"SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF DHOLUO NOUNS: THE SEMANTIC FIELD APPROACH."

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts, University of Nairobi.

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DECLARATION

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

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This dissertation has been submitted for examination with my approval as the appointed University supervisor.

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Atoh. Fred Ochieng'

October, 2001
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Martha, and the boys: Bruce and Lee, who endured many nights alone for two years but kept calling to say, "Keep going!"
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ABSTRACT

An adequate semantic theory must be able to give a satisfactory answer to some of the questions of interest raised within the theory. It should ascertain the possible anomalies in or meaningfulness of a given word or sentence, provide a formal means of establishing if two words or sentences have common meanings and how many of such, and characterize the words forming the sentences by the explicit form of the uses of a given word.

This study: Semantic Analysis of Dholuo Nouns: The Semantic Field Theory, examines the semantic properties of Dholuo nouns with a view to investigating if their relationships within given sentences are determined by these distinctive properties. Meaningfulness or anomalies are attributed to the correct choice and use of these words. The study is based on the semantic field theory of semantic analysis advanced by Lehrer Adrienne (1974) in Semantic fields and Lexical structure.

In this theory, the choice of lexical items (nouns) for use by native speakers is viewed as a process of careful and purposeful selection of only those lexical items which are semantically related by virtue of belonging to a given field, or whose semantic domains are related closely enough to allow for extension of meaning. Essentially, the theory of semantic field relationships constrains the extent of word choice in normal ordinary discourse.
The areas investigated in this study are the relationships between closely related words (nouns) in meaning, which are therefore often subsumed under a general semantic domain. It will be observed that the lexicon is a network of relationships whereby there is a connection between fields or domains such that some fields are mutually exclusive. In addition, the native speakers are intrinsically aware of this interlace of relationships and uses this knowledge in the determination of the appropriate words in every context during a discourse. It is significant to note that the tendency of lexical items to relate within a semantic domain and across domains is characteristic of existing human languages and Dholuo, in particular.

The central claim of this study is that the choice of nouns to be used in given discourse events by native speakers is informed by the distinctive components of the words and their semantic relationships within and across fields. This analysis of Dholuo nouns further gives empirical support to the semantic field theory as an acceptable and proven framework for semantic analysis of words.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>PROG.</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0. INTRODUCTION

In this study, our main interest is to develop a componential representation necessary for the semantic interpretation of Dholuo nouns within the semantic field theory. The study will also investigate if the semantic interpretation also depends on the sense-relations holding between such lexical items.

The central thesis of the structuralists, including F. de Saussure, is that every language is a unique relational structure, or system, and that the units of analysis of a given language find their meaningfulness only in relationships with other units in the same language system. In the mind of the native speaker, he does not first identify the units and then at a subsequent stage of the speech event, enquire what combinational or other relations hold between them; he simultaneously identifies both the units and their interrelations. Chomsky (1972:11) says that “a person who has learnt a language has acquired a system of rules that relates sound and meaning in a certain specific way. He has, in other words, acquired a certain competence that the puts to use in producing and understanding speech.” These rules, once internalized by the speaker, help him to identify the units and mentally interpret their interrelations. Therefore, these units of analysis do not exist independently of their defining components or relational facts. Such components are inherently part of the units.
It was upon this kind of thinking that the semantic field theory was built and the adoption of the componential analysis approach to lexical analysis developed. The underlying claim of this study is that the choice of nouns to be used in given discourse events by native speakers is informed by the knowledge (overt or covert) of the distinctive components of the words and their semantic relationships within and across fields. Chomsky (1975:6) in his arguments 'cognitive capacity' says that "...the mind can compare, analyze, see cause-effect relations, symmetries, and so on giving, a comprehensive idea of the whole, with its parts, relations, and proportions." "The mind," he says, "provides the means for analysis of data as experience, and provides as well a general schematism that delimits the cognitive structures developed on the basis of experience" (Chomsky 1975:7). This experience is the knowledge a speaker acquires from the linguistic experiences available to him. Chomsky's idea of the working of the mind presupposes the existence of some kind of knowledge a speaker has about his world which aids him in the choice of the nouns appropriate in certain discourse events.

1.1. GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE LANGUAGE

Dholuo is a Western Nilotic language spoken in Kenya and the Northern part of Tanzania by the Luo people. The Luo are part of the Nilotic group of tribes whose cradle-land is believed to be the Southern Sudan. Cohen (1974) records that the Luo began to settle in the Nyanza region of Kenya between 1500 – 1550 A.D. The most recent population census conducted in 1999 shows that they number up to million people. According to Adhiambo (1981:2), the Luo people live in the Kisumu, Siaya, Nyando.
Rachuonyo, Homa-Bay and Migori districts of Kenya. This is besides the number that lives outside the said districts for reasons such as employment, marriage and migrations. The degree of variation in the language spoken in Nyanza depends on where one comes from and how long he has been there.

There are two major variations (Stafford, 1967) namely, ‘the Trans-Yala’ variety spoken in Ugenya, Alego, Imbo and parts of Gem, and the South Nyanza variety spoken in South Nyanza districts (Homa-Bay, Rachuonyo and Migori) and parts of Central Nyanza (Siaya, Kisumu, Nyando) which are excluded from ‘the Trans-Yala’ group. Adhiambo (1990:195,201) identifies two major dialects as did Stafford (1967) except she calls them the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect “spoken in a wider geographical area and which functions as the standard form...”; and the Boro-ukwala dialect “spoken in a smaller region” which is “considered less prestigious.” She also identifies “interdialects”, a form which developed because of the process of “accommodation between Dholuo dialects.” Although mutually intelligible, these dialects are varied enough to identify the speakers with specific regions. The present study is based on the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is aimed at analyzing the nouns in Dholuo using the semantic field approach. Semantic field, according to Lehrer (1974:1), refers to a group of words closely related in meaning, often subsumed under a general term. The object of the analysis is to
collect some nouns in Dholuo that belong to a field and show the relationship of each of them to one another and to the general term.

After exploring the properties of semantic field by examining a variety of lexical sets, we hope to establish some interesting and important facts about semantic structure which are ignored by other approaches. In Dholuo, there are some nouns which belong to specific domains by virtue of their shared sense relations. Hierarchies can be formed on the basis of some common field categories.

**e.g. Dhano**

\[
\begin{align*}
+ \text{Animate} \\
+ \text{Human}
\end{align*}
\]

is a broader hierarchical level than its components.

**e.g.**

\[
\begin{align*}
dichwo & & dhako & & \text{and} & & nyathi \\
+ \text{animate} & & + \text{animate} & & + \text{animate} \\
+ \text{human} & & + \text{human} & & + \text{human} \\
+ \text{male} & & - \text{male} & & \pm \text{male} \\
+ \text{adult} & & + \text{adult} & & - \text{adult}
\end{align*}
\]

Dhano 'Human being' is inclusive, in its definition, of the three lower rank categories, i.e. dichwo, dhako and nyathi. These are therefore members of the field: Dhano, and are related in this field by the shared senses of [+ animate], [+ Human] and [± male]. It is this kind of relationship that we intend to investigate by this study.
In this analysis of Dholuo nouns, we will mostly be concerned with the applicability of the componential analysis (decompositional) approach. Hence, we shall in effect be testing the efficacy of this approach as a universal instrument of lexical analysis.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

1. to identify and describe the types of Dholuo nouns and how they are formed.
2. to test if Dholuo noun lexicon is a network of relationships within and across semantic fields.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

In this study, it is hypothesized that:

1. the semantic field theory and componential analysis adequately account for the meanings of Dholuo nouns.
2. Dholuo nouns are related within and across semantic domains.
3. native speakers choose their nouns on the basis of their field relationships.
1.5. RATIONALE

Little has been done with regard to Dholuo nouns. Most of what there is concerned with the formation of Dholuo nouns found in the work by Okoth (1982) and the dictionary work by Blount (1871). To the best of my knowledge, no study has been undertaken with specific reference to a semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns. This study is therefore justified because it seeks to fill the gap that exists within linguistic study of Dholuo nouns particularly the semantic study. It will by so doing shed some light on an otherwise inadequately studied area, and become a source of reference for those intending to study the semantics of Dholuo in future.

Another justification is in the fact that this study applies the semantic field theory on Dholuo nouns using the componential analysis as its instrument. This has so far not been done by any other study. A similar study has been carried out on other languages especially English by Dillon (1977), Halliday and Fawcett (1987) and Lehrer (1974), among others. They all agree that by using the componential analysis based on the semantic field approach "relatedness of meaning can easily be determined by noting the shared components" (Dillon, 1977:10). In Halliday and Fawcett (1987: 14) a reference is made to the study done on Hebrew language by Harris entitled 'A componential analysis of a Hebrew paradigm (1948).’ In this work, Harris proves that meaning relatedness can be established by the feature analysis approach. Therefore, our study will, in effect, also test the validity of semantic field approach as a universal theory of meaning and hence prove its suitability in accounting for meaning in various natural languages.
According to Lehrer (1974), a semantic word is the minimal analyzable semantic unit. He argues that the morpheme is too small for dealing with such words as 'believe' and 'prefer' when the stems and affixes do not have a meaning predictable enough to account for the meaning of the whole word. Furthermore, the existence of idioms shows that the word may sometimes be too small a unit for semantic analysis and therefore phrases and even whole clauses must be treated as semantic units. The point in this argument is that semantic words will include even constructions larger than a single lexeme. In our case, any such construction will only be analyzed, if it still remains a noun, e.g. the kinds of compounds generated by morphological productivity discussed in chapter two sections 2.4.

This study aims at a semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns. It treats the noun as a semantic word and will therefore not discuss pronouns and nominal phrases. Sentences containing such nouns may only be discussed if in so doing they will demonstrate the relationship more clearly. The study will focus on feature analysis of the nouns as they occur within specified fields to establish the relationships that exist among them.
1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.7.1. Introduction to the semantic field theory.

This study is based on the semantic field theory as proposed by Lehrer Adrienne (1974), Trier (1934) and Cole Rogers (1977), among others, whose works are more definitive and exhaustive in handling the field theory. The Theory did not, however, originate with these scholars as others before them had already laid a foundation. According to Lyons (1977:250), what has now come to be known as the theory of semantic fields (or field theory) was first proposed by a number of German and Swiss Scholars in the 1920s and 1930s. These included Ipsen (1924), Jolles 1934), Porzig (1934) and Trier (1934).

Lyons observes that its origins can, "however, be traced back to at least the middle of the 19th century and more generally to the ideas of Humboldt (1936) and Herder (1772). It has been used since and a great deal of work has been based on this theory for the past over 40 years."

This theory falls within the broad school of structuralism and is more closely associated with Trier and Weisgerber. The former developed a version based on the paradigmatic relations of sense and is said to have 'opened a new phase in the history of semantics' (Ullmann, 1962:7). Since he published nothing, his ideas were further developed by his students and also by L. Weisgerber. The theory later became known as the Trier - Weisgerber theory. Both Trier and Weisgerber were structural semanticists.
The basic thesis of the semantic field theory is that 'the value of a word can only be determined by defining it in relation to the value of neighbouring and contrasting words. It is only as a part of the whole that it has sense: for it is only in the field that there is meaning' (Lyons, 1977: 251). Meaning is therefore field-dependent. Lyons'...value of a word' refers to the meaning of a word, and this line of argument is the basis of our second objective: to test if Dholuo noun lexicon is a network of relationships within and across semantic fields.

Accordingly, therefore, lexemes and other units that are semantically related, whether paradigmatically or syntagmatically, within a given language - system are said to belong to, or be members of, the same semantic field. Structuralism posits that every language is a unique relational structure, or system, and that the units which we identify or postulate as theoretical constructs, in analyzing the sentence of a particular language (i.e. sounds, words, meanings, etc) derive both their sense and existence from their relationship with other units in the same language - system.

The semantic field theorists therefore define a field or domain as "a group of words closely related in meaning, often subsumed under a general term." (Lehrer, 1974:1). For example, words in the field of colour fall under the general term 'colour' and include such components as red, blue, green, white, etcetera. The object of the field theory is to collect words that belong to a field and show the relationships of them to one another and to the general term (field). The theory treats a related set of words that belong to a domain. For example, glass is related to cup, bowl, mug and vase because all fall under
the domain of a container. It contrasts with brick, concrete, plastic, ward as a material. This approach shows clearly the reason for the selection of lexical items available in a domain.

1.7.2. Componential Analysis and the field theory.

Lyons (1977:269) defines componential analysis as a “tool of description of the meaning of words and phrases.” It rests upon “... the thesis that the sense of every lexeme can be analysed in terms of a set of more general sense-components or semantic features.” In his work, the sense-components are viewed as ‘atomic’ and the senses of particular lexemes as ‘molecular’, concepts. For example, the sense of ‘man’ combines in the molecular concept ‘man’ the atomic concepts ‘male’, ‘adult’ and ‘human’. Its underlying argument is that the molecular sense is a product of the atomic concepts, or sense-components. Therefore, ‘man’ is the product of MALE, ADULT and HUMAN – the capital representation being the conventional form that sense – components take.

It is our submission that in collecting the words (lexemes) belonging to a field and showing their relationship to one another and to the general field on the basis of the field theory, we use componential analysis as the instrument of analysis.

The earliest and most influential proponents of componential analysis in the post-Saussurean structuralist tradition were Hjelmsler and Jakobson (Lyons 1977:269). They both believed that the principles that Trubetzkoy (1939) had introduced into phonology
A feature of distinctive features could be extended into both grammar and semantics. Though this approach was initially developed independently of field-theory, it has many affinities with it and has in fact been adopted by some of the more recent work in the theory of semantic fields. Lyons (1977) notes that in America, it was first proposed as a general theory of semantic structure by anthropologists as a technique for the description and comparison of the vocabulary of kinship in various languages. Later, it was taken up and generalized by such scholars as Lamb (1964), Nida (1964, 1965), Weinreich (1963, 1966) and Katz and Fodor (1963).

1.8. **THE LITERATURE REVIEW.**

Previous work done by linguists like Trier (1934), Porzig (1934), Lyons (1968, 1977) have concentrated on the role of semantic field theory in both the synchronic and diachronic changes in language-systems and, of course, the relationships of words with the language-system in general. None of them and those paid particular attention to the semantic behaviour of nouns. The most recent work on Dholuo includes the *Dholuo Morphophonemics in A Generative Framework* and *The Functional Paradigm and Dholuo constituent order* by Okoth (1982, 1986), among others. However, these also touch only on areas that, though insightful, do not particularly address the question of whether Dholuo nouns have a relationship which has semantic significance, and whether such relationships are consequential in the selection of such nouns by native speakers and in meaning determination.
Therefore, this review is divided into two broad areas, namely: the literature in the theoretical framework which traces the development of the theory and its use over the years in linguistic research, and the literature on Dholuo language. This latter one is a general review of the studies that may be of interest to the present study. It is intended that the review takes a pyramidal structure starting with a survey of the broad theoretical area of semantic fields and narrowing towards the specific study area of semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns.

1.8.1. The Theoretical Literature

Important contributions have been made to what, in a very general way, is described as field-theory by many scholars. A number of American anthropologists have investigated the vocabulary of kinship, plants, disease, and other culturally important and variable systems of classification. They have described the results in similar terms to the field-theorists.

Semanticists in France have tended to concentrate on those fields in the vocabulary of a language which are subject to rapid change and expansion and reflect important political, social and economic developments. Scholars like Greimas (1965) and Barthes (1964) have used the field theory in an attempt to extend the Saussurean notion of lexical structure defined in terms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations to the stylistic analysis of texts and to other semiotic systems than languages.
Lyons (1968, 1977) subscribes to the view that "the results obtained" from the investigation of lexical systems in the vocabulary of different languages which belong to certain domains (fields) "have conclusively demonstrated the value of the structural approach to semantics, and that these are semantic distinctions made in languages by semantic features and membership to specific domains." In this he confirms the Saussurean view that each language imposes specific distinctive features to its lexemes and the native speakers are aware of these distinctions.

He elaborately discusses the concept of fields with particular reference to and greater interest in lexical, conceptual and semantic fields. He defines these areas as distinct though interrelated. Although he pays no particular attention to the semantic behaviour of nouns in both works, Lyons brings out the important and relevant idea of structural relationships that hold between lexemes within a field. This establishes a sound and authoritative background for the theory of semantic fields from which this study sufficiently borrows.

Trier (1934) developed a version of field-theory which was judged to have "opened a new phase in the history of semantics" (Ullmann, 1962:7). He looks at the vocabulary of a language as an integrated system of lexemes interrelated in sense. This thesis is oriented towards the investigation of diachronic and synchronic semantic changes within a language-system. Therefore his contributions to the field-theory only concentrates on the lexical field and the relationships between lexemes within the given field. His articulation of the point on semantic relatedness between lexemes within a
field provides a strong backing for the semantic fields theory.

Although he does not directly address himself to nouns, his general treatment of lexemes and the definition of a conceptual field gives valuable insight to this study with respect to the claim that nouns belong to specific semantic domains, and together they form the semantic structure of that domain. It is worth noting that Triar's approach was built upon the investigation of the paradigmatic relations holding between lexemes, but within the realm of semantic language change.

Porzig (1934) developed a notion of semantic fields which was founded upon the relations of sense holding between pairs of syntagmatically connected lexemes. He bases his theory on the relationship holding within bipartite syntagms (or collocations) composed of a noun and a verb or a noun and an adjective. The two lexemes in each syntagm are bound together by what is called an essential meaning - relation. For example, the relationship holding between kick and foot and punch and fist in the sentences:

(1) He kicked the ball.
(2) He punched his friend.

In the above sentences, the verbs kick and punch necessarily entail the same use of foot and fist respectively. He also posits that there are many distinctions of sense that can be made either by the syntagmatic modification of a more general lexeme or by the use of a more specific single lexeme. For example, the syntagm 'unmarried man' ('man' is
modified by 'unmarried') or the single lexeme 'bachelor' when a single lexeme is used to cover the sense of a syntagm; he calls this encapsulation.

It should be noted that both Trier's paradigmatic relations and Porzig's syntagmatic relations are arguably complementary, and can be incorporated in any satisfactory theory of lexical structure (Lyons 1977: 252, 261). However, Porzig's notion of field theory is closer to the problem of this study because its nerve centre is the sense relationships that hold between lexemes, and the possibility of encapsulation which is a characteristic feature of Dholuo nouns.

Taylor (1989) observes that "Many linguists have adopted a feature approach which parallels in many aspects the assumptions and even the notation and terminology of the phonologists" p.29. The feature approach to semantic analysis "enables the linguist to make economical and insightful statements about the structure of a language" (Taylor 1989: 29, 30). According to Taylor, feature approach enables one to:

1. state the proportional relations which exist within the lexicon, for example, between bachelor and spinster, such that one member of the pair has the feature [MALE], while the other is [FEMALE]. Otherwise, the feature specifications for the two words are identical; we can also capture the other kinds of relations between words such as inclusion and hyponymy, for example, the meaning of the word man [HUMAN], [ADULT], and [MALE], is included in the meaning of bachelor. Man is super ordinate to bachelor; bachelor is a hyponym (subordinate to man);

2. define natural class items. Thus [HUMAN] defines the class of human nouns, while
[-ANIMATE] defines the class of inanimate nouns. Such classes are involved in the statement of selection restrictions, hence

3. "Infant bachelor"

is contradicting because infant, with the feature [-ADULT], contradicts bachelor [+ ADULT].

4. "This bachelor is my sister"

is necessarily false, not because of the facts of the world, but because of the incompatibility of the feature [FEMALE] of sister and [MALE] of bachelor.

A significant point that Taylor raises is thus summarized: "a full analysis" of the meaning of a word involves decomposing the meaning "unto its most elementary components" (Katz and Postal, 1964:13). Bierwich (1967:35) expresses a similar view, adding that the elementary components have the status of universals, that is, word meanings in a particular language are composed of "basic elements that are true candidates for the universal set of semantic markers." This view contributes significantly to this study because it underscores the important question of feature analysis as a key approach to the understanding of the meanings of words, in this case nouns.

This view of universality of semantic features has been expressed by Chomsky (1965:160) thus:
"It is important to determine the universal, language-independent constraints on semantic features—in traditional terms, the system of possible concepts. The notion ‘lexical entry’ presupposes some sort of fixed universal vocabulary in terms of which these objects are characterized, just as the notion ‘phonetic representation’ presupposes some sort of universal phonetic theory. It is surely our ignorance of the relevant psychological and physiological facts that makes possible the widely held belief that there is little or no a priori structure to the system of ‘attainable concepts’.”

Therefore, just as the set of universal phonological features define the sound-producing capabilities of man, so the set of universal semantic features define his cognitive capabilities. It is the purpose of this study to test the universality of the field theory and the componential analysis approach to semantic interpretation.

Lehrer (1974) and Cole (1977) are the linguists whose works are most relevant and exhaustive with regard to the field theory and componential analysis. Lehrer defined a semantic field as a "group of words closely related in meaning often subsumed under a general term" (Lehrer 1974:1). He argues that the goal of a semantic field theory is to collect the words that belong to a field and show the relationships of each of them to one another and to the general term. Accordingly, linguistic fields are not isolated, but rather they "join together to form, in turn, fields of higher order, until finally the entire vocabulary is included" (Öhman, 1953:127). Hence there are connections between
fields, for example, one could establish the field of occupations, one of recreations, of learning, and then group them into another giant field of human activities.

Cole (1977) states that the classification of meanings in terms of domains inevitably results in putting together the meanings of lexical units belonging to quite different formal classes. "The study of meaning", he contends, "involves the processes":

1. grouping the words into domains;
2. determining the componential structures of the classified words. Cole sees a relationship between domains and a preliminary analysis of the componential structures such that one depends on the other.

Therefore, these last two scholars raise propositions that narrow the broader theoretical questions of the single-focused theory of semantic fields and its instrument of interpretation, the decompositional analysis.

1.8.2 Literature on Dholuo Grammar

Some earlier works were done in Dholuo grammar by people whose interests were to provide resources for beginners interested only in learning elementary Dholuo for daily use. Stafford (1967:viii) says, "This grammar has been written for the person who needs to acquire a working knowledge of Luo as quickly as possible." Such works include *An Elementary Luo Grammar* (Stafford, 1967), *Dholuo Without Tears* (Malo, 1952), *Elementary Lessons in Dholuo* (Huntingford, 1959), *Luo-English Dictionary* (Blount, 1971) and *Dholuo Grammar* (St. Joseph’s Society, 1962). These writers did not
address the question of meaning, particularly of the nouns in any theoretical way. Therefore, their usefulness lies only in their being valuable sources of data for this study.

There are, however, a few studies in Dholuo which have come close to a theoretical discussion of the Dholuo nouns. In *Dholuo Morphophonemics in A Generative Framework*, Okoth (1982) attempts a detailed investigation of the "motivation for the morphophonemic alternations which are prevalent in Dholuo grammar." (Okoth 1982 12) He examines cases where the alternations carry relics of earlier stage of the language, where the alternations have a purely phonetic motivation, phonological or purely morphological. In Okoth (1986), he gives an indepth study of the constituent order in Dholuo. Both works, though lacking particular attention to the semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns, are significant as sources of data, and because of the insightful observations on the behaviour of Dholuo nouns: the noun morphology. They are particularly significant in the development of Chapter two of this study whose main focus is on the formation of Dholuo nouns.

Another important scholar in Dholuo linguistics is Adhiambo J. Oduol. Of particular interest is her work in 1990 entitled *Dholuo Dialects: Synchronic states and some Historical Inferences*. Although she is concerned mainly with certain lexical items of the noun class in relation to dialectal variations, her work gives clues to certain semantic aspects of these words which will assist in sense discrimination during our analysis. She treats these nouns as variables, e.g. the kinship term, dayo / day’/ to which she assigns
two different senses as follows:

"dayo defines two areas: one where it means a grandmother or husband's mother and another where it only means grandmother" (Adhiambo 1990:94).

Because she has a host of Dholuo nouns with clearly marked senses, her work becomes valuable for this study as a source of data and for theoretical interests.

1.9. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the methodology for the collection of data will be the researcher's own intuitive knowledge of the language. This is because the researcher is a native speaker of Dholuo. The data so gathered will be counter-checked with other native speakers through observation and elicitation to ensure that it has not been influenced by personal prejudice and that it is sufficiently informed. Extracts of actual spontaneous speeches by native speakers in conversational situations will be recorded and will form part of the data. This will help investigate what are here called the native-speaker choices of nouns. It will also be necessary for the purpose of data collection and analysis to carry out library research. This will ensure that there is adequate and relevant information for the study.

When the data has been collected, we shall form an inventory of items in each field. For each field, a further subdivision will be done by piling the items into groups which seem to belong together, and a common field category which seems more inclusive will be
found by analyzing the sense relations. This subdivision will be done till the finest detail or subdivision is achieved. There may also be need to build a tree diagram for the hierarchical classification to determine relations in terms of ranks. It is within this framework of classification that the analysis of the sense relations will be done.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0. INTRODUCING DHOLUO NOUNS

Nouns in Dholuo include the names of persons, places or things. The members of this class are expressions with referential potential, i.e. they can be used to refer to entities in some world. For purposes of clarity, a division based on ANIMATENESS is essential (Ojwang’, 1998) hence:

(i) \[ + \text{ANIMATE} \]
\[ + \text{HUMAN} \]

(a) Proper (human) names, e.g. Akoth, Omollo, Akinyi, etc

(b) \[ + \text{ANIMATE} \]
\[ - \text{HUMAN} \]

Names of animals, e.g.

- dhiang’ /dɪaŋ/ ‘cow’
- guok /gʊok/ ‘dog’
- diel /dɪɛl/ ‘goat’
- liech /liɛtʃ/ ‘elephant’
This group generally includes names of places and non-living things, such as:

- **ot** /oːt/  'house'
- **agulu** /agulu/  'pot'
- **ring'o** /riŋ'o/  'meat'
- **yien** /yiɛn/  'tree'
- **kidi** /kidɛ/  'stone'

### 2.1. WORD

It is important at this point to begin by considering, briefly, the meaning of the term *word*. Although confusing in meaning, native speakers “can easily recognize a *word* of their language when they see or hear one” (Katamba, 1993:17). The difficulties in clarifying the nature of a *word* are largely due to the fact that the term is used in a variety of senses which usually are not clearly distinguished. Branford W. (1967:116) says that there is no established "*criteria for a watertight definition of a word*" and suggests that "*the best working definition of a word is Bloomfield’s ‘a minimum free form’; i.e. the smallest form that can occur alone as a complete utterance.*"

In the context given below, for example, can the *word* ‘pockled’ be considered a *word* in sentence (1)?
(1) He went to the pub for a pint and then *pockled* off.

One would, perhaps, look up this unfamiliar term in a dictionary, not as *pockled*, but as *pockle*, eventually ending up with other forms like *pockling* and *pockles*. Furthermore, as Katamba (1993:17) argues, these are different manifestations of the same abstract vocabulary item.

(2a) *Dhok* ariyo nindo kacha  
Cows two sleep + PROG there  
Two cows are sleeping there

(2b) *Dhiang'* nindo ka  
Cow Sleep + PRES here  
A cow sleeps here

In (2a) and (2b), *dhok* and *dhiang'* are considered as two separate words although morphologically *dhok* is a different realization of *dhiang'* and marks plurality. Therefore, the words *pockled* in a sentence (1), its variants *pockles* and *pockling*, and the word *dhok*, in (2a) are different realizations of a basic abstract vocabulary item. We shall refer to the word in this sense of abstract vocabulary item using the term *lexeme*.

"Lexemes are the vocabulary items that are listed in the dictionary." (Di Sciullo and Williams, 1987).1
However, when we use the term *word*, it is not always the abstract vocabulary item with a common core of meaning, the lexeme, that is referred to. Katamba (1993:18) argues that sometimes we may use the term to refer to a given physical realization of that lexeme in speech or writing, i.e. a particular *word-form*. Considered this way,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>miyo</td>
<td>/miyo/</td>
<td>'woman'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mon</td>
<td>/mon/</td>
<td>'women'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mine</td>
<td>/mine/</td>
<td>'women' (the gen. Case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monda</td>
<td>/monda/</td>
<td>'my women' (the gen. Case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monde</td>
<td>/monde/</td>
<td>'his women' (the gen. Case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mondi</td>
<td>/mondi/</td>
<td>'your women' (sg. gen. Case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mondu</td>
<td>/mondu/</td>
<td>'your women' (pl. gen. Case)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

are all seen as seven different words and treated thus in the following sentence:

(3) *Miyo* moro ochoko *mon* duto e chiro.

*Woman some 3rd PERS. PERF. + gathered women all in market*

Some woman has gathered all the women in the market.

### 2.1.1. Dholuo noun

In view of the preceding arguments, a Dholuo noun is one which in addition to its referential potential can stand as a lexeme as in the words:
miyo /miyo/ 'woman'
dhiang /dlaf/ 'cow'
pi /pi/ 'water'
suna /suna/ 'mosquito'

or a noun which has undergone such morphological processes as inflection, e.g. mine /mine/ 'women', and derivation, e.g. japur /japur/ 'farmer'. A further definition of a Dholuo noun includes compounds. These are nouns which are formed by the combination of two or more nouns (root-morphemes), e.g.

odguok /zdguok/ 'kennel'
komnyaluo /kzdmlaluo/ 'three-legged stool'
oluthkuon /zlukuon/ 'cooking stick'

Besides these aspects, there is a set of words which, for reasons which are discussed later (cf. section 2.4), qualify to be regarded as Dholuo nouns. They include:

minojowbie /mnjzwbie/ 'a fictitious, messy/dusty female character'
okwachkich /zdkwatz[kit]f/ 'refers to a police investigator'
akor /akor/ 'someone who involves himself in heavy duties, e.g. lifting heavy things'
chi ong'ong'ong'ong' /tʃiʊŋ'ŋ'ŋ/ 'the wife of a fictitious character known as Ong'ong'o - used to ridicule a loser or failure in some activity'

Such nouns are used on the spur of the moment and are only meaningful in such contexts. Normally the speakers are in agreement on the meanings of the expressions. Some of the terms, due to popular use, have gained status in the lexicon and are in use across the dialect boundaries. These kinds of nouns formed in this way can be in the same noun paradigm with single lexemes or their variants as demonstrated below:

- Onyango biro: 'Onyango is coming'
- minojowbie biro: 'mm ojow bie is coming'
- chiong'ong'on'g'ong' biro: 'chiong'on'g on'gon'g biro'
- asunga biro: 'asunga is coming'
- ayom ayom nyathi winyo biro: 'ayom yom nyathi winyo is coming'

2.2. CLASSIFICATION OF DHOLUO NOUNS

Dholuo nouns can be classified into three basic categories as follows:

(a) Basic or inherent nouns
(b) Derived nouns
(c) Compound nouns
2.2.1. Basic or Inherent nouns

These are forms which are inherently noun. Nida (1949:81) calls them free morphemes which he defines as "those which may be uttered in isolation," e.g.

wuoyi /wuoyi/ 'boy'
nyako /njako/ 'girl'
dhako /ndako/ 'woman'
Otieno
Okoth proper names

He also calls them nucleus. A lot of Dholuo nouns fall under this category with the proper nouns forming the majority in the inventory.

2.2.2. Derived nouns

According to Nida (1949:98) complex structures which belong to the same general external distribution class as the simplest member of the class referred to here are the parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and particles. In Dholuo, these are nouns created from other word classes like verbs using the prefix [ja-], e.g.

bayo /bayo/ 'to loiter' → jabayo 'one who loiters'
doyo /doyo/ 'to weed' → jadoyo 'one who weeds'
pur /pur/ 'to farm' → japur 'one who farms'
Others are derived from other nouns (Olu Tomori 1977:35) although their derivation still uses the [ja-] morpheme. They include:

wach /watʃ/ ‘talk’ ➔ jawach ‘one who talks a lot’ or ‘one who socializes easily’

wuoro /wuoro/ ‘greed’ ➔ jawuoro ‘a greedy person’

kongo’ /kɔŋɔ/ ‘alcoholic drink’ ➔ jakongo’ ‘drunkard’

2.2.3. Compound nouns

Some nouns in Dholuo are formed by what Dillon (1977:54) calls the “Noun + Noun rule”.

Two nouns are combined to form a single nominal entity with its own meaning, e.g.

kidi /kidi/ ‘stone’ + mikai /mikai/ ‘first wife’ ➔ kitmikai ‘legendary rocks in a place called Seme in Kisumu District.’

ot /ɔt/ ‘house’ + guok /guok/ ‘dog’ ➔ odguok ‘kennel’

luth /luθ/ ‘stick’ + kuon /kuon/ ‘ugali’ ➔ oluthkuon ‘cooking stick’

abila /əbila/ ‘a small hut’ + rombe /rombe/ ‘sheep’ ➔ abichrombe ‘sheep’s pen’

As in the examples above, Dholuo compound nouns are generally formed by having the first (initial) one in its genitive form (cf. 2.3.3 for further discussion).
2.3. DHOLUO NOUN STRUCTURE

Nouns have structures just like all other words. The formation processes of inflection, derivation and compounding are evidence of the structural nature of the nouns. Some nouns, which are lexemes, are indivisible units of meaning, and can therefore not be segmented into parts that have grammatical as well as semantic content (Katamba 1993:19). Many Dholuo nouns are morphologically complex. They contain derivational and inflectional morphemes that mark plurality and singularity, and derivational nouns formed from verbs and other word classes. The following plural formation processes are important in Dholuo noun morphology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhako</td>
<td>/ñak/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miyo</td>
<td>/miyo/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhian'g</td>
<td>/ðiŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rawera</td>
<td>/rawera/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyako</td>
<td>/nìak/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yien</td>
<td>/yìen/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dholuo is dominantly inflectional (not agglutinative) in its morphological behaviour. Thus, word forms are usually unpredictably related to the base-form. There are no recognizable general pattern in pluralization in the cases above that would necessitate a fast rule of pluralization in the behaviour of Dholuo nouns. Deletion, a phonological process involving the loss of segments is responsible for the changes that occur in the
above plural formation process. The deletion process “is done of the major phonological processes… in Dholuo” (Adhiambo, O. J. H. 1981:48). She says that the process affects consonants and in some cases even units such as syllables. In the examples above, the word internal segment deletions is sporadic and takes place in different conditions.

It is also observable that two or more segments may be deleted at once leaving only the word initial segment, and a new segment inserted, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Sg.</th>
<th>Noun Pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>miyo</td>
<td>mon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhian'g</td>
<td>dhok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyako</td>
<td>nyiri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the same is not the case with derivations arising from verbs or other nouns as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DER Sg. Verb</th>
<th>DER Pl. Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japur /japur/</td>
<td>jopur /jpur/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jariembo /jariembo/</td>
<td>joriembo /jriembo/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jayalo /jayalo/</td>
<td>joyalo /jyal/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DER Sg. Noun</th>
<th>DER Pl. Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jakong’o /jakong’o/</td>
<td>jokong’o /jokong’o/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jakuo /jakuo/</td>
<td>jokuo /jokuo/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Katamba (1993:21) "the elements recognized as belonging to a given morpheme contribute an identifiable meaning to the word of which they are a part.” In the cases above, the morpheme [ja-] marks singularity when attached to either a verb or a noun to derive a different noun with the general meaning of “someone who does X” (where X is the action denoted by the verb or described by the noun).

When the plural forms are formed, the [ja-] changes to [jo-]. Therefore, because of this general pattern in the plural and singular formations, it is possible to generalize that while the verb or noun remains a constant variable, the singular prefix [ja-] becomes [jo-] in plural formation.

Okoth (1982) identifies a group of nouns “whose pluralization involves a change in the final consonant” and sub-classifies them thus:

(a) those in which voiceless obstruents become voiced.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{Nom. sg.} & \text{Nom. Pl.} \\
\text{alot} /\text{al}\text{ʔt}/ & \text{alode} /\text{al}\text{ʔde}/ & \text{‘vegetable’} \\
\text{bat} /\text{bat}/ & \text{bede} /\text{bede}/ & \text{‘arm’} \\
\text{luth} /\text{luθ}/ & \text{ludhe} /\text{luθe}/ & \text{‘stick’} \\
\text{guok} /\text{guok}/ & \text{guogi} /\text{guogi}/ & \text{‘dog’} \\
\end{array}
\]}
(b) those in which voiced obstruents become voiceless, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg</th>
<th>Nom. Pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kidi /kidi/</td>
<td>kite /kite/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puodho /puodo/</td>
<td>puothe /puoθe/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mogo /mɔɡɔ/</td>
<td>moke /mɔkɛ/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) those in which /w/ or zero becomes /p/, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg</th>
<th>Nom. Pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gowi</td>
<td>gope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bao</td>
<td>bepe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loo/lowo</td>
<td>lope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) those in which /p/ or zero becomes /w/, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg</th>
<th>Nom. Pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pap / pap/</td>
<td>pewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rao /raɔ/</td>
<td>repe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e) those in which /l/ become /nd/, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg</th>
<th>Nom. Pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tielo /t̪iɛlɔ/</td>
<td>tiende /t̪iende/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tol /t̪ɔl/</td>
<td>tonde /t̪ɔndɛ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bul /bul/</td>
<td>bunde /bunde/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
those in which /c/ becomes /y/, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg.</th>
<th>Nom. Pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kwach</td>
<td>kwech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wich</td>
<td>wiye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ich</td>
<td>iye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

kwach /kwatʃ/     kwech /kway/kwetʃ/    'leopard'
wich /witʃ/       wiye /wiye/           'head'
ich /iʃ/          iye /iyɛ/            'stomach'

What is observable in both the [ja-, jo-] forms and the Okoth (1982) sub-classification is a regular pattern which is the most common operation in the pluralization process of Dholuo nouns.

Dholuo nouns do not combine more than two morphemes except in the cases discussed in section 2.4. In noun formation, the most common morphemes which combine with certain nouns (in root forms) and verbs to derive other nouns with different meanings, or to denote plurality is the prefix [ja-] and the suffix [-ni], e.g.

[ja-] Nom. Sg.

Jakongo' /jakoŋo/ 'drunkard'
jabayo /jabayo/ 'one who loiters'
jasunga /jasʊŋa/ 'a proud person'
jaracho /jaritʃo/ 'sinner'
Okoth (1982) gives the following examples for the [-ni] Nom. singular and plural forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pala</td>
<td>pelni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higa</td>
<td>higni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law</td>
<td>lewni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bugo</td>
<td>bugni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agulu</td>
<td>agulni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lwanda</td>
<td>lwendni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, whereas [-ni ] has a rather transparent and unambiguous meaning, the morpheme [ja-] can behave differently in some cases, e.g. it can be ambiguous as in the two sentences given below.

(1) Ne aromo gi jakochia

PAST 1ST PERS. Sg. + meet + PAST with a man from Kochia

I met a man from Kochia

(2) Ne aromo gi jakuo

PAST 1ST PERS. Sg. + meet + PAST with thief.

I met a thief

In sentences (1) [ja-] denotes of, from or belonging to and is only meaningful in combination with other nouns which denote the names of places. In sentence (2) the morpheme [ja-] combines with the noun kuo to form a whole new entity jakuo ‘a thief’.
In this sense, it occurs with nouns of things, activities, behaviour and character. Having ascertained that Dholuo nouns have an internal structure, we intend to introduce a wide range of word-building elements used in the creation of that structure.

2.3.1. Roots, Affixes, Stems and Bases in Dholuo

Katamba (1993:41) defines a root as “the irreducible core of a word, with absolutely nothing else attached to it.” Olu Tomori (1977:32) defines the root as “The very heart of a word.” It is the word from which all other word-forms are built as in the case of the unmarked forms like walk, drink, nature and go. It is also the form to which other forms refer back, e.g. the case of suppletion in forms like good and better, and bad and worse. In the latter case, better realizes the lexeme good, while worst realizes the lexeme bad.

Some roots are free or lexical morphemes. Most Dholuo nouns are lexical morphemes except those formed by the process of affixation. Examples of such lexical morphemes include:

dhako ‘woman’
gweno ‘hen’
guok ‘dog’
wuro ‘greed’
sunga ‘pride’
gor ‘mountain’
nyako ‘girl’
It is not in the interest of this paper to discuss the distinctions between the terms *affixes*, *stems* and *bases*; only a brief mention of each will suffice. An affix is a morpheme which only occurs when attached to some other morpheme or morphemes such as a root, stem or base (Nida 1949:81). A stem is a part of a word in existence before another inflectional affix is added to it. Olu Tomori (1977:32) defines it as "... that part of the word to which the last morpheme in the word is structurally added," e.g.

**Stem before affixation**  
**After affixation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem before affixation</th>
<th>After affixation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>got</td>
<td>gode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nam</td>
<td>nembe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhian’g</td>
<td>dhok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rwath</td>
<td>rwedhi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'mountain'  
'lake'  
'cow'  
'bull'

Either a root or one which has undergone affixation can be a stem as is the case with the English words *workers* and *cats*. Because a base is any unit to which affixes of any kind can be added, all roots are bases.

Katamba (1993) classifies nouns as lexical morphemes. Most Dholuo nouns carry most of the 'semantic content' of utterances, i.e. referring to individuals, e.g. the nouns *Akoth*. Thatched to activities e.g. *Nindo* 'sleep', *ywak* 'cry', *tugo* 'play', *wach* 'talk'...
behaviour terms, e.g. luor ‘respect’, hera ‘love’, achaya ‘disrespect’, guondo ‘stingy’

wuoro ‘greed’, among others.

2.3.2. Inflectional and derivational morphemes in Dholuo

Affix morphemes operate as inflectional and derivational morphemes. The terms
inflection and derivation refer to two principal word building processes which have been
used widely in word formation in many languages (Katamba 1993:47; Olu Tomori 1977:33). We want to posit that these processes affect languages differently depending
on how each language forms its inflected forms and marks its derivational forms.

It was noted earlier that most Dholuo nouns are lexical morphemes. There are however,
cases of nouns formed by derivation. The use of the most common prefix [ja-] helps to
derive nouns entities with new meanings, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1: Root</th>
<th>Derived entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kuo ‘stealing’</td>
<td>jakuo ‘one who steals’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juok ‘wizardry’</td>
<td>jajuok ‘wizard’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koko ‘noise’</td>
<td>jakoko ‘a noisy person’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidura ‘laziness’</td>
<td>jakidura ‘a lazy person especially one who is reluctant to go and look after cattle’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case 2: **Place Name**

- kochia
- kisumo
- Kenya

**Person reference**

- jakochia 'person form'
- jakisumo 'person form'
- jakenya 'person form'

Case 3: **Root**

- nyako
- alot
- agwata
- rao
- rwath

**Infected for plurality**

- nyiri 'girl'
- alode 'vegetable'
- agwetni 'calabash'
- repe 'hipopotamus'
- rwedhi 'bull'

Proper nouns in Dholuo are never affected by the derivational and inflectional processes, e.g. whether there are many boys called **Onyango**, each one will be separately identified by the name **Onyango**, and not **Onyangos**, to show plurality. Therefore, sentence (a) below is acceptable while (b) is not.

(a) **Onyango** ni ka

*Onyango* is here

(b) **Onyangni** ni ka

*Onyangos* are here
Katamba (1993:46) defines a compound word as one “which contains more than one root.” A compound may be viewed, in other words, as a word which contains at least two bases which are both words, or root morphemes. In a prototypical compound, the components are bases which can occur elsewhere as independent words (lexemes). Compounding in Dholuo makes much use of the genitive case which Okoth (1982:32) says “involves more noun-to-noun relations than just that of possession.” He further observes that “in Dholuo it is the possessed that undergoes the change corresponding to the genitive case.”

In Dholuo, it is the bare noun roots that are combined in compounds as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun roots</th>
<th>Gen. Sg. Compounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[abilajN]</td>
<td>[abichrombejN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[kidi]N</td>
<td>[kitmikaijN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ot]N</td>
<td>[odguokjN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[kom]N</td>
<td>[komnyaluojN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[juok]N</td>
<td>[juogwan’gjN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[kodhi]N</td>
<td>[kothkochiajN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[luth]N</td>
<td>[oluthkuonjN]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ogila]N</td>
<td>[ogilanyakarondojN]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data above shows the different phonological changes that occur in genetivization in compound noun formation as follows:

(a) those in which the final voiceless obstruents are voiced, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg.</th>
<th>Nom. Sg.</th>
<th>Gen. Sg. Compound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ot</td>
<td>guok</td>
<td>odguok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juok</td>
<td>wan’g</td>
<td>juogwan’g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) those in which a voiced obstruent becomes voiceless, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom. Sg.</th>
<th>Nom. Sg.</th>
<th>Gen. Sg. Compound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kidi</td>
<td>mikai</td>
<td>kitmikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kodhi</td>
<td>kochia</td>
<td>kothkochia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luth</td>
<td>kuon</td>
<td>ludhkuon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is a tendency in Dholuo noun formation to use compounds to refer to a given thing, often due to lack of a specific single word (roof/base) for it. The case presented here is different from the case of such proper nouns as Opiyo, Otieno, Akoth, etc. Compounding helps to provide names for parts of the body and other phenomena of interest to the native speakers. For example,

\[
[kuom]N + [dhian’g]N \rightarrow [kuomdhian’g]N
\]

\[
[pap]N + [akuche]N \rightarrow [pawakuche]N
\]
apparent that although these compound words are single meaningful units, they
are as two words separated by a space. We want to posit in our thesis that
graphic conventions are not reliable indicators of compounding. Rather, as
put it "accent subordination) is the hallmark of compounds." 4
word accent dominates the rest in a compound. In Dholuo, it's normally the first of
bases that occupies the main accent while the other is subordinated (although it may be the
word), e.g. KUOM dhian'g
PAWakuche
KOMnyalu
OLUTH kuon, etc
(uppercase words carry the main accent).

Practically, it makes good sense to analyse these noun compounds as the "noun+ noun
form" (Dillon, 1977:54) using the phrase structure rule, \( N \ N+N \), suggested by
which licenses compound nouns such as \( N[N \ kit \ N \ mikai] \). This
provides the basis of analogical formations like:

\[ N \ kom \ [N \ nvaluo] \]
\[ N \ ogur \ [N \ othith] \]
\[ N \ oluth \ [N \ kuon] \], etc
A number of linguistics, according to Katamba (1993: 303), have argued that word-formation rules are phrase-structure rules akin to those found in syntax. One, Selkirk (1982), *The Syntax of Words*, argues that both morphological and syntactic rules are similar. She posits in her book that morphology is the study of "the syntax of words," while, syntax is "the study of the syntax of sentences." We intend to examine the issue of headedness of compounds in the noun formation process in Dholuo in the light of this argument by Selkirk. It should, of course, be noted that the tendency in modern Linguistics is to talk about grammar for both Syntax and Morphology and work with principles that account for both as far as possible. However, not all morphological processes have been subjected to syntactic rules.

According to her, in the study of 'word syntax' phrase structure rules are used to generate permissible strings and to assign them structural descriptions. Rules of word syntax specify the combinations of morphemes that words are made up of much in the same way that rules of sentence syntax specify concatenations of words that result in well-formed sentences. Selkirk proposes for English, word-level context-free phrase structure rules like the following (Katamba 1993:302):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase structure rule</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stem $\to$ affix + stem</td>
<td>expel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem $\to$ stem + affix</td>
<td>fraternal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word $\to$ word + affix</td>
<td>broking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word $\to$ affix + word</td>
<td>re-wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word $\to$ word + word</td>
<td>footpath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(here 'stem' refers to any bound non-affix morpheme).

The notion of head plays a key role in the work of generative morphologies like Williams (1981a, 1981b), Di scullio and Williams (1987) and Selkirk (1982). Using the theory of X-bar Syntax they highlight the fact that just as phrases in syntax have heads; words also have heads.

A head has two characteristics:

(a) it assigns its category features to the constituents of which it is the head e.g. the head of a NP is a noun as in the entire phrase, NP [ADJ new] [N books]

(b) it is one level lower in the X-bar hierarchy than the constituent of which it is the head, e.g.,
Selkirk (1982) proposes an X-bar analysis of noun compounds parallel to the kind of syntactic analysis of NPs given above. It is important to note at this point that Dholuo compounds are formed by the phrase structure rule:

\[ \text{Word} \rightarrow \text{Word} + \text{Word} \]

Therefore, \( N \rightarrow \{N\} N \)
The compounds given above are typical examples of endocentric compounds. We want to posit here that because Dholuo compounds are formed by the word → word + word rule, they are endocentric with most heads being on the right. Syntactically, the head is the dominant constituent of the entire compound word. This is similar to conventional Syntax where we now have non-stem heads (e.g. INFL).
2.3.4.1. The Right-hand Head Rule (RHR)

Nominal compounds in Dholuo are endocentric, i.e. they have a head. Most heads appear as the right-hand most constituent of the word. It has been argued already that Dholuo nominal compounds are made up of bases of similar syntactic categories (nouns). Unlike English, the category of the entire compound is self-determining owing to the inherent categorial nature of the constituents.

Williams (1981a: 248) tries to capture a generalization that “in morphology we define the head of a morphologically complex word to be the right-hand member of that word.” However, much as this is true of English and some other languages, it is not entirely applicable in Dholuo. We want to argue here that some Dholuo compounds have right-handed heads. These heads are the ones which are inflected for number (in the case of nouns which is our focus) as the following analysis shows:
In the examples above, it is the head which is inflected for number. Suppletion takes places so that from a singular noun one obtains a plural noun which looks more like a different word, semantically independent. Yet the resulting word is the inflected manifestation of the singular form. Some Dholuo nouns are known to undergo suppletion in their inflectional processes.

There are, however, instances which portray a deviation from this, somewhat, general pattern. First, there are cases where the inflection in the compound word affects only the left-hand element although it is not the head.
Using one example, we will attempt an analysis of the ‘syntax of words’ type as follows:

\[
\text{[ogutothith]} \rightarrow \text{[ oguteothith ]}
\]

Secondly, there are cases where both bases are inflected for number, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg.</th>
<th>Pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Komwendo</td>
<td>kombewelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odguok</td>
<td>uteguogi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odwinvo</td>
<td>utewiny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These can be inflected in the exemplifying analysis below:

Conclusively, the right-hand headedness principle as developed by Williams (1981) is not a universal principle, but only relates to the nominal compounds in Dholuo which obey the RHH principle. In fact, even in English, there is a small minority of endocentric compounds with left-hand heads. These include nouns which form their plural by adding the plural morpheme to the noun in first position such as the following (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973: 84):
2.4. PRODUCTIVITY IN DHOLUO NOUN FORMATION

2.4.1 The Open-endedness of the Lexicon

Productivity is a very significant tendency in the Noun formation in Dholuo. It simply means generality. The more general a word-formation process is the more productive it will be assumed to be. There are two key points to be explained (Katamba 1993: 65ff).

(1) Productivity is a matter of degree. It is not a dichotomy, with some word-formation processes being productive and others being unproductive. Probably no process is so general that it affects without exception, all the bases to which it could potentially apply. The reality is that some processes are relatively more general than others.

(b) Productivity is subject to the dimension of time. A process which is very general during one historical period may become less so at a subsequent period. Conversely, a new process entering a language may initially affect a tiny fraction of eligible inputs eventually applying more widely. Katamba (1993:65)) argues that one of the goals of
morphological theorizing is to account for the ways in which speakers both understand and form not only ‘real’ words that occur in that language, but also potential words which are not instantiated in use in utterances.

The philosophy of the notion of productivity as a linguistic (specifically morphological) phenomena is the thesis that although a large percentage of ‘real’ words listed in dictionaries are memorized, it is also true, and of great theoretical interest, that countless words used in discourse events are new, made up on the spur of the moment (Katamba, 1993:72). Morphology must not only concentrate on the structure of established words, but also on the freshly coined neologisms Katamba (1993:65) posits that the lexicon cannot be viewed as a static list because no dictionary, however large, can list every word in a language. There are new words in use every day and in every conversation. The more we recognize such words as part of the language the bigger and more open-ended will our lexicon be. And this is the essence of productivity. Dholuo compounding has generated nouns such as:

1. chiongong ongong
2. Itar ka min ojow bie
3. okwach kich
4. ang’ich webo
5. onguru raten’g
6. okore wuon oganda
7. Apuoyo ogila nyakarondo
8. ayom yom nyathi winyo.

One of the devices that make morphology open-ended and therefore productive is the notion of conversiveness. Re-attaching the same morpheme recursively is permitted in Dholuo noun-formation, but unusual. In fact, the grammar cannot exclude them as ill
formed, but performance difficulties in working out what it is that they exactly mean will/do severely restrict their usage, e.g.

*ayomyom yathi winyo*  
‘as weak as a baby-bird’

*chi on’gong’ on’gong’*  
‘reference to an, ogre’

*yombe yombe*  
‘wild behaviour’

We want to observe here that such morphological behaviors of noun morphemes is only a functional aspect of the language, and therefore only meaningful within the discourse event and environment. The terms above are only used in their derogatory senses as forms of insults or to frighten someone, particularly children.

Another form of demonstrating productivity of the morphology of Dholuo nouns is by “pillaging the vocabulary of other languages” Katamba (1993: 66). This is a very common feature in Dholuo word-formation process. A lot of things that are not typically Luo are named either by coinage or borrowing from other languages. According to Adhiambo (1990:226) “borrowing of lexical items comes through contact with speakers of other languages.” Cases of loanwords are numerous and include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tinga</td>
<td>‘tractor’</td>
<td>from Swahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okombe</td>
<td>‘kikombe’</td>
<td>from Swahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ojiko</td>
<td>‘kijiko’</td>
<td>from Swahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufria</td>
<td>‘sufuria’</td>
<td>from Swahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baranget/onget</td>
<td>‘blanket’</td>
<td>from English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otanda</td>
<td>‘kitanda’</td>
<td>from Swahili</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adhiambo (1990:226) says that at borrowing “each borrowing language attempts to indiginize the loanword making it fit its own sound system.” To ensure these conform to the phonological symmetry of Dholuo nouns, certain structure preserving phonotactic rules are effected, for example, the insertion of /o/ in place of [ki] using the rule:

\[ [\text{ki}] \rightarrow /o/ \rightarrow \text{any base morpheme} \]

for the Swahili loanwords. The phonotactic constraints in the lexicon act as a filter allowing only well-formed words into the lexicon. Any phonologically non-conformist word is nativised as above. This way the Luo morphology is able to cope with the loanwords and the language has a way of responding to new challenges.

The upshot of this discussion is that morphology is productive, and that there is no limit to the number of potential words in a language. It is true as Katamba (1993:79) observes that “the term productivity has sometimes been used to refer to creativity.” This is the capacity of human languages use finite means to produce an infinite number of words and utterances. Morphologically, creativity can be rule-governed or rule-bending. Rule-governed creativity is built on the fact that words are formed following general morphological rules and principles internalized by native speakers during the language acquisition process.

However, speakers have the ability to extend the stock of words idiomatically or otherwise by producing words without following the conventional rules of word-formation. In Quirk (1973:19), it is observed that “new items are constantly being created…” This is based on a preceding argument that the noun class belongs to the
'open' class "in the sense that it is indefinitely extendable." No synchronic rules can be devised to account for the meaning of a semantically unpredictable compound like: *itar ka min ojow bie*

**Okorewuon ogonda**

**Chi on’gon’g on’gon’g**

*Okwach kich, etc*

In some cases, it is only by delving into history that we can show that some of these compounds had a literal meanings, which got superceded by later metaphorical extensions, e.g.

(a) *min ojow bie* - may have been derived from the practice of gathering ants as chicken- feed by women who would eventually end up being very dusty.

(b) *an’gich welo* - may have been derived from the practice of leaving home at dawn for a journey being that there were not vehicles and people had to travel long distances on foot.

### 2.4.2. Constraints on productivity

The cover term for factors which impinge on word-formation processes is **blocking**. In Dholuo noun-formation, there is only one apparent constrain: the performance constrain. As we noted earlier, it is permitted to recursively re-attach certain base morphemes in order to form compounds in certain instances of discourse, e.g. *chi on’gon’g on’gon’g*
on 'gong', oyom yom nyathi winyo, etc. However, it becomes problematic accounting semantically for any stretch of morphemes beyond two (which is the standard) and three (which is only for emphasis) besides the derogatory sense this recursion carries and perhaps, only as a pun in children's games and story-telling sessions. In normal discourse events, speakers often stick to compounds comprising only two bases.

NOTES

2. this term and its variants listed in the paradigm is a polite reference to an elderly or married woman. It strictly refers to a mother, but is often used instead of the impolite term 'dhako' (woman).
3. my own addition considering such words as rao
3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this section, we shall attempt an analysis of samples of Dholuo nouns in terms of semantic domains. Various domains have been identified for the purpose of establishing the possibility of semantic relationships within and across fields. They are: the family domain, the domain of colour, the domain of physical features and that of human beings. A decompositional analysis will be done to determine the possible distinctive and relating features (components) of individual nouns within the specified fields.

3.1 THE FAMILY DOMAIN

Lyons (1968:477) argues that “it has been shown... that one can analyse the most common kinship terms of English in various ways.” For example, brother and sister can be regarded as having the same components: ‘direct line of descent,’ as father and mother or son and daughter. The same argument applies appropriately to the family relations in Dholuo. The tree analysis adopted below helps to illustrate this kind of relationship well.

3.1.1 Inventory of some Dholuo family terms

- kwaro - grandfather
- wuoro - father
- myo - mother
- wuo - boy
- mvako - girl
- dayo - grandmother
The terms in parentheses describe the relationship holding between the superordinate term (the key term in the domain) and the term on the next node below the parenthesized one. We shall call the terms in the parentheses, the relationship markers. *KWARO* is the
point of references for all the unparenthesized terms. It forms the larger domain such that all the others, e.g. *WUORO*, can be used to head sub-domains within the family field, e.g.

**Fig. 2**

![Diagram](image)

The nouns in Fig. 1 can be analysed into their componential parts as follows:

**KWARO**

- animate
- human
- male
- adult
- has offspring
- grandparent

**MIYO**

- animate
- human
- male
- adult
- has offspring
- grandparent

---

60
All these nouns belong to the same semantic field. Lehrer (1974:15) says that the assumption of the theories of semantic field is that "the vocabulary of a language is structured" such that "the words of a language can be classified into sets which are related to conceptual fields and divided up the semantic space or the semantic domain in certain ways". Assuming for the purpose of this analysis, that _KWARO_ is the ultimate point of reference in the family domain, _WUORO_ and _MIYO_, in Fig. 1 would be said to be related within the field as children (nyathi) of _KWARO_. Besides the shared components, there is a further feature shared by both nouns, i.e. a direct line of descent.

_WUORO_ and _MIYO_ can each have offsprings in the form of a boy (_WUOI_) and a girl (_NYAKO_). These are further related to each other in a complementary sense (Lyons, 1968:479) and as cousins sharing the feature [+ COLLATERAL] (Lyons, 1968:477). Furthermore, the offsprings of _WUORO_ and _MIYO_ are related to _KWARO_ as grandchildren.
In the even that these offspring establish their own families, their offspring will be defined within the larger family domain in two ways that are semantically differentiating. I.e. they relate to WUORO and MIYO as grandchildren (nyakwaro) and to KWARO as great-grandchildren (dhokliunda).

There is yet another relationship shown in Fig. 1 that is important. This is what English distinguishes as *nephew* and *niece*. Dholuo, on the other hand, lacks specific and homegrown terms for such relationships. Instead, the relationship shown by the broken lines between MIYO and WUOI/NYAKO is that of sonship owning to the fact that MIYO is a sister to WUORO, WUOI and NYAKO will, of course, refer to MIYO as their *aunt*. They will refer to WUORO using the term uncle. This is acceptable because WUORO is a brother to their mother (MIYO). He also shares the sonship relates with them so that they are 'my daughter'. The English understanding of uncle is acceptable in this context.

The following sentences demonstrate the correctness of the relationship above.

1. (a) *Waya ose biro*
   
   My aunt has come

   (b) *Nera nindo ka*
   
   My uncle sleeps here

The assumption in Fig. 1 is that KWARO has as hid immediate offspring a boy and a girl. However, if he has only boys, the terrain of relationship will be expressed slightly
differently. Replacing MIYO with other WUORO, the offspring marked as (nyakwaro), i.e. WUOI and NYAKO, will refer to either of the WUORO not as uncle in the English sense of the word, but using the politeness term father. This is due to the fact that their fathers are brothers, or offspring of the same father (KWARO).

Ullmann (1979:247) observes, "a few basic relations such as 'father', 'mother', 'son' and 'daughter' are probably semantic 'constants', which will somehow have to be expressed in any language, though even here there is room for diversity." In Dholuo, as noted earlier, there are two senses for 'father': the first, which refers to a purely physiological fatherhood and the other, which could also carry social connotations. It is to this latter one that the 'father's brother(s)' belong. This is what we have referred to above as the politeness term because its semantic range extends to any other person the father relates to a brother or cousin, however distant. The senses of 'father' can be analysed thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>1. physiological male parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. male sibling of physiological male parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. cousin of physiological male parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This interpretation of 'father' is not exhaustive because even a daughter-in-law can call her father-in-law simply as 'father' although none of the above senses applies here. The above analysis is limited to the context of the proceeding argument.

In view of this latter relationship, native speakers would consider the following sentences anomalous.
2. (a) Kwara nigi yawuoi ariyo, wuonwa mar ariyo ema tuo.
   My grandfather has two sons; the second one is the diseased

(b) # Kwara nigi yawuoi ariyo, nera mar ariyo ema tuo
   My grandfather has two sons; my second uncle is the diseased

(c) Wounwa matin osedok
   My youngest uncle (father's brother) has gone back.

(d) # Nera matin osedok
   My youngest uncle has gone back

Note: the sign '#' indicates semantic anomaly.

In 2(a), (b), (c), (d), WUORO which has the sense of 'a brother to my father' and NERA, which carries the sense of 'a brother to my mother' are deterministic in assessing the anomalies in 2(b) and (d). It is if the native speaker's experiential knowledge that the noun NERA is only used in connection to the maternal line of the family relationship. According to Ullman (1957: 156), in some languages, it is essential to distinguish between uncles and aunts on the father's and the mother's side. Any choice, therefore, will depend on whether the niece or nephew is referring to a father's brother or mother's.

As we noted earlier, the relationship markers in Fig. 1 act, in a sense, as selectional restrictions in sentence constructions involving the use of family terms in Dholuo. One can therefore say:
4. (a) WUORA en nyathi KWARA
   My father is my grandfather's child

   (b) KWARA luongo NYAKWARE
   My grandfather is calling his grandchild

But never:

5. (a) # WUORA en nyakwar KWARA
   My father is a grandchild of my grandfather

   (b) # KWARA luongo WUODE
   My grandfather is calling his son.

When in 5(a) it is understood that WUORA (my father) is a son to KWARA (my grandfather), and in 5(b) it is intended that KWARA 'is calling his grandchild.' In such cases as above, the word nyakwar and wuode carry distinctive senses that restrict their choices in speech events.

3.2 THE DOMAIN OF COLOUR

Semantic field plays a significant role in the organization of our experience. Ullmann (1970:246) argues that "the importance of this role will largely depend on the nature of the field itself, whether it is concrete or abstract, continuous or made up of discrete elements." One of the examples of a concrete sphere where man is faced with a
continuum that he has to divide up and arrange in some sort of orderly pattern is the system of colours (cf. Ullmann 1970:246).

An attempt to divide up this continuum into specific and distinctive colours gives rise to a vagueness demonstrated more clearly by the fact that "The spectrum is a continuous band and the number and nature of the distinctions which we superimpose on it are of necessity arbitrary and variable" (Ullmann 1970:246). Consequently some languages have no single term for 'brown' or 'gray', for example. Others like Russians have two, adjectives for 'blue' "sinij 'dark blue' and goluboj 'azure, sky-blue' (Ullmann, 1970:246).

In his discussion of semantic vagueness, Ullmann (1957:94ff) argues that one of the reasons for such vagueness is "lack of sharp demarcation lines" between referents. The field of colours is one example of the fields in which semantic vagueness is more prevalent. Lehrer (1974:16, 152) also observes that from the study of colour terms by Berlin and Kay (1970), it was found that speakers "disagree among themselves as to where to draw the line between colours."

This semantic vagueness with regard to colours is problematic even in Dholuo colour differentiation. It will be noted in Fig. 3 and Fig. 5 that the point of arbitrariness is manifested in the use of additional morphemes or reduplication to find functional terms for shades that are slightly different from the principal colour.

The following inventory shows some of the basic colours in Dholuo:
In analysing Dholuo colour words, we shall subsume all the basic terms under one field, which in Dholuo is called 'rangi' (colour). In an interview with some native speakers, there was a general agreement among them as to the shades and the following colours were found to correspond to the English "white", "black", "red", "green", and "yellow".

In such a case, KIDO is the semantic marker of all the other colour words. Distinguishers separate the rest, which fall within that field, e.g. [rateng'], [rachar] etc. Those others
shades or colours form the components of what Katz (1967a, 149) called the "conceptual representation of sense." In other words, the word KIDO (colour) carries the universal sense of 'colour' and is realized in the varied components, the different 'colours.'

A practice among Dholuo speakers that is worth drawing attention to because it has semantic significance is that of distinguishing the principal shades from those bearing some semblance with the principal shades. They attach certain intensifier morphemes to the noun of a given colour. This, in effect, establishes sub-domains within the colour spectrum which pyramidally point to the main point of reference, i.e. the conceptual term 'KIDO.' The following are examples of such sub-domains.

Fig. 3 (a)
In all these cases, a distinction is drawn between 'ordinary' white and 'pure' white (a), 'ordinary' red [rakwaro] and 'deep' red [rakwaro ha]. They have three terms corresponding to "black", the first denoting the blackness of darkness, another the black of charcoal, and the third the dark complexion of a human face from which we derive the utterance: Nyako ma dichol ‘A dark girl’. The relationship between rachar and rachar dher could be described by giving them the semantic marker (rachar). In our proposal, we posited hypothetically that a relationship exists within and across domains. This is evidenced in the relationship that exists among the sub-domains, which is expressed by combining them under the same conceptual term KIDO as show below.

The immediate constituents of the conceptual term KIDO, i.e. rachar, rateng' and rakwaro, are enclosed in parentheses and squire brackets to signify that they carry the two senses: the conceptual sense and that of being distinguishers, e.g. ([rachar]) is first a
distinguisher, then a conceptual term or semantic marker heading a sub-domain whose distinguishing components are /rachar/ and /rachar dher/.

Another way of distinguishing between shades within a sub-domain is by the morphological process known as **reduplication**, i.e. 'the full or partial repetition of the base' (Katamba, 1993: 163). E.g.

![Diagram showing reduplication in color terms](image)

The relationship expressed between the actual colour and its counterpart described by reduplication in Fig. 5 is similar to the one explain under Fig. 4 above. This way, the native speakers are able to capture shades of colour that are closer to the principle colour.

In view of the foregoing argument, it should become apparent that the native speaker has knowledge of the relationship holding between the different colours and describes them appropriately. His choice of which colour to refer to at given points is guided by this experiential knowledge. It is on these grounds that the following sentences would be considered anomalous.
1. (a) # Ot ma rachar cha en rateng'

That white house is black

(b) # Pe rateng'

Ice is black

(c) # Orwako law ma athing' kendo athing' athing'

She is putting on a gray dress which is also grayish.

In practical speech situations, the native speaker is aware that sentence 1 (a) presents an apparent contradiction because the sense of rachar ‘white’ is in a relationship of antonymy with the sense of rateng’ ‘black’. Therefore, a house cannot be both white and black at the same time. Sentence 1(b) presents the speaker with impossibility. Ice is generally known to be inherently white. The componential features of pe ‘ice’ do not include the feature [+ black] and similarly the features of the colour black do not include [+white]. Therefore, there is no possibility of a collocation within a sentence in which rateng' qualifies pe. Sentence 1(c) implies that a colour can be both gray and grayish at the same time. This is semantic nonsense. As a matter of fact, we have already established that this is one of the ways by which colour differentiation is done in Dholuo.

Ullmann (1957:95) says that ‘plethora of concrete words and corresponding paucity of abstract terms is a well-known characteristic of the vocabulary of uncivilized races: the Zulus have no word for ‘cow’, only for ‘white cow, red cow’; the Mohicans have none
for 'cutting', and the Aborigines of Central Brazil lack any generic expression for 'palm' and 'parrot', though there is in both cases a wealth of concrete names for specific instances." In a similar way, and with specific reference to the colour domain, Dholuo does not have names for all the different shades of colour. E.g. whereas English has the following names for such variants of the colour blue: sky-blue, dark blue, navy blue, etc, Dholuo will cluster all these different senses of 'blue' into one sense and call them *rambilu* 'blue'. But in the cases in which there are specific terms for different colours, the speakers are able to distinguish them and use them appropriately. The following utterances demonstrate the appropriacy of choice in actual speech situations.

2. (a) Ogola nyiedho dhiang’ *marateng’* cha.

   Ogola is milking that *black* cow.

(b) Rwath *marachich* olal e lap.

   The whitish bull has got lost in the grazing field

(c) Dhiang Onyango *marachar* onywolo nyathi ma *athing’* *athing’*

   Onyango’s *white* cow has given birth to a *grayish* calf.

This choice is a result of a clear understanding of the different senses that the colour names carry, and the acceptable arbitrary terms in use by the speech community for each colour.
3.3 DOMAIN OF PHYSICAL FEATURES

The physical features included in this domain for our study fall under two categories: *kuonde pi* 'Water sources' and *piny* 'Land'. Our analysis will use what the philosopher Ludwing Wittgenstein (Kearns, 200:13) described as 'family resemblances.' This involves clustering the terms according to certain open similarities of features. It is used in describing the sense relations holding between terms that do not have many common features. In Wittgenstein's example, which we shall quote extensively here, "The activities which are called games do not have any features common to all, but a number of different features occur in certain clusters of games." He gives numerous examples, but we shall take only three.

**Soccer, basketball, hurling, etc.**

- rules for play
- competition/contest
- scoring system
- physical skill/strategy
- pastime

**Chess**

- rules for play
- competition/contest
- mental skill/strategy
- pastime
Bridge, mah jong, poker, back gammon, etc

- rules for play
- competition/contest
- scoring system
- mental skill/strategy
- pastime

He then argues that these three categories of games belong to a family by virtue of the resemblance holding between them. There are shared features that seem to be recurrent, e.g. rules for play, competition/contest and pastime. It is the features that occur in certain clusters of games that make the games belong to one domain, and sub-domains, as is the case with the first and last categories.
3.3.1 The sub-domain of water sources

The analysis of this sub-domain of water sources begins on the note that *water sources* is the principal semantic marker. It has two major senses each of which forms an independent minor domain. These in Dholuo are *NAM* and *BUGO.* Dholuo has no distinct terms that correspond to the English *lake, ocean* and *sea.* Therefore, *Nam* carries within it these different senses of *lake, ocean* and *sea.* Its semantic feature specifications include:

**NAM:**
- broad sheet of water

**BUGO** 'depression'
- long narrow depression deep permits water flow
- basin pool of water reservoir
Working on the assumption that a Luo native speaker's range of experience only goes as far as the 'lake' is concerned, it would be reasonable to argue that, in case of an encounter with an expanse of water corresponding to the English ocean and sea, the probability of calling it Nam is high. For example, it is not uncommon to hear speakers make such utterances as below in reference to both Lake Victoria and the Indian Ocean:

1. (a) Gidhi neno namb Lolue

   They are going to see Lake Lolue

   (b) Wadhi Mombasa, nam chumbi

   We are going to Mombasa, the place of salty water

The sense of ocean and lake, though they are physically different, is combined such that to the native speaker the semantic distinction is null.

Bugo 'depression' has the following set of components:

\[
\text{depression} \\
\text{smaller than a lake} \\
\pm \text{long} \\
\pm \text{pool of water} \\
\pm \text{deep}
\]

As is shown in Fig. 1 above, it heads a minor domain comprising Aora 'river' and yao dago 'pond'. It is apparent that the two different senses of Bugo share some features
of *Bugo*, e.g. *DEPRESSION, SMALLER THAN A LAKE*, while other components are distinctive. It is these shared components that permit the 'family resemblance classification adopted above. *Aora* corresponds to the English *river* and finds its semantic expression in the components: *LONG NARROW DEPRESSION, DEEP* and *PERMITS WATER FLOW*. When its features are considered against the features of its hosting semantic market, *Bugo*, it is considered a kind of *Bugo* and native speakers are often heard saying:

2. (a) Aora kawuono opong’

   Today the river is overflowing

   (b) Aora otero dhok

   The river has swept away the cattle

It is on the premise of such common features between *Aora* and *Bugo* that we infer the semantic relationship between the two.

*Yao* and *Dago* are in a synonymous relationship. The two are an example of a case of two different expressions having the same referent and therefore necessarily having the same meaning. They are also defined by certain components that define *Bugo* e.g. the fact of being a *BASIN* and *POOL OF WATER*. In Dholuo the meaning of *Yao* or *Dago* are actually functional because more often than not the pond is manmade for a specific purpose. The most essential point here, however, is that *Yao/Dago* relate to *Aora* because both are smaller than the lake and necessarily water sources of the *Bugo* type.
This is the reason why they belong to the same family of *Bugo* and relate as such within that domain.

There is a marked relationship across domains i.e. the domain of *Nam* and *Bugo*, typified by the fact that they are both 'containers' of water. However, speakers are clear on the separate semantic implications when they make such utterances as:

3. (a) Odhi *nam*
   He has gone to the lake

   (b) Odhi *aora*
   He has gone to the river

   (c) Odhi umbo *e yao*
   He has gone to fetch water from the pond

3.3.2 The sub-domain of land

Fig. 2

(PINY) 'land'

(GOT) 'highland'

(PAP) 'plain'

[Got] 'mountain'  [Thur] 'hill'

Open country plateau
*Land* here means mass of 'solid part of the earth's surface (as opposed to sea, water)' (Horby, 1974). *Got* as the immediate component of *land* in Fig. 2 conveys a sense that corresponds to the sense of *highland*, in English. The conceptual understanding of *got* among the native speakers of Dholuo combines the two senses of *got* 'mountain' and *thur* 'hill'. These latter two have a relationship of antonymy since they represent different forms of 'highland.' However, as components of 'highland' they belong to one family. Given the foregoing argument, *got* carries two distinct senses i.e. of a highland in the general sense, e.g.

1. (a) Aneno gode Kericho

   I can see the Kericho highlands.

and of a mountain as a form of highland, e.g.

   (b) Odhi e god Kirinyaga

   He has gone to Mount Kirinyaga

Therefore, in one sense it is a conceptual term or semantic marker and in another, it is a distinctive component of a higher concept. The sentential distinctions drawn in the two possible utterances above are indicators of the awareness among speakers of the different senses.
Thur is the equivalent of the English ‘hill’. The following sentences show how the speakers understand its sense.

2. (a) Thuche go pek

Those hills are too steep

(b) Pinyu otimo thuche

Your country is hilly.

(c) Mago thuche matindo tindo

Those are small hills

The conceptual term, got ‘highland’ stands in an antonymous relationship with pap ‘plain’. The latter is distinguished by the two features (cf fig. 2) of open country and plateau. But just as got ‘mountain’ and thur ‘hill’ are related within their domain as forms of ‘highland’, pap and got ‘highland’ are also related with each other both in their independent conceptual sense and as components of the larger semantic marker, LAND. Again the native speakers are aware of the opposition in senses between these two terms and use them appropriately, e.g.
3 (a) Wan wadak e got to un udak piny e pap

While we live on a highland, you live down on the plains.

(b) Pinyu no otimo pap lilo

Your country is all plain

3.3.3. Domain of Physical features revisited

Fig. 3
According to Lyons (1977:251), “the value of a word can only be determined by defining it in relation to the value of neighboring and contrasting words. It is only as a part of the whole that it has sense; for it is only in the field that these is meaning.” By ‘value’ Lyons meant the semantic sense. We have already proposed (cf. chapter 1:2) that some Dholuo nouns belong to fields and relate within and across those fields. The larger domain of physical features brings out this claim clearly, thus: there is the principal conceptual word, PHYSICAL FEATURES. The concept of physical features is viewed in many forms, but kuonde pi ‘water sources’ and piny ‘land’ are the ones chosen for analysis in this study, as an example. The two of them are themselves conceptual words as well as larger components of the main concept. This is the common factor between them which signals a semantic relationship. They are, however, understood by speakers as contrasting words because of the underlying relationship of antonymy. For this reason, they easily lend themselves as heads of antonymous families or fields. Hence, the subdomains of water sources and land, consecutively.

It is when they head such domains that they each carry the sense of conceptual terms defined further into different and minor conceptual words, e.g. nam, hugo, got and pap. Again each pair of components listed above (nam vs. hugo, got vs. pap) are in an antonymous relationship, each having its componential features that define it. We had indicated that it is possible to break down these meanings into the smallest possible. Tvalor while quoting Katz and Postal (1964:13) states that “a full analysis” of the meaning of a word involves decomposing the meaning “into its most elementary components.” The components of Bugo in Fig. 3 exemplifies this possibility, i.e. it is
decomposed into *Aora* ‘river’ and *Yao/Dago* ‘pond’ each of which is further decomposed into its most elementary distinguishing features, e.g.,

- **Aora**
  - long narrow depression
  - deep
  - permits water flow

It is clear in Fig. 3 that the members of the field of *water sources* and those of *land* interrelate as opposites sense-wise and as members of a domain bearing what Wittgenstein (Kearns, 2000:13) calls ‘family resemblance.’ Upon this two grounds of interpretation, we can affirm that there exists an intra- and inter-domain sense relationship exhibited among some Dholuo nouns.

### 3.4. THE DOMAIN OF HUMAN BEINGS

![Diagram of the domain of human beings]

- **(DHANO) ‘Human being’**
  - **(dichwo) ‘male’**
    - [dichwo] ‘male’
    - [wuoi ma rawera] ‘boy’
  - **(dhako) ‘female’**
    - [dhakó] ‘woman’
    - [nyako ma rawera] ‘girl’
In this section of the analysis, we intend to highlight the following relationships: hyponymy, antonymy and the principal of selectional restrictions on word choice. Ferdinand de Saussure and his followers in developing ‘structuralism’ held that every linguistic item has its ‘place’ in a system and its function or value, derives from the relations if contracts with other units in the system (Lyons, 1968:427-443). It is in the light of this proposition that we want to analyze the domain of human beings.

3.4.1. Hyponymy

Dhano ‘human being’ carries within it the concept under which its immediate and ultimate components find definition. Its componential features show that it is the all inclusive conceptual term in this domain. It is in a relationship of hyponymy with its constituents. (Kearns 2000:12) describes hyponymy as a relationship whereby one thing is a kind of the other, e.g. if A is a hyponym of B then A is a kind of B). This is what Leech (1969) calls the principle of logical inclusion, i.e. X logically includes Y if all the components of X are also components of Y.

In Fig. 1, the immediate components of DHANO can be decomposed into the following senses:

\( \text{dicwyo 'male'} \quad \quad \text{dhako 'female'} \)

- ANIMATE
- HUMAN
- MALE

+ ANIMATE
+ HUMAN
- MALE
They are logically included in the concept of *DHANO* because each of the componential features of *dhano* is found in the set of features for *dichwo* and *dhako*. There is absolutely no reason for providing a distinct set of features, for *nyathi* which is the equivalent of the English 'child' and whose possible componential features would be 

[±ANIMATE], [±HUMAN], [±MALE] [-ADULT].

The argument about *nyathi* only helps us to capture another instance of relations between words, that of inclusion and hyponymy, e.g. the meaning of the word *nyathi*, with the above features, is included in the meaning of *wuoi ma rawera* 'boy'

\[
\begin{align*}
&+ \text{ANIMATE} \\
&+ \text{HUMAN} \\
&+ \text{MALE} \\
&+ \text{ADULT}
\end{align*}
\quad \text{and} \quad
\begin{align*}
&+ \text{ANIMATE} \\
&- \text{MALE} \\
&- \text{ADULT}
\end{align*}
\]

such that *nyathi* is superordinate to *wuoi ma rawera* and *nyako ma rawera*, and the latter terms are hyponyms of or subordinate to *nyathi*. 

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3.4.2 Antonymy

Kearns (2000:7) defines antonyms as words with opposite senses. The relationship of antonymy is better captured within the following framework:

In Fig. 2, *dichwo*, which carries the sense of 'male', is in a kind of conceptual term or semantic marker, and it heads the sub-domain of 'male' components. However, in Dholuo, it is also understood to have the sense of 'man' with the following features.

**Dichwo**

- ANIMATE
- HUMAN
- MALE
- ADULT
- MATURE

This is in sharp contrast with the component *wuoi ma rawera* 'boy' whose features are:

- ANIMATE
- HUMAN
- MALE
- ADULT
These two terms belong to the same domain of 'maleness' because certain features are common to both, e.g. the first three features in each case. This is what defines their relationship within that sub-field.

Fig. 3 is interpreted in the same way as Fig. 2 except that it is of the 'femaleness' field.

*Dhako* as a conceptual word carries the sense of 'femaleness', and also in a subordinate way, the sense of 'woman', with the features:

\[
\begin{align*}
+ & \text{ANIMATE} \\
+ & \text{HUMAN} \\
- & \text{MALE} \\
- & \text{ADULT} \\
- & \text{MATURE}
\end{align*}
\]

The relationship it has with *nyako ma rawera* 'girl' lies in the shared componential features, hence they are necessarily members of the same field.

The members of the two domains (cf. Fig. 2 & 3) are in an antonymous relationship with each other. The native speaker of Dholuo understands this relationship well enough to determine the correctness of the following utterances.
1. (a) Anyango onywolo nyathi ma dichwo
     Anyango has given birth to a male child

     (b) Dichwo kod dhako moro okadho ka
        A certain man and woman have passed here

     (c) Wuoi ma rawera kod nyako ma rawera na dhao
        A boy and a girl were fighting

2. (a) # Dichwo moro onyuom kawuono
      A certain man has been married today

     (b) # Nyako ma rawera omiyo dichwo cha ich
        A girl has impregnated that man

Both 2(a) and (b) are considered semantically anomalous because the feature specifications of the terms used (i.e. dichwo, nyako) do not correspond to what is said about them. In Dholuo, a man marries, but is not married as is the case in 2(a). Therefore, this utterance attributes to a man a feature that does not belong to it. 2(b) is an absolute nonsense and a semantic impossibility since even in the natural world, a girl cannot impregnate, leave alone doing so to, a man. Such utterances are only possible from people who have scanty knowledge of the language, or if they are used figuratively for temporary effects.
3.4.3. Selectional restrictions.

The correct choice of words in given speech situations which would help deal with anomalies expressed in 2(a) and (b) and justify the expressions in 1(a), (b) and (c) depends on the selectional restrictions. In our study, such restrictions are simply the native speaker's knowledge of the componential features of each word which, as F. de Saussure proposed (Lyons, 1968: 427-443), determines its function and meaningfulness within a system or domain. An utterance such as 3(a) below is unacceptable because [dhako] and [dichwo] though are paradigmatically related and fall within the same semantic field, are not synonyms, i.e. one cannot be the other.

3. (a) # Aneno dhako ma dichwo
   I have seen a woman who is a man

The only open possibility for its interpretation is metaphorical but which has no place in this study. The meaninglessness of such a combination of nouns lies in the different components that they each have. Furthermore, if the speaker is aware of the features of dhako and dichwo, he will only accept an utterance like:

(b) Dhako ma yach
   A pregnant woman

as meaningful. A contradiction such as

(c) dichwo ma yach
   a pregnant man
will be considered uninformative in the sense that it is “in compatible with any known state of the universe” (Bar-Hillel, 1964:301). Such an utterance baffles him by purporting to tell him more than he can accommodate in his conceptual scheme. The native speaker’s conceptual scheme is informed by a set of distinctive or componential features that provide semantic information about each noun necessary for the selection process.
4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 SUMMARY

This study began with a general introduction in which the background of the language of study was given, and the nature of the problem, objectives and hypotheses were presented. The rationale, scope and limitations and the theoretical framework followed this. The review of literature and a section on the methodology are also dealt with in this section.

In chapter two, an examination of the nature and forms of Dholuo nouns was done. The main concern was with the types and how they are formed. This was intended as a basis for the actual study of the semantics of Dholuo nouns.

Chapter three dealt with the actual analysis of samples of Dholuo nouns. It was an attempt to examine the semantic status of these nouns when they occur in given domains or fields and how they relate within and across such fields. After examining a number of domains, it was established that some nouns find their meanings in relationship with other nouns within given structural setups. It also became apparent that there is a kind of structural relationship in which minor domains project into sub-domains that finally project into the principal domain.
In this study, we set out to identify and describe the types of Dholuo nouns and how they are formed. This was our main interest in Chapter two. We established that these nouns can be classified into basic or inherent nouns, derived nouns and compound nouns. It also became apparent that Dholuo nouns are morphologically complex, but like all other nouns, they exhibit the formation processes of inflection, derivation and compounding. In our examination of the headedness principle, we noted that most heads appear as the right-hand most constituent of the given compound words.

The main interest of this study was the semantic analysis of Dholuo nouns to establish if there is a network of relationships within and across semantic fields, and to find out if native speakers choose their nouns on the basis of their field relationships. From our analysis in Chapter three, Dholuo nouns fall within given domains in which they share semantic space. They fall into such fields on account of family resemblances and common componential features. The analysis into domains revealed that there are relationships cutting a cross fields leading to a structural kind of network at the top of which is the principal conceptual word which seems to govern the immediate and ultimate components below it.

Furthermore, it was clear that native speakers depend on these feature specifications to select their words in speech salutations. We concluded that these feature specifications act as selectional restrictions to help avoid possible anomalies in utterances.
Finally, on account of the network of relationships established within and across domains and the reality that the choice of words is dependant on the selectional restrictions, we were able to show that the Semantic Field theory incorporating the conceptual framework of Componential analysis accounts for the meanings of Dholuo nouns adequately. We were able to use this theory and the decompositional analysis to establish the senses and relational factors among the nouns we selected, and therefore show that the theory is valid as a universal theory of meaning suitable for use in accounting for meaning in natural languages.

4.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Our study opened up some questions for future research. First, the analysis of meaning in Dholuo calls for a study of the role of ambiguity in meaning determination. It was apparent during the study that polysemous words are numerous, and ambiguity often threatened to mar the interpretation of certain words. Secondly, there is need to do a study on the indeterminacy and arbitrariness of meaning of Dholuo nouns particularly with regard to productivity or creativity. These will obviously bring into focus a number of interesting semantic properties of Dholuo nouns.

When the data has been collected, we shall form an inventory of items in each field. For each field, a further subdivision will be done by piling the items into groups which seem to belong together, and a common field category which seems more inclusive will be
found by analyzing the sense relations. This subdivision will be done till the finest
detail or subdivision is achieved. There may also be need to build a tree diagram for the
hierarchical classification to determine relations in terms of ranks. It is within this
framework of classification that the analysis of the sense relations will be done.
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