Prototypical Categorization of Conceptual Metaphors in Dholuo

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Abstract

There has been an insatiable interest in the study of conceptual metaphors across languages. This has been prompted by the principal reason that for a long time, the traditional approach to the study of metaphors had taken centre stage with most scholars viewing metaphor as a decorative mechanism in which a word is used to replace another even though no new information is emanated. It was not until the revolutionary study of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that scholars started exploring metaphor from a different perspective. This paper was guided by the following objective: to prototypically categorize conceptual metaphors in Dholuo. The study employed the prototype theory by Rosch *et al.* (1976). Before this theory was put to use, metaphors were identified by employing Metaphor Identification Procedure proposed by Crisp *et al.* (2007) in order to identify lexical items that are metaphorical in nature after which they were prototypically classified, interpreted and finally explained. Data was collected using a tape recorder and analyzed qualitatively. The tape recorder was used, since it reduces the chances of collecting data selectively. Also the information recorded could be played over to be able to thoroughly study and critically examine it (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). After the metaphorical expressions were identified, they were transcribed and translated with both the literal and figurative meanings being given, and thereafter, translated to the language of study. The study found out that the body is the principal source domain of conceptual metaphors and, it is the focal point from which metaphorical mappings are carried out. It also noted that grouping by prototype is important since it provides an avenue where individuals make sense of their experiences and learn about their world through embodiment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphor, the entity on which this study is based, according to Steen (2008) is defined as an invitation to understand one thing (the target) in terms of another (the source). Lakoff & Johnson (1980) posit that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience in terms of another. The entities studied are different and the actions performed are also different nevertheless, one entity is partially structured, understood, performed and talked about in terms of another. Thus the entity, activity and consequently the language is metaphorically structured.

Metaphor is a property of our conceptual system and that through them we are able to identify similarities in two concepts that are totally different, Charteris-Black (2004) posits that:

> Metaphor is a gateway through which persuasive and emotive ways of thinking about the world mould the Language that we use and through which our thoughts about the world are moulded by language use… It is

the evidence of the ability of the human brain to perceive similarity relations and our ability to find the similar in the dissimilar (p.1-2).

1.1 Objective of the study

1. To prototypically categorize conceptual metaphors in Dholuo.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The prototype model which was established by Rosch *et al*. (1976) is based on two tenets: the tenet of cognitive economy and that of perceived world structure. The former tenet notes that human beings may gain a lot of information about their surroundings using minimum cognitive effort and resources. This principle calls for grouping of elements with the same attributes in one category thereby maintaining economy in cognitive representation (Evans & Green, 2006). The latter tenet notes that the world around us has a form that is interdependent. This implies that elements which correlate are classified in the same category (Evans & Green, 2006).
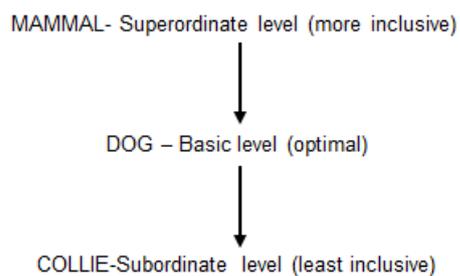
The prototype model brings about a system of categorization that has two aspects: vertical and horizontal. Of these aspects, this study is interested in the vertical one, which relates to the point of an all inclusive specific class. The vertical aspect deals with the point at which an element is on the vertical axis. This means that the higher up an element is the more comprehensive it is. Inclusivity entails the elements that are engrossed in a particular category.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lakoff (1987) posits that categorization is a vital concept in cognitive linguistics. This view is supported by Evans and Green (2006) who opine that categorization is crucial, because it accounts for knowledge representation and linguistic meaning. There are two main models of categorization used in linguistics studies: classical and prototypical models. The former mode of classification is considered traditional by cognitive linguistics scholars. The proponents of this model like Mathewson (2012) argue that things are in the same category only if they share a set of mandatory and adequate conditions. These conditions are referred to as 'mandatory and adequate', because they are independently mandatory but not jointly adequate to denote a class. To explain what this category entails Mathewson notes that there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled for an entity to belong to a given class. For example, for an entity to belong to the class BACHELOR, it must fulfill certain conditions, which are: it is not married, it is male, it is an adult. Although each of the conditions stated is mandatory for explaining the class in question, none of them is independently adequate because 'unmarried' could also stand for a SPINSTER while male could stand for HUSBAND. The latter model of categorization was unveiled in order to address weaknesses of classical model. Rosch*et al*.,(1976) state that in this model, classification is done according to prototype. They argue that grouping by prototype enables individuals make sense of their experiences and also learn about the world through embodiment. Embodiment emphasizes on the body as the main source of conceptual metaphors. It is the domain from which metaphorical mappings are carried out.

According to Evans and Green (2006), categorization by prototype is based on two tenets: the tenet of cognitive economy and that of perceived world structure. The former tenet notes that human beings may gain a lot of information about their surroundings using minimum cognitive effort and resources. This principle calls for grouping of elements with the same attributes in one category thereby maintaining economy in cognitive representation (Evans & Green, 2006). The latter tenet notes that the world around us has a form that is interdependent. This implies that elements which correlate are classified in the same category (Evans & Green, 2006).

The prototype model brings about a system of categorization that has two aspects: vertical and horizontal. Of these aspects, this study is interested in the vertical one, which relates to the point of an all inclusive specific class. The vertical aspect deals with the point at which an element is on the vertical axis. This means that the higher up an element is the more comprehensive it is. Inclusivity entails the elements that are engrossed in a particular category. To illustrate this dimension, Evans and Green (2006) give a prototypical categorization of animals. They note that if an entity such as a DOG is used, it has a connection with another entity such as MAMMAL. The latter belongs to a different class that is above that of a dog in terms of hierarchy. It also incorporates more members than the class DOG. The class COLLIE however, is found at a lower level along the vertical axis and has fewer members. This class is less inclusive than that of DOG. This prototypical classification can be diagrammatically illustrated in Fig. 1.

MAMMAL- Superordinate level (more inclusive)

↓

DOG – Basic level (optimal)

↓

COLLIE-Subordinate level (least inclusive)

Fig. 1: Prototypical categorization of an animal

Evans and Green (2006) further note that there is a level of comprehensiveness that is most favourable for human beings. This level is at the middle (between the most and the less inclusive levels). In using the animal example above, the optimal level is the one associated with the category DOG. Classes higher up the rank which give limited details are called supeordinate while those at the lowest level of the rank which give more details are called subordinate. Classes in the middle where the members of a prototype share features that are common are called basic.

This study borrowed from prototypical mode of classification in categorizing conceptual metaphors in Dholuo. The main tenets of prototype model (cognitive economy and the family-resemblance structure among others) were put to use. Of concern to this study was the basic level of categorization since it is the most abstract and inclusive level at which it is feasible to develop mental images.

2.1 Categorization of conceptual metaphors

In the study of metaphorical conceptualization of anger, fear and sadness in English, Esenova (2011) comes up with various metaphorical expressions from which different conceptual metaphors of emotions such as anger, fear and sadness are developed. To elaborate on conceptual metaphor of anger for instance, the study established that speakers of English conceptualize voice, an entity that does not have physical boundaries, as a container and anger as a fluid or substance held in it. Voice in this case is compared to a container, an element that has an interior, exterior and boundary because human beings have a likelihood of forcing imaginary boundaries on different entities that may not be characterized by real boundaries that are physical or otherwise.

Another finding of the study is that human beings experience emotions in two different ways that is, as uniform mental phenomenon and as part of a complex emotional experience. The study further established that most source domains that occur with emotions are not limited to emotions but expand to other domains. To support this claim, the study investigated HORSE source domain and found out that the application of this domain goes beyond the scope of target domain of emotion into a great number of non

emotional concepts that characterize humans' and non human qualities as well.Esenova's study informed this one on source domains essential in comprehending target domains as well as ontological correspondences which arise between the two domains that assist in the formation of different conceptual metaphors. It also helped in understanding image schemas that play a principal role in giving vivid descriptions of images portrayed in conceptual metaphors.

The point of departure however for the two studies (Esenova, 2011 and this one) is firstly on the method of classification. While Esenova (2011) employed classical model of categorization in which fear, sadness and anger are classified as emotion metaphors, this study used the prototype model of classification. Secondly, Esenova's study looks at the scope of various source domains in relation to the target domain of emotion while this study is not interested in the scope of source domains but on conceptual metaphors limited to human body parts, food and animals. Thirdly, data that was used in Esenova's study was in English language and was elicited from dictionaries, British National Corpus (BNC) and the internet. On the contrary, data that was used in this study is in Dholuo language and it was elicited from everyday discourses of respondents as they go about their daily activities.

In her study of idioms of body parts in the Hijazi dialect of Arabic, Al-Jahdali (2007) examines the relationship between body and culture and how this interplay contributes to the construction and comprehension of meaning. The study is crucial to this one because it deals with human body parts and the idiomatic expressions related to them while the current one deals with conceptual metaphors of human body parts. Both studies agree that embodiment and culture are two important aspects which aid in understanding of our experiences as well as our cognitive world. The study also informed this one on methodological procedures such as conceptual categorization, coding, classification and translation of data that was collected. The two studies however differ on some issues for instance, while Al-Jahdali's collected data of body parts in Arabic language the current one collected data in Dholuo. Also, the former was interested in idiomatic expressions limited to human body parts only while the latter was interested in conceptual metaphors limited to human body parts, food and animals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed data that was manifested in words and expressions so as to prototypically categorize conceptual metaphors.Data was presented from the perspective of respondents so that the researcher's intellectual biases do not distort collection, interpretation or presentation of data.The target population for this study was native speakers of Dholuo in Uriri Sub-County, Migori County.Simple random sampling was used to get a sample population of forty eight respondents from whom data useful for the study was obtained.This number was deemed appropriate because Milroy (1987) observes that large samples may not be necessary for linguistic surveys because they tend to be redundant, bringing increasing data handling problems with diminishing analytical returns.

Data was collected with the help of two research assistants (male and female) both of whom were native speakers of Dholuo. These assistants were able to read and write in English and Dholuo. Issues to be investigated during the research were clarified to them. The research assistants performed roles such as taking notes and audio taping the sessions.The main data collection instrument that was used was a tape-recorder. The tape recorder was chosen majorly because it reduces the chances of collection of data selectively. The researcher can play the recorded information over and over to be able to thoroughly study it and critically examine it (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

3.1 Discussion

The body is the main source of conceptual metaphors as postulated by Kövecses (2006). This assertion is supported by Ma and Liu (2008) who posit that the body is a universal source domain since body parts are similar. Consequently, different cultures reflect similar embodied thinking patterns. The study examined some of the productive parts of the body such as the eye, head, mouth, nose, chest, heart, hands and buttocks as explained below.

3.2 The eye

According to Al-Jahdali (2007) the eye is the faculty of sight and it is through it that we perceive elements in our surroundings. Eye acts as a channel that enables us keep details in the organ that has the power of retention. It is a mechanism through which we comprehend our world and the events that take place in it. Thus our eyes play a central role in our expansion of knowledge and cognition. There are metaphorical expressions that bring forth the conceptual metaphor EYE IS A LIMB. From this metaphor, we get divergent conceptualizations of the eye such as surveillance, consolation and protection among others.

Consider the metaphorical expressions in 1and 2 below:

> (1) /*ting' wang'i ne ruoth* /   "lift your eye to the Lord"
>
>   carry your eye to God   Seek solace in God
>
> (2) /*baa wang'i e polo*/   "*throw* your eyes in heaven"
>
>   throw your eye in heaven   seek heavenly intervention.

The two metaphorical expressions above yield the conceptual metaphor EYE IS A LIMB. From them, we come up with a conceptual category of consolation which is presented in Table 1.

(i). Consolation

Table 1: The Conceptual Category of Consolation and the number of metaphorical expressions

Conceptual category	Number of Metaphorical expression
Consolation	2

In the metaphorical expression 'lift your eye to the Lord,' (refer to 1) the source domain of eye enables us understand the abstract concept of consolation. In this metaphorical expression, the eye is seen as an appendage that can be lifted or lowered. The second metaphorical expression is also used in a biblical sense. For instance, one can say that 'I threw my eyes to the heavens because that is where my help comes from.' This metaphorical expression is also used as a form of encouragement to believers to always seek the face of the Lord at all times. These two expressions (1 and 2) put emphasis on concentration.

Al Jahdali (2007) opines that when you focus on something you actually take a position that moulds your perspectiveon the matter. This study is in agreement with this assertion because when the eye concentrates on a target (in this case the heavens), it influences the view point of a person. Those who subscribe to Christianity believe that solutions to their problems are found in heaven because that is where God is. The prototypical categorization of the conceptual metaphor EYE IS A LIMB is diagrammatically presented in Figure 2.

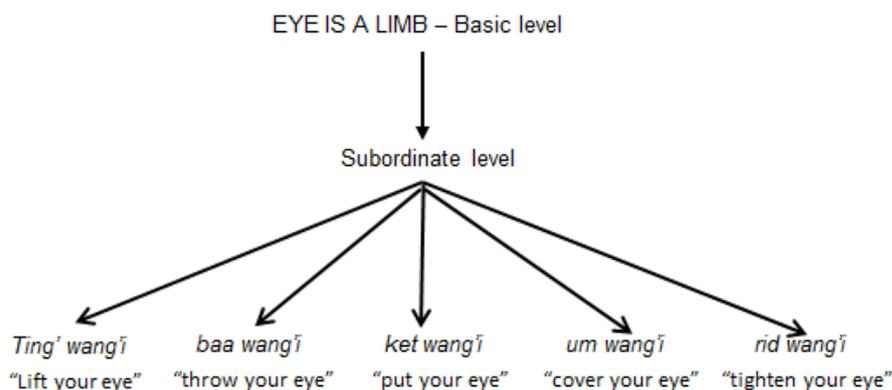Body part metaphor- Superordinate level

Fig. 2: Representation of the conceptual metaphor EYE IS A LIMB

Eyes are brought forth as organs that make one go astray. This is so because once the eye sees something/someone that attracts it, it sends a message to the brain communicating this affection. Once this information is processed, eye maintains contact with object of its desire.
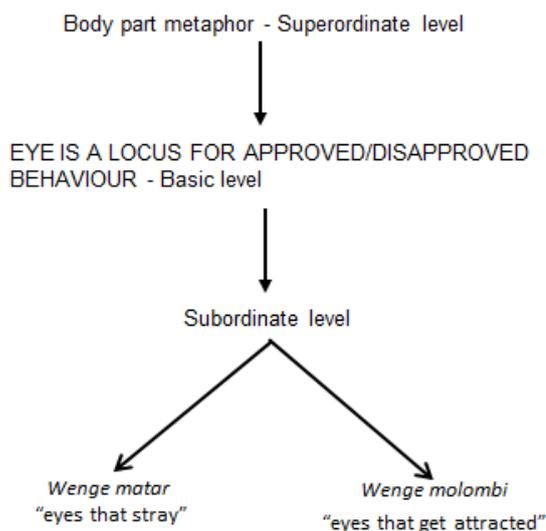
Consider the following metaphorical expression:

(3) /*wuode wang'e tar*/   "his son's eyes are leering"
       his son eyes are leering   His son has roving eyes.

This metaphorical expression (refer to 3) points to lose morals that the one being referred to has. Among the Luo, immorality is an attribute that is castigated and those who engage in it are admonished. An immoral person veers off the 'straight path' (likened to one sexual partner) that he/she is expected to take as dictated by regulations of society and ventures into several paths (likened to several sexual partners). The expression (see 3) can also bring forth another conceptual metaphor STRAYING IS DETESTED.

(4) /*nyakono olombo wang'a*/   "that lady has attracted my eyes"
       That lady attracted my eyes   that lady is beautiful.

This metaphorical expression (see 4) brings out the eye as a source domain which helps in comprehending the abstract entity of attraction. When one is attracted to someone/something, the person gazes at the object of his/her attraction. Attraction makes one fix his/her eyes at one point as he/she keenly observes traits of the target that has drawn his/her attention. Eye thus develops a physical contact between itself and the target. This expression can yield another conceptual metaphor SEEING IS LIKING.

Wandering eyes bring forth the notion of stealing. When one engages in stealing, he/she take things that do not belong to him/her. Therefore the prototype is theft of property and not of women since the latter is an extended usage that comes about as a result of the widened conceptual space. Attraction mentioned in the fourth metaphorical expression comes about as a result of wandering eyes. Prototypical categorization of the conceptual metaphor EYE IS A LOCUS FOR APPROVED/DISAPPROVED BEHAVIOUR is presented diagrammatically in Figure 3.

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Body part metaphor - Superordinate level

                    │
                    ▼

EYE IS A LOCUS FOR APPROVED/DISAPPROVED
BEHAVIOUR - Basic level

                    │
                    ▼

            Subordinate level

            ╱                 ╲
          ▼                     ▼

  Wenge matar            Wenge molombi
  "eyes that stray"      "eyes that get attracted"
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Fig. 3: Representation of the conceptual metaphor
EYE IS LOCUS FOR APPROVED/DISAPPROVED BEHAVIOUR

The Tongue

The tongue is another crucial body part that is instrumental for speech production and chewing food. There are divergent conceptualizations brought to perspective by the conceptual metaphor TONGUE IS A LOCUS FOR DISAPPROVED BEHAVIOUR.

Consider the following metaphorical expression:

(1) _/jaduong'no lewe kech/_   "that old man has a bitter tongue"
    That old man his tongue is bitter   that old man's tongue unleashes negativity.

This metaphorical expression brings forth the conceptual category of negativity which is presented in Table 2.

(i)   **Negativity**

Table 2: The Conceptual Category of Negativity and the number of metaphorical expressions

Conceptual Category	Number of Metaphorical Expressions
Negativity	1

The source domain of tongue assists in understanding negativity which is an abstract entity. In the metaphorical expression (refer to 1), tongue is brought out as a medium through which negativity is promulgated. When tongue acts as a channel of conveying negativity, it releases information that may be meant to bring down an individual and make him/her appear worthless. For example, it may be used to pronounce curses, convey information that is intended to discourage another person or even denigrate him/her. Such a tongue brings out the contemptuous nature of its owner towards his/her target.

Another metaphorical expression is exemplified as follows:

(2) _/nyathino lewe chwadre/_   "that child has a craving tongue"
    That child's tongue beats itself   that child has a craving tongue.

This expression brings to perspective the conceptual category of desire which is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The Conceptual Category of Desire and the number of metaphorical expression

Conceptual Category	Number of Metaphorical Expressions
Desire	1

The source domain of tongue aids in understanding desire which is an abstract entity. Through the conceptual category of desire, another conceptualization of tongue is propagated. When a tongue is labeled as craving, it means that it wants to consume food especially sweet ones every time. This longing may drive one out of control making him/her want to live beyond his/her means. To fulfill this desire, the one who has the craving may be tempted to steal. The attribute of craving or yearning for something is thus discouraged among the Luo. Of the metaphorical expressions used to refer to the tongue, the prototype is the first because it brings to the fore a principal function of the tongue which is tasting. A tongue craves for food that is delicious. The other metaphorical expressions bring forth extended uses of the tongue. Prototypical categorization of the conceptual metaphor TONGUE IS A LOCUS FOR DISAPPROVED BEHAVIOUR can be presented diagrammatically in Figure 4.
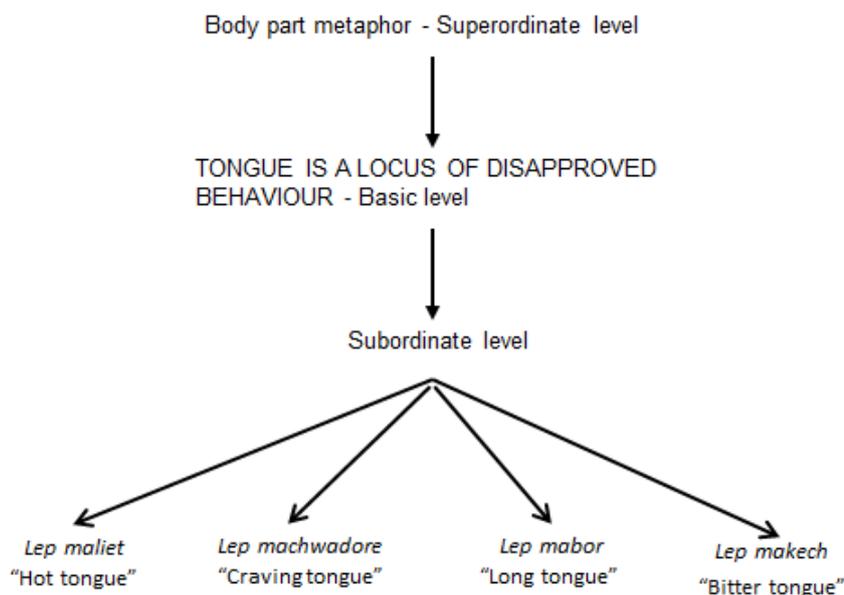
Fig. 4: Representation of the conceptual metaphor TONGUE IS A
         LOCUS OFDISAPPROVED BEHAVIOUR

4. FINDINGS

The study realized that grouping by prototype is important since it provides an avenue where individuals make sense of their experiences and also learn about their world through embodiment. The study further noted that items that are prototypically categorized in the same group correlate. This tenet of correlational structure assists human beings in establishing categories.Conceptual categories involve prototypes and are organized by taxonomic relations such that at the highest level of the hierarchy is the superordinate, followed by the basic at the mid level and subordinate at the lowest level. The study further noted that even though the superordinate level is the most comprehensive it provides less detail as compared to the subordinate level that is the least comprehensive but provides more detail. The study noted that the basic

level of all conceptual metaphors is the prototype. It is the mental image that is associated with the category. For the human body part conceptual metaphors for instance, the prototype is a body part.

5. CONCLUSION

In categorization by prototype, concepts are grouped in terms of family relations. Among the members of a family, are those who have more qualities associated with that family than others. Prototype is considered the standard point of reference and is given prominence over the other two levels that is the superordinate and subordinate levels. The superordinate brings together several elements that are related and which form a family. It is the most accommodative level even though it gives fewer details in relation to members. The basic is the intermediate which is considered the most important level in the categorization of elements. The subordinate is the least inclusive level nonetheless it provides the most details in relation to the members of a family. These three levels are crucial in achieving a unified chain.

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