully complete this inferential process?

This leads to the study to another claim of relevance theory that, in order to complete the referential process, the reader must rely not only on what has been written i.e. the semantic content of the sentence , but also on the contextual information with which it is inferentially combined.

In relevance theory the interpretation of discourse units is said to be constrained through the context via the principle of relevance. The two interact to ensure that the reader arrive at only as single interpretation which matches with that intended by the writer.

In the section that follows, the study introduces the notions of context and relevance as discussed in the theory and looks at how they interact with old and new information and in effect constrain the processing effort and maximizes on the cognitive effects.

4.4 Context in Relevance

In relevance theory, context plays a crucial role in the communication process. Context is understood in a cognitive sense and is defined as a "psychological construct, a subset of the readers' assumptions about the world". (Sperber & Wilson 1986:15)

Specifically, the readers' assumption is the background against which the meaning of a clause/sentence is interpreted. According to relevance theory, 'the assumptions are stored in the mind of every individual and constitute the individuals cognitive environment. Context in this theory is not just limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding sentence only ; it also includes expectations about the future, scientific hypothesis or religious beliefs , anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions , beliefs about the mental state of the writer etc".(Sperber & Wilson 1986:15f).

These assumptions are acquired from the cultural environment through ones educational background, family upbringing etc, so the context is like memory (1986) encyclopedic

information about the world. It contains the beliefs and value systems, plus the cultural norms of behavior.

All these set of assumptions are brought into communication process by the participants and play in the kind of pragmatic meaning a given sentences will receive.

In interpreting sentence (60) a reader may follow the following path.

i.   The lion is a wild animal.

ii.   It is touted as the king of the jungle.

iii.   All other wild animals respect him and they obey his word.

iv.   Therefore a lion must be very powerful and authoritative.

This is so because of the many mythological stories about the lion where he is presented as the ruler of all the other animals. This knowledge is acquired from the culture of a particular reader hence forms the context upon which the sentences (59) and (60) are understood.

Consider also the below sentence (61)

Topic				Focus	
(61) Le	duto	bende	ne	o- luor	-e
Animals	all	and	TNS	respect	–him

And all the animals respected him

The study points out that "*Sibuor*" is a hyponym of "*Le*" hence the label of "*le duto*" as the topic of sentence (61). The only new information presented above is that "they respected him" (the lion). This also follows from the knowledge that strong or powerful individuals are usually respected. So as much as the preceding sentences help in enriching the meaning of the sentence, the world knowledge also makes a vital contribution.

However , another question that emerges is, how does the reader decide on which context as the right one that yields the intended interpretation given that human cognition has a large storage of information?

The answer lies with the assumption about context. Relevance theory states that the reader's choice of context and subsequent interpretation of the sentence is constrained by this assumption, that the writer is being relevant. Hence only information that is relevant will be accessed and used in the comprehension of sentence. This is pointed out below by Sperber & Wilson (1986)

> Utterance /sentence interpretation is not just a matter of bringing any arbitrary set of assumptions to bear as context, rather, the actual context for the interpretation of an utterance /sentence is constrained by the organization of the individuals' encyclopedic memory and the mental activity which is engaged.
>
> (Quoted in Blakemore 1987:58)

In relevance theory, there are three kinds of information that a writer might be trying to impart to a reader, but only one will be processed by the reader; i) Old information, that is, information

that is already available to the reader i.e. had been previously mentioned, for example, "Sibuor" in (59). This old information will not be worth processing when mentioned again i.e. in sentence (60), unless the reader needs it for a particular cognitive task, and did not have it immediately manifest. This is the case when the topic is contrastive as shown below.

(62) Chon gilala, Oliktiga kod Oyieyo to kod Winyo nene gin osiepe.

   Long ago   Bat   and Mouse   and Bird   TNS friends.

   Chien'g achiel Oliktiga nene odhawo kod Oyieyo………

   One   day   Bat   TNS   fight   with Mouse………

Long ago, bat, mouse and bird were friends. One day, bat and mouse fiercely fought……………..

The first sentence in this excerpt introduces three participants as '*Oliktiga, Oyieyo and Winyo*' and makes a comment about them. In the second sentence, two participants are mentioned once again. Even though this information is old information, it is worth processing since it is contrastive i.e. it selects a character out of a group that is already mentioned (old information). It separates the two (*Oliktiga and Oyieyo*) from *Winyo* who never participated in the fight. Then to have the writer remind the reader of these participants, the names are repeated to provide easier access for the reader than to assume that the reader's own effort can recall them.

ii) The other information might be not only news (focus) to the reader but also completely unconnected to anything the reader knows already. All the reader can do is to take it on board as entirely isolated that is, irrelevant to anything the reader is already aware of. This, the study suggests, is the category of functional words such as conjunctions and prepositions in Dholuo. For example, "*kendo*", "*bende*" etc.

iii) However there is a third kind of information a writer might impart to a reader namely, information that is new, but connected with old information or information that is already manifest in a reader's/hearer's cognitive environment . This is the focused information. In relevance theory, old information is what a reader uses as the context upon which comprehension of new information is undertaken. This new information (focus) together with old information can be used by the reader as premises in an inferential process to provide further new information. When this happens then the new information is considered relevant enough for the reader to process. Hence sentences (59) and (60) can both be used as premises upon which sentence (61) is understood.

In relevance-theoretic terms, the notion of relevance is a universal inherent property of human cognition as captured in the cognitive and communicative principles below;

The cognitive principle of relevance;

Human cognition is geared towards maximization of relevance (Sperber & Wilson: 2004)

This means that human beings only pay attention to information that is relevant to them. Thus in communication, a reader's aim in interpreting sentences is to recover a proposition that has some relevance to him within a given context.

Thus in the context of the below example (63)

(63) Chien'g achiel, Sibuor nowacho ni, "Le duto moti onge ohala…"

One day,   Sibuor said that, "Animals all old have no profit"

One day lion said, "All old animals have no benefit…… "

The information in the quotation marks is understood to be a comment made by "*Sibuor*" about "*Le duto*" which functions here as the topic of the clause. "*Chien'g achiel*" is the point of departure as it sets the spatial frame upon which the events are understood. The comment made about "Le duto" is focused information, that is, new information. New information since it had not been mentioned before and it is the information that the writer wants to add to the knowledge that the reader already has. This is the interpretation that would be relevant to a reader within the context given in the extract.

The question that emerges still is how is the context of a sentence constrained by the above principle of relevance? According to the theory's claim, communication is made successful because the communicators are both guided by the search for optimal relevance, in communication. In order to ensure that maximal relevance is realized, the theory has formulated the following communicative principle;

The communicative principles of relevance which states that;
Every ostensive stimulus coveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson 2004:612)

The presumption of optimal relevance which states that;
The ostensive is optimally relevant to a reader if;

a. It is relevant enough to be worth the reader's processing effort.

b. It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences.

This means that old information plus functional words will not be processed and that only new information (focused material) will be worth the reader's processing effort. This is so since the reader is operating on the assumption that the writer will only communicate what he/she believes to be relevant to the reader because as pointed out in Blakemore;

> It is pointless for the speaker (writer) to offer information to the hearer (reader) unless he/she knows that it will have some effect on the hearers (readers) existing assumptions.

The reader is only concerned with the effect that newly presented information has on his/her existing representation of the world. These effects are known as contextual effect in relevance theory. They are created when new information (focus) is presenting to the reader who interprets it against a background of existing assumption (topic) , the effects may be in the form of confirmation of the existing assumptions , contradiction or elimination of existing assumptions or totally new assumptions may end up being created (Blakemore 1987:49

Gutt (1992: 22) defines cognitive effects as 'the link-up between what is said and the context ". In other words, "it is the modification of one's cognitive environment achieved by combining both the stimulus and the context and not each in isolation (Gutt, ibid)

This therefore means that any new sentence/clause is judged as relevant if and only if it leads to the creation of any of the above effects in the hearer. Hence clause two off sentence (60) negates the existing assumption that "friends don't fight" and creates a new assumption after they fight.

In sentence (63) the assumption that "*Sibuor*" is the king is confirmed when he orders the killing of all the old and weak animals. From our world knowledge we know that orders usually come from above (the rulers/leaders) and not vice-versa.

4.5 Relevance –theoretic Comprehension Procedure

Relevance theoretic comprehension procedure

    a) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. Consider interpretations (e.g. disambiguation, reference resolutions, contextual assumptions and implicatures) in order of accessibility.

    b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.

A reader using this procedure in interpreting an utterance /sentence such as the one below;

Topic	Focus

(64) Apwoyo   ne opondo ei bur mane ni e tiend yadh mawembe..........

Hare   TNS hide   in hole that TNS is foot tree mango....

Hare hid in a hole that was at the foot of a mango tree.........

should (a) pay attention to perceptually salient aspects of the input, in this case "*Apwoyo*" as the possible topic of this sentence and the rest of the sentence as the focus; b) consider the most accessible disambiguation, reference resolutions, contextual assumptions, implicatures, speech – act descriptions etc for ex ample , in sentence (64) the morpheme "o-" attached to the verb "-*pondo*" refers back to the lexical NP "*Apwoyo* " which also happens to be the sentence topic but not the discourse topic . The discourse topic is "*Sibuor*"; c) stop when he has an interpretation that yields enough cognitive effects to satisfy the particular expectation of relevance raised by the utterance /sentence.

So in written communication, the function of an overt input/stimuli like a sentence and word order is to guide the reader in an interpretation process of narrative by altering the salience of possible disambiguation, reference resolutions, contextual assumptions, implicatures , speech – act descriptions etc. What relevance theory adds to this intuitive description is the idea that the salience of interpretation can be affected not only by altering processing effort but also by manipulating the relationship between processing effort and expected cognitive effects. Thus a writer having introduced more than one participant in a narrative must resort to the use of a specific Lexical NP (e.g. *Apwoyo or Sibuor*) in subsequent sentences to avoid any confusion in the interpretation. This may be called disambiguation of the participants within a narrative text.

The word order and /or topicalization are methods through which writers of narratives may resort to convey their intended information structure categories. From the excerpt, it appears that the topic usually precedes the focus in unmarked structures. The marked structures such as the initial sentences within a narrative convey a different message since the whole sentence is usually

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focused. Each of these patterns should yield different implications and be relevant in a different way.

While unmarked (SVO) structure would cause the reader least processing effort, it would give him little guidance on the type of cognitive effects he is expected to derive. By contrast, any departure from unmarked structure would increase the readers' processing effort but would thereby encourage him to look for extra (or different) effects.

What effects should a reader derive? According to the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure, he should follow a path of least effort, deriving whatever effects are made most accessible in the circumstance by the type of information structure used, and stopping when he has enough effects to justify the extra effort caused by the departure from unmarked structure. Thus a sentence such as (64) in a text, Indicates that the writer intended the reader to recognize *Apwoyo* as the topic and the rest of the sentence as focused. What the writer intended the reader to derive or should warrant the derivation of a particular range of positive cognitive effects via the automatic working of the relevance–theoretic comprehension procedure.

Another reason writer chooses the unmarked structure is discussed from relevance – theoretic perspective in Sperber/Wilson (1986/95: chapter 4 Section 5). It follows from the Communicative Principle of Relevance that if two patterns/structures differ in the amounts of processing effort required, the costlier pattern/structure should be used more sparingly and only in order to create extra or different effects. Thus compare the effects of reference assignment of the following two sentences below:

Topic	**Focus**	**Topic**	**Focus**

(65) Thuol moro mane ni e wuodhe ne o- chopo kama ne Sibuor nindoe

   Snake certain who   walk   TNS arrive where   lion sleep

   A certain snake that was in his own walk arrived where lion was sleeping

Also consider (66)

           Topic

(66)   Ne o- neno ka Sibuor nindo otero, to dhoge to - - - -

      TNS   see   lion   sleep   but mouth - - -

      He saw the lion in deep sleep but the mouth was - - - - - - - - - - -

Sentence (66) is a continuation of (65). The morpheme "o-" in (66) refers back to "*thuol*" while

the second topic in sentence (66), which is "*Sibuor*", is repeated to avoid any confusion between

the two topics. A reader using the relevance –theoretic comprehension procedure in interpreting

sentence (66) should follow a path of least effort in assigning reference and interpret the

morpheme "o-" in (66) as referring to "*thuol*" (an assignment made easily by lexical repetition of

"*Sibuor*" on the one hand ,and encyclopedic knowledge of the native speaker of the language, on

the other). Note that both "*thuol*" and "Sibuor" belong to the same semantic category. They are

both wild animals. On this account, the S-V-O word order showing *thuol* in the S position of the

SVO structure helps to establish the referent o- i. This is achieved via the automatic working of

the relevance –theoretic comprehension procedures.

4.4 Summary

This chapter attempted an analysis of relevance theory and also attempted an analysis of its two principles; the cognitive and communicative principles of relevance, to test how best the theory can analyze discourse.

According to the cognitive principle of relevance, the human cognition is geared to the maximization of relevance. In discourse a clause or sentence is enough stimuli that triggers this search for relevance. Therefore this principle is adequate in guiding the reader towards identifying both topic and focus in a sentence and/or discourse unit.

Communicative principle of relevance states that any ostensive act of communication conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance. This is true of sentences and clauses. Hence a reader of a narrative text assumes that the writer is conveying information that is relevant and worthy of the reader's attention.

Therefore this study posits that relevance theory can adequately address the concepts of topic and focus in narratives using the above-mentioned two principles plus the comprehension procedure path that tells the reader to stop when his expectations of relevance are met.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the research findings that will lead to conclusions and recommendations for further research on issues arising from the analysis. The conclusion is intended to determine whether the findings provide answers to the research questions and whether they tally with the objectives and hypotheses

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The study began by stating, and this assumption has been maintained throughout, that Dholuo is an SVO language and that Dholuo is a subject initial language so that mostly in narratives, the subject and the topic do coincide. The only exception is the initial sentence in a narrative where the whole sentence has a focus status and cannot be split into topic-focus distinctions. The study has found out that the topic of a sentence in narratives is usually coded sentence initially.

It has also emerged that topic is retained in various ways in narrative texts in Dholuo. Most common is the syntactic method by use of word order. Dholuo being an SVO language employs this structure to signal to the reader that the subject is also the topic. This is the unmarked structure. The other method is by the use of the morpheme "o ̗". This morpheme is usually used in cases where a lexical NP has just been mentioned.

Repetition of a lexical NP is another method through which topic is retained within a discourse unit. When the writer has introduced more than one participant in a discourse unit, he employs the use of repetition to avoid any confusion of their referents.

This study has observed that the focused information is usually hinged upon the topic. So in cases where the subject is also the topic, then the predicate is usually focused information since it can be concluded to be the new information conveyed about the topic. In other cases, especially on the participant introducing sentences, the whole sentence is normally new information.

The study also realized that the element e can only be said to be the focus marker per excellence only when dealing with utterances and contrived sentences. In speech, the element e will be accompanied with addition stress (this is prosodic). However, in narratives because Dholuo does not have any structural device for focus, any constituent within a sentence can be focused or can be said to be the focus of a sentence. The context of a sentence is very important in disambiguating this focused element.

The study adopted relevance theory as its tool for description and analysis of data and it has shown that the information structure categories; topic and focus, can adequately be accounted for by the two principles of relevance. The cognitive principle of relevance claims that human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance. This claim has been observed in the study because a reader of a text constantly attaches comments to referents that must be found within that very text. Also the theory claims (the second principle) that an utterance (here as sentence) or other ostensive act of communication creates a presumption of relevance .A

sentence , being an overt evidence ,feeds into the cognitive process a stimulus to be processed. In the available contextual assumptions, the topic and focus of that sentence must always be found.

The theory also offers a comprehension procedure that states that a reader/hearer/listener should follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects and then stop when his/her expectations of relevance are satisfied.

This has been found to be very applicable since human cognition tends to be lazy and would not spend an extra amount of energy that is not accounted for or justified. The relationship between processing effort and positive cognitive effects confirm that a more relevant topic expression is the one reader would arrive at using the least processing effort. This explains why writers code the topic referent using an overt lexical NP word initially.

5.2 Importance of the Findings

These findings will contribute to the study of discourse analysis and to the understanding of the information structure categories. It will also give the scholars who are interested in these areas more insights.

5.3 Recommendation for Further Research

An intensive research should be carried out to establish the role of prosodic features such as tone in the information structure of Dholuo. As noted in chapter one, this study only dealt with written

texts. Of course, it is obvious that tone plays a significant role in the packaging of a message in Dholuo.

5.4 Conclusion

After examining the research problem critically, the study concludes that Dholuo, just like any other natural language has topic and focus as information structure categories. How these categories are coded depend, to the bigger part, on the mode of transmission either oral or written. Prosodic features play a role in oral communication while word order and morphological features play a role in written communication.

The study also concludes that relevance theory can adequately account for the coding of the information structure categories in Dholuo narrative texts. The objectives and hypothesis that were guiding this research has been proved to be correct because they tally with the findings. All the research objectives and hypothesis have been tested and found to be true.

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