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A Conceptual Analysis of Dholuo Insults

Joseph Rotumoi [1], Cellyne Anudo[2],
[1]Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Media
University of Kabianga, Kenya.
[2]Department of Languages, Literature and Communication
University of Kabianga, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Swearing is a universal phenomenon shared and normalized in everyday conversations; it plays a pivotal role in the management of feelings and emotions. Though tabooed in many societies, insults are frequently used in daily interactions moreover, they provide a platform upon which linguistic analyses can be conducted. Insults, a sub set of swearing, cover a variety of topics and play different roles for example, some insults help language users get relief from anger and tension in certain situations. Others are used to humiliate or belittle while some are used to challenge the existing social power. Insults are context and culture dependent as such, what may be considered an insult in one society may not be in another. Insults take varied forms, there are those that are direct others indirect. Additionally, there are those that are short consisting of just a word while others consist of two or more sentences. This study sought to classify Dholuo insults and describe the images used therein; examine the image schemas in Dholuo insults and explain the functions of Dholuo insults. The study employed the Conceptual Integration Theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) which helped in the construction of meaning of conceptual metaphors used in Dholuo insults and the Image schema theory by Johnson (1987) which helped unravel the meanings portrayed in the varied metaphors used in Dholuo insults. The data which was collected using an interview schedule was analyzed qualitatively. The study revealed that Dholuo insults are not only used to release pent up emotions but also for humour.

Keywords: Insult, Phenomenon, Taboo, Conceptual Metaphor, Image Schema

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1. INTRODUCTION

Akhter (2023) asserts that language, a central feature of social interaction, is used by people in varying situations and contexts. According to Fairclough (as cited in Akhter, 2023), it's vital for one to be aware of the functions of a specific language to understand the economic and cultural systems in which it is used. This study was interested in insults, a sub set of swearing, which entails the use of foul language. Insult according to Ofori (2015) is defined as follows:

> A behavior or discourse, oral or written, direct or indirect, gestural or non-gestural, which is perceived, experienced constructed and most of the time intended as slighting, humiliating, or offensive, which has the potential of psychologically affecting not only the addressee or target but his/her associates (2015:22).

Struiksma et al., (2022) argue that verbal insults go against a universal moral imperative not to inflict harm on others. However, Irvine (as cited in Struiksman et al., 2022) notes that despite this imperative, insults occur rather frequently in everyday life, in all corners of society, and with potentially serious consequences. Samarin (as cited in Ofori, 2015) postulates that the form of insults may be relatively short; it could just be a word, phrase or body gesture. Some insults could be two or three sentences or more. The core of insults is a characterization of "some part of the target's body or his/her actions; this may be preceded or followed by other utterances appropriate to the situation.

Baumeister and Bushman (as cited in Struiksman et al., 2022) opine that insults directed at one poses a severe threat to the self as well as to one's reputation and might for that reason not easily lose their sting. Insults form part of hateful expressions; according to Mutunga (2023), hateful words result in damaging the dignity of people based on the defamation related to certain features they share with the group, thereby affecting the group's dignity and disrupting social order in the society. Insults should therefore not be taken lightly because of the detrimental effects that they have on those targeted.

Akhter (2023) posits that the use of foul language is evident in many conversations carried out by both gender in the contemporary world. This language is used in the context of surprise, frustration, and happiness. Moreover, it expresses many other states of mind in different situations. Svensson (as cited in Akhter, 2023), argues that the behaviour of people towards the use of foul language is different. Some consider it disrespectful and rude although for many others it is the common practice in their daily communication.

1.2 Social functions of derogatory language

Cervone et al. (2021) argue that psychological research has identified five social functions served by derogatory language namely: perpetuation of prejudice; maintenance of status hierarchies; legitimization of violence against outgroups; and in-group cohesion. Prejudice is perpetuated through the use of homophobic and neutral category labels describing the same category. However, the derogatory labels are more likely to trigger a strongly negative, affective and evaluative reaction than the neutral ones

With regard to the second function, derogatory language is intrinsically linked to social hierarchies in its use and effect. The dominant groups unlike the subordinate ones are more likely to use racial slurs. Moreover, they are less likely to speak up when others use such slurs and they are less likely to be on the receiving end of such instances of language discrimination. Therefore, the asymmetrical use of disparaging language reflects the existing social stratification while at the same time promoting the power differential between the dominant and subordinate groups (Cervone et al., 2021).

Cervone et al., (2021) note that derogatory language and hate speech legitimize violence and social inclusion either by dehumanizing outgroups or by portraying them as a threat to the in-group. The tools used in dehumanization include the use of animal or object metaphor, extreme language forms as well as slurs of low complexity. The use of language forms signal that the target person is excluded from humankind or that he/she cannot be considered a full member of the human species since they lack some of its essential features.

With regard to the third function which is in group cohesion, Ritchie (a s cited in Cervone et al., 2021) argues that the way we define the in-group is critical in perpetuating hatred. Hate speech flourishes in communicative environments where the audience identifies strongly with the common in-group identity provided by the speaker. When the speaker perceives the in-group as being under threat, it is the responsibility of the members to protect themselves from the perceived threat. As such, they feel justified to reject the outgroup. In some extreme cases, the members of the in-group may go as far as eliminating the outgroup in order to preserve and maintain the existence of the in-group.

Špago (2020) asserts that the study of insults has proven to be an interesting topic for researchers (both linguists and psychologists) as numerous studies have been done in different languages focusing on various aspects of insults as well as the specific contexts in which they occur. One of the interesting perspectives from which insults can be explored is the gender perspective in which the gender differences in the use of language of insults has been interrogated. Although this aspect of the study of insults has also received significant attention, the exploration of gender differences in different cultural backgrounds leaves room for further research. Leong (2022) also supports the study of insults by noting that insults which is at times regarded as an art, offers an exciting platform for linguistic analysis. It is a fascinating instance of imaginative language use, delivered with wit and style. Another reason for the interest in the study of insults is given by Sarr (2019) who opines that the paradox of prohibiting insulting on the one hand and institutionalizing it on the other, is precisely what makes it a fascinating subject of study. In addition, work in the area of the language of insults remains scarce as such, a lot more certainly needs to be done to better understand the form and nature of offensive language. It is thus on these bases that this study sought to carry out a conceptual analysis of Dholuo insults.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1.3 Specific objectives

This study sought to address the following specific objectives:

1. To classify Dholuo insults and describe the images used therein
2. To examine the image schemas in Dholuo insults.
3. To explain the functions of Dholuo insults.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study that was conducted on insults across cultures, a total of 12, 000 pungent expressions whose content varied revealingly between different national groups were generated. The authors of the study used insults as a window into cultural differences in the understandings of personhood. They found out that abusive terms implicating the offender's family members were only common in some Mediterranean cultures. They argued that in collectivist cultures, people see themselves as inextricably embedded in a web of family relationships. Therefore, insults will tear at the web rather than targeting the person in isolation. In individualist cultures on the other hand, people see themselves as autonomous and separate thus, insults are more likely to disparage the singular person. The point of convergence between this study and the current is that both of them are interested in insults. However, while the former examines insults across cultures around the globe, the present is interested in insults among the Luo of Kenya.

In a study conducted by Akhter (2023), it was revealed that the use of foul language is a common practice by both genders in many societies across the globe. Moreover, both genders make use of different types of foul language except for profanity which is not used by males and vulgarity which is not used by females. In addition, majority of males use more foul terms as compared to females. Another finding was that there are many terms used to insult both genders however, females are the greater recipient of such terms. This study presents a theoretical gap in the sense that while it analyzed data using Batistella's theory (2005), the current one used Conceptual Integration theory by Faulconnier and Turner (2002) and Image Schema theory by Johnson (1987).

In a study conducted by Špago (2020) on potential gender-linked differences in the use and perception of insulting language among Bosnian university students, it was revealed that insults from the category of sexual looseness were the most frequent type listed by both male and female participants as the worst thing one can call a woman. With regard to male related insults, the findings revealed that those which question a man's masculinity were regarded as the worst insults which can be hurled at men. The results further indicated that offensive words associated with being mentally inadequate are perceived as very offensive to both men and women. This study is instrumental to the current in the sense that it brings to perspective the significance of the gender variable in the use of language of insults. While respondents in the present study belonged to a particular group (university students) those in the current were mixed that is they were male and female Dholuo speaking respondents of different ages and occupations/groups.
Ivy et al., (2021) examined indecent language on radio in Ghana. The findings revealed that more males than females used indecent language on radio. This is attributed to the culture of the Ghanaian society which requires women to be submissive in all circumstances and which also frowns upon women who openly use indecent language.

This may explain why women were less likely to use indecent language than men. While the present study was interested in examining gender differences in the use of insults in Ghana, the current is interested in generally examining Dholuo insults without putting emphasis on the gender variable. It also portrays insults as a verbal art in which a variety of stylistic devises such as metaphor, repetition, similes, hyperbole, sarcasm among others are used. It further explores the functions of these insults in the Luo society in Kenya.

Santibanez (as cited in Ntabo, Onyango & Ndiritu, 2021) defines image schemas as pervasive organizing structures in human cognition which emerge from our bodily and social interaction with the environment at a preconceptual level. Oakley (as cited in Ntabo, Onyango & Ndiritu, 2021) opines that image schemas emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects and our perceptual interactions.

Johnson (1987) notes that there are several image schemas the first is the CONTAINMENT: we view our bodies as containers in which varied products are stored. The structural elements of this image schema are An INTERIOR, a BOUNDARY and an EXTERIOR. The second is PART- WHOLE: the whole is made up of parts that can be manipulated. The structural elements of this image schema are a WHOLE with constituent PARTS and a CONFIGURATION. The third is the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL: a solid motion which has an initial and end point coupled with a sequence of points in between the initial and end points. The structural elements of this image schema are a SOURCE, a DESTINATION, a PATH and a DIRECTION along the path.

The fourth image schema is LINK: there is a bond between two elements. These bonds vary depending on the relationship between the elements. The structural elements of this image schema are two entities **A** and **B** with a connecting LINK. The fifth image schema is CENTER-PERIPHERY: we view our bodies and other entities as having pivots and margins. The structural elements of this image schema are an ENTITY, a CENTER and a PERIPHERY. The last image schema is BALANCE: movement calls for application of balance to inhibit an entity from stumbling or falling. The structural elements of this image schema are two related entities **A** and **B** and a FULCRUM (Johnson, 1987).

In another study conducted by Ofori (2018) on the use of insults in Ghanaian political discourse: a critical discourse analysis, it was revealed that insults play a therapeutic role. In the midst of economic challenges, citizens resort to the use insults to release or diffuse any pent-up feelings, emotions and tension.
They prefer to release their frustration and anger by calling into radio stations, or going online to express them. The study also revealed that the use of explicit insults was very limited on radio as compared to online websites. This was so because most radio stations do not allow ordinary citizens to use intemperate language on their stations as opposed to online sites which provide 'conducive' environments for the expression of all kinds of insults, some of which are unprintable. This study informed the current on the functions of insults. The current study found out that insults are used as a way of relieving tension in so doing they provide a cathartic effect. Moreover, they are used for the purposes of humour thereby eliciting positive emotions.

Theoretical Framework

This study made use of two theories namely: Conceptual Integration theory by Faulconnier and Turner (2002) and the Image Schema theory by Johnson (1987).

Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT)

Džanic (as cited in Anudo, 2018) opines that the Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT) initiated by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and advanced by Coulson and Oakley (2002) provides awareness into the way we view, comprehend and reason about our world. This theory deals with language and perception since it incorporates clarifications of linguistic innovation with those of other language attributes, in addition to diverse products of human inventiveness. It also explains the combination of knowledge coming from well-defined sources onto a single, self-reliant and logical unit, the blend. Conceptual integration makes it possible for one to derive meaning from concepts that are different.
The mental spaces are the elementary units of cognitive arrangements in this theory.

They are defined as conceptual packets that are designed as we ponder or speak for purposes of enabling us understand our actions.

The mental spaces are devised in such a manner that they separate the new pieces of information within the metaphorical representation. There are four mental spaces: two input spaces, a generic and a blended space. These mental spaces are connected to each other and can be adjusted as thought and conversation evolve (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

The mental spaces contain different information; each space has information on a different aspect of the conceptual metaphor but all of them provide bits of information which together are geared towards understanding of metaphor. The input spaces are similar to the source and target domains as exemplified in Lakoff's and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980). The input spaces give rise to selective projection. This means that not all elements from the inputs are transferred to the blend. The input spaces are connected by means of a generic space which incorporates attributes common to the inputs. The blended space contains harmonized information from input spaces as well as an emergent structure that is an additional piece of information. This piece of information is not contained in either inputs and is regarded as the meaning of the conceptual metaphor (Coulson & Oakley, 2002).This theory assists in the construction of meaning in conceptual metaphors used in Dholuo insults.

The Image Schema Theory (IST)

Image schemas are a representation of systematic patterns derived from domains that are imagistic such as forces, containers, balance, path and links that manifest themselves repeatedly in a variety of incorporated domains (Lakoff, 1987; Johnson, 1987). Hampe (as cited in Anudo, 2018) posits that image schemas are internally complex in the sense that they are made of a few related parts. In addition, they are very versatile and this versatility is pronounced in the many changes they encounter in different contexts that are experiential in nature. Image schemas are preconceptual in origin; they are the premise upon which the conceptual system is hinged (Johnson, 1987).
Evans and Green (as cited in Anudo, 2018) posit that image schemas are inherently meaningful; they are representations that are obtained from experience. They are also analogue in nature. This means that they are represented in the form of holistic sensory experiences like memory. Image schemas are also dynamic in nature in that they undergo changes leading to one image schema transforming to another one. This theory informed the study by assisting us comprehend abstract entities like conceptual metaphors used in insults in the Luo community. Moreover, it helps unravelling the meanings portrayed in the varied metaphors used in Dholuo insults.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative in nature. According to Silverman (as cited in Ofori, 2018), qualitative research deals with in-depth information, discovers meanings, and reveals the subtlety and complexity of cases or issues. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of their daily life (Bayisa, 2020). Data for this research was collected through interviews and native speaker intuitions.

4. DISCUSSION

It is a common practice currently by both genders in many of societies the world over, to make use of insults in their everyday conversations. Previously, the use of such language was a reserve of the male since women were regarded as agents of polite language not just because of societal expectations but because they are also charged with the responsibility of nurturing the language of children.

Verbal insults have serious ramifications on those at the receiving end. Brown and Levinson (as cited in Struiksma et al., 2022) posit that insult is a serious threat to one's "face." Struiksma et al., (2022) further notes that an insult signals strong interpersonal distancing. Depending on the degree, it could hurt a little or a lot. Svensson (as cited in Akhter, 2023) opines that people behave differently when insults are used. Some consider it disrespectful and rude however, for a majority, it is the common practice in their day-to-day interactions.

Classification of Dholuo insults and description of images used therein

There are insults that make reference to biological organs which are considered taboo in many communities. These organs are referred to as they are without using their euphemisms for the sole reason that the intention behind the act of insulting excludes any mark of respect and sensitivity to the impact of the utterer's words (Sarr, 2019). In Dholuo, insults are classified on the basis of sexual organs/ body organs; physical attributes; animals and physical traits of members of the society.

(i) Insults that make reference to the male and female sexual/ biological organs:

Allan and Burridge (as cited in Bayisa, 2020) argues that sexual activity is tabooed as a topic for public display and severely constrained as a topic for discussion. However, the language of sexual pleasuring and copulation gives rise to a great deal of verbal play and figurative language. Taboo words are shunned because of their sensitive nature; those who overtly use them are regarded as violators of social norms and customs. However, linguistic taboos are a common occurrence in swear words such as insults, scatology, profanity, obscenity and cursing among others. The following insults in Dholuo make reference to the male and female sexual organs:

Ther meru -the vagina of your mother
Ng'ony meru -the vagina of your mother
Olund meru -the buttocks of your mother

Insults that refer to the sexual organs of parents are very disrespectful, humiliating and inflict harm upon the addressee. This is so because parents are revered in the Luo culture.

Wiyi oyugno ka nyar jakech – your hair is shaggy like a famished person's pubis
Piere tar ka tandarua – his/her buttocks are ashy like plain canvas
Piere dongo- big buttocks
chund wuoru- your father's penis

(ii) Insults based on physical attributes

Dhoge okapu -his/her mouth is a basket
Dende otuo ka tia'ng- his/her body is dry/skinny like sugarcane
Tiende chuoyo piny ka ondhuch kwesi- his/her tiny legs prick the ground like the stem of a smoking pipe.
Ogwande tindo tindo ka kede- her calves are small, small as a stick
Wang'e olil ka wang' ong'er- his/her face is dark like that of a monkey
Dhi kucha gi dhok mar omena- go there with the mouth of omena
Siandane oyuyore kamar jago Nyatiti-he/she has worn out buttocks like a Nyatiti (eight- stringed Luo musical instrument played while sitting on a flat hard surface).

(iii) Insults that make reference to animals

Insults that make reference to animals are a common occurrence among the Luo. Animals like lion, elephant and cheetah among others are held in high regard and are given positive attributes while others like cat, dog and sheep among others are negatively viewed. In Dholuo insults, different animals such as dog, cat, chameleon and goat are used.

According to Serpell (2016), animals are 'culturally constructed' since they acquire a wealth of symbolic and metaphorical associations and meanings that are peculiar to particular cultural settings. Animals like dogs have found their own place in the lives of human beings, especially in religious, spiritual, and even ethical aspects, largely owing to the significant functions they perform for people. Due to a complicated interplay of biological and cultural factors resulting in the domestication process, dogs have been an important and prevalent presence in virtually all human cultures across the globe. Besides their functional roles, different cultural contexts may, more significantly, shape the symbolic meanings of dogs. Therefore, different societies and religions may see dogs as a source of disease and attackers, recruiters into the forces of the Lord of the Dead, helpers of or those who accompany the deceased, to the powers of the totem and the embodiment of animal instincts inherent in a person (Brodowicz, 2024).

Among the Luo, a dog is viewed as a dirty and foolish animal; when one is referred to as a dog, the insult is intended to hurt the person being addressed. This insult elicits a negative emotion. A dog vomits and eats back the same stuff. It mates openly; it defecates where it lives and it does so in the full view of other animals and people. It can scavenge even rotten carcasses whose causes of death are unknown. Dogs harbour ticks and fleas thus these shortfalls make people conclude that the dog is a foolish animal. While this insult makes the addressee angry, the speaker uses it to release pent up emotions. For the speaker, it offers catharsis. This insult downplays the fact that a dog remains one of the most faithful animals in life.

Another animal that is demeaned and commonly used in Dholuo insults is a cat. Olaiya (2022) opines that the history of humans and cats has been around for almost 10,000 years. Unlike dogs, they were not purposely domesticated, they just started to coexist with humans, in a kind of partnership that developed naturally through the mutual benefits that the species observed. For cats, food stocks were a reliable source of game, and humans were able to effectively control pests. The Egyptian civilization made cats popular; they were associated with the goddesses Isis and Bastet thus cats were sacred. Killing them was absolutely forbidden, and when a family's cat died, it was taken to the holy city of Bubastits to be embalmed and buried in a special sarcophagus. In Norse mythology, cats were often associated with the goddess Freya. The goddess had two grey cats that fought at her side and pulled her chariot. To gain her protection and that of the cats, farmers often left bowls of milk for the felines. Even though cats were held in high regard, there are those who repudiated them. In Europe for example, during the witch-hunting season, cats were associated with witches and some people even believed they were demons. Black cats were the most persecuted, the attacks against these animals began in Ancient Greece.

Cats served as spiritual functions in Greece, they were seen as abodes, the dwellings of Spiritism. According to Greek mythology, Hera turned her servant into a black cat because she got in the way of the goddess's plans to prevent the birth of Hercules, the bastard son of Zeus. This servant then became an assistant to Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft. During the colonization of the United States, pilgrims believed that witches were able to transform into cats. This way, they would be able to sneak into people's homes, cast their spells, and leave without anyone noticing. From there, the belief became popular that crossing the path with a black cat is synonymous with bad luck (Olaiya, 2022).

In the Luo society a cat is viewed as a foolish animal this is so because when an opportunity presents itself it preys on its owner's chickens.

Moreover, just like the dog, it pukes and goes ahead to lick the vomit. Thus, when one is referred to as a cat it means that person does not have the ability to reason.
The insult mbura (cat) can be used for the purposes of humour and to show the bond that exist between friends. It elicits a positive emotion. Mbura (cat) is regarded as a gentle and clean animal among the Luo. It relieves itself in hidden places and buries the waste hence cats have very high hygienic standards. A cat only eats the rats that it has killed but not a carcass whose cause of death is unknown. Against this backdrop, to insult a person mbura (cat) is to praise albeit in a subverted manner. This insult also generates humour; it may also be used to belittle one or make him/her feel less important. From the insults mbura (cat), guogni (this dog), diel gi nyambiye (a goat and its intestines) the conceptual metaphor people are animals can be invoked. We use different animals to comprehend an abstract entity which in this case is a person.
Examples of Dholuo insults that make reference to animals include the following:
Guogni- this dog
Ifuwo ka rombo- foolish like a sheep
Mbura- a cat
Wiye tek ka wii okoko- tough headed like okoko
Diel gi nyambich- a goat and intestines

(iv) Insults based on lifestyle

Rakoko- the noisy one. This is an insult which is used for one who is troublesome, quarrelsome or one who talks too much. Depending on the context in which it is used it many invoke a positive or negative emotion.
Jabayo- the adventurous one. This is used for one who likes adventuring. In many instances, it is not treated as an insult but in contexts where it is, it invokes a positive emotion.
Ochot- prostitute. This is used to mostly insult women as opposed to men. Being a patriarchal society, women are subjugated; they are regarded inferior and negative traits are associated with them. Men are considered polygamous by nature in the Luo society as such, those who engage in extra marital affairs are encouraged while the women who do the same are admonished and treated very harshly by the society.
Raracha- the ugly one. This is an insult that is used to refer to a person whose physical appearance- is unattractive. The insult may hurt if uttered by a stranger; it may have serious ramifications especially on children leading to instances of low self-esteem among others. However, when used between people who share strong bonds like friends it may be taken lightly by the one being addressed.

Yom yom ka nyathi winyo- weak like the young of a bird. This insult is used in reference to a person who is weak; one who is unable to perform tasks as is expected. It could also be used for one who is not able to defend himself/herself against accusations levelled against him/her. It could also have negative effects since the one being addressed may see himself/herself as a failure or a good for nothing individual and this may affect the person's self-esteem.
Jawuoro- the greedy one. In many instances, it is not treated as an insult but in contexts where it is, it invokes a positive emotion.

Rasihingwa/ raura- mentally retarded/ foolish. This insult hurts a lot; it invokes a negative emotion. It is deemed very offensive. This finding is supported by Špago (2020) who notes that offensive words associated with being mentally inadequate are perceived as very offensive to both men and women.
Longlaloyo pier pino- the loose mouthed/ the talkative the buttocks of a wasp. It is used in reference to a person who talks a lot.
It elicits a positive emotion and it is used for humour.
Images used in Dholuo insults
There are several images that are used in Dholuo insults. There are instances of similes, metaphors and exaggerations used in the insults collected in this study. Examples of those in which similes are used include:
Wiyi oyugno ka nyar jakech - your hair is shaggy like a famished person's pubis.
The quality of the pubis is determined by the type of food that one consumes. A poor person does not have the luxury of eating a balanced diet. On many occasions, such a person consumes one type of food which in most cases is carbohydrates thus depriving the body of essential nutrients.
Piere tar ka tandarua - his/her buttocks are ashy like plain canvas.

Canvas is used for a variety of purposes and in different types of weather. During the rainy season for instance, canvas is likely to be muddy while during the dry season it is likely to be dusty. Buttocks that are ashy are an unpleasant sight to look at; they have a hard texture and are dry.
Siandane oyuyore kamar jago nyatiti- he/she has worn out buttocks like a Nyatiti player (Nyatiti is an eight- stringed Luo musical instrument played while sitting on a flat hard surface). If played for long, the instrumentalist sits for a long time. The Luo believe that this extended sitting is likely to affect one's buttocks that is, the more one sits the flatter the buttocks become.

Wiye opamore ka tend cholo mon- his/her head is as flat as the traditional stool used when aiding women give birth. The process of midwifery is long and tiresome therefore, a midwife needs a flat traditional stool that will not only provide comfort but also effectively aid the delivery process.
Ong'iya gi wang' mokunyore ka bur bala. (He/she is looking at me with eyes as deep as the hole of a salty mineral called bala). Bala is a salty mineral that is found in Homabay County, Rachuonyo Sub- County. This mineral is mainly harvested by women who sell it to earn a living. To get to the mineral, soil on the surface is extracted creating a hole in the process continuous harvesting deepens the hole. Eyes sockets that are deep could be signs of illness or malnourishment. The word deep in this context is an exaggeration. The speaker wants to emphasize the fact that the addressee's eyes are sunken. This insult invokes laughter as such it is used for the purposes of humour.
Ne kaka ochalo ong'ongruok- Look at the way he/she resembles a chameleon. This insult is used to refer to an ugly person. The eyes of a chameleon are big and protrude from their sockets. This insult is humiliating and it invokes a negative emotion.
Ifuwo ka rombo- foolish like a sheep. Sheep are considered foolish in the Luo community. When in a group, they emulate what the group leader does without taking note of the consequences of such actions. For example, if the group leader jumps over something whether real or imaginary the others do likewise. When the leader stops in the middle of the road, the others do so.

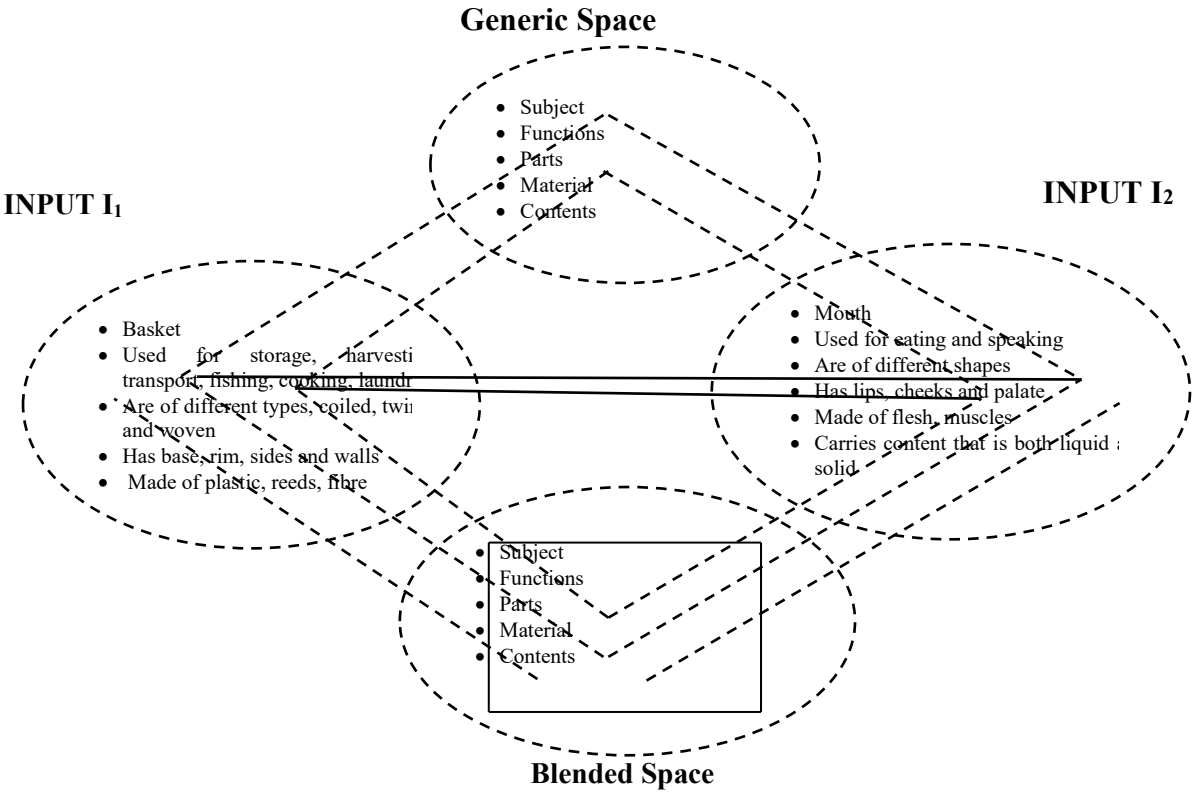
Wiye tek ka wii okoko- (tough headed like okoko). In many instances, it is not treated as an insult but in contexts where it is, it invokes a positive emotion. It is used in reference to someone who is stubborn.
Examples of insults in which metaphors are used include the following:
Dhoge okapu- his/her mouth is a basket
Guogni- this dog
Mbura -a cat
dhok mar omena- the mouth of omena
There are linguistic metaphors from which we can derive the conceptual metaphor MOUTH IS A CONTAINER. Examples include:

Dhoge okapu (his/her mouth is a basket)
Dhoge bor ka dho *suma* (his/her mouth is as long as that of *suma* (a type of fish))
Dhok mar omena (the mouth of *omena* (a type of fish))
Dhoge osuomore ka dho fuko (his/her mouth has an awkward shape like that of bush rat)
Dhoge bor ka dho osou (his/her mouth is as long as that of *osou* (a type of bird)

The linguistic metaphor mouth is a basket is understandable in respect of unmediated predictions from the input space of basket directed by a sequence of established correlative transformations: 'mouth' is mapped onto 'basket,' used for eating and speaking is mapped onto 'used for storage, harvesting, transport, cooking, laundry, fishing e.t.c,' 'are of different shapes is mapped onto 'are of different types e.g coiled, twined and woven,' 'has lips, cheeks and palate is mapped onto has base, rim, sides and walls,' 'made of flesh and muscles' is mapped onto 'made of plastic, reeds, fiber e.t.c,' 'carries content that is liquid and solid in nature' is mapped onto 'carries solid content.' This information could be presented in fixed counterpart mappings as follows:

Input 1 (Source Domain: Basket)	**Input 2 (Target Domain: Mouth)**
Used for storage, harvesting, transport, cooking, laundry, fishing etc.	Used for eating and speaking
Are of different sizes	Are of different sizes
Are of different types: coiled, twined, woven etc.	Are of different shapes e.g. bow-shaped, wide, full lips etc.
Has different parts: base, rim, sides, and walls	Has lips, cheeks, and palate
Made of plastic, reeds, fibre etc.	Made of flesh, muscles etc.
Carries "solid" contents	Carries contents that are both liquid and solid

The fixed counterpart mapping is diagrammatically represented in Figure 1



Another element of style that features prominently in Dholuo insults is the use of exaggeration. Examples include the following: siandane oyuyore kamar jago Nyatiti-he/she has worn out buttocks like a Nyatiti player (Nyatiti is an eight- stringed Luo musical instrument played while sitting on a flat hard surface) and tiende chuoyo piny ka ondhuch kwesi- his/her tiny legs prick the ground like the stem of the smoking pipe. Yuyore means worn out; it is something that is in a sorry state thus beyond repair. By using this word, the speaker is exaggerating the state of the buttocks. The speaker wants to emphasize the fact that the buttocks are in a bad state. In the second example, the speaker uses exaggeration by mentioning that the legs prick the ground. The speaker's intention is to emphasize the thinness of the legs in question.

Image schemas in Dholuo insults

The body parts (sexual organs, buttocks, mouth, eye, legs etc) mentioned in different Dholuo insults are examples of containers. Vernillo (as cited in Ntabo, Onysngo & Ndiritu, 2021) opines that the CONTAINER image schema is one of the basic, natural and embodied image schemas which is resourceful in explaining abstract entities based on the concept of containment. Ntabo, Onyango and Ndiritu (2021) posit that a penis is an important body part that functions involuntarily in the discharge of urine from the urinary bladder. It is also responsible for depositing sperm cells into the female reproductive duct during sexual intercourse. The release of urine and sperm cells from the penis activates the OUT concept in the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema (Ntabo, Onyango & Ndiritu, 2021). Since men are responsible for the advancement of the family lineage, those who have the ability to sire children are held in high regard in the Luo society. So important are children to a marriage that if a man was unable to sire children in the traditional Luo community, the wife was allowed to 'look' for children outside the marriage. The woman was advised to seek the assistance of her brothers' in-law or her husband's cousins for the soul purpose of procreation. Such acts were kept in the confines of the family to wade off unwanted traits.

The vagina is also a crucial container. As an important part of the reproductive anatomy, the vagina provides a passage through which blood and mucosal tissue from the uterus leave the body during menstrual flow. The vagina also enables the female experience pleasure during sexual intercourse. Moreover, it makes pregnancy and childbirth possible. The release of blood, mucosal tissue and a baby from the vagina activates the OUT concept in the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema. On the other hand, the entry of the sperm through the vagina during copulation activates the IN concept in the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema.

A container has different parts such as the interior, exterior and boundary so does the mouth which has lips, tongue, jaw, soft and hard palate. The mouth is transitive in the sense that it is a container placed inside another one which in this instance is the body. Therefore, the entity carried in the mouth is within both containers. The insult Dhoge okapu (his/her mouth is a basket) is an insult directed at someone who has a big mouth. This insult invokes the IN (the mouth is used for eating) and OUT (the mouth is used for speaking) subsidiary image schemas. Food gets into the mouth while information is relayed via the mouth. To some extent, the size of the mouth could activate the EXCESS subsidiary image schema. The assumption is that the size determines the amount of food consumed such that the bigger the mouth, the more the food eaten and the more the information conveyed. The insult dhok mar omena (the mouth of *omena* (a type of fish)) is used for one who talks too much. Most of this talk is usually insignificant and it borders on gossip. As such, the insult invokes the EXCESS subsidiary image schema.

The vagina also activates the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema. The vagina aids the entry of the sperm when the male ejaculates it is thus the entry point of the sperm also referred to as the source. The sperm then swims through the uterus and fertilizes the ovum in the fallopian tube (the sperm follows a path from the vagina to the uterus where it settles). Odhiambo et al., (2022) notes that after fertilization, the zygote divides many times to form a blastocyst. The blastocyst moves into the uterus, attaches to the thickened walls of the uterus till it develops into a fully grown foetus. The foetus which is born during delivery is the goal. The vagina also known as a birth canal is the path that the baby follows from the uterus to the outside world.

There are insults that activate the OBJECT image schema. Santibãnez (as cited in Anudo, 2018) opines that OBJECT schema is an elementary schema which acts as a guideline for stimulating additional representations. It entails a variety if subsidiary image schemas such as LINK, PART-WHOLE, CENTRE-PERIPHERY and COLLECTION among others. Vagina, penis, mouth, face, leg and head are parts of the body hence invoking the PART-Whole subsidiary image schema. Lakoff (1987) notes that our bodies are PART-WHOLE configurations in which the whole is arranged in a particular fashion.

Functions of Dholuo insults

Akhter (2023) argues that the language of insults is used in the context of surprise, frustration, and happiness. In addition, it also expresses many other states of mind in different situations. Among the Luo, insults are used to express anger. Through such verbal insults, pent up emotions are released thereby relieving the speaker. Such insults thus have a cathartic effect. Insults used to express anger include the following: Guogni- this dog; ifuwo ka rombo- foolish like a sheep; ne kaka ochalo ong'ongruok (see how he/she looks like a chameleon) among others.

Insults are also used for the purpose of humiliating the one being addressed. In this category, are insults that depict sexual organs (male and female) since sex is a taboo topic in the Luo society. Examples include: ng'ony meru -the vagina of your mother, olund meru -the buttocks of your mother and chund wuoru- your father's penis. In the Luo society parents are respected. The father being the head of the family, is held in high regard. He is the provider, the head of the family and the sole decision maker. His word is final and no one dares go against it. The mother on the other hand, takes care of the family by ensuring that the needs of every family member is taken care of. In the absence of the father, the family looks up to her for guidance and counsel. Because of the positions that parents hold and the roles that they play in the Luo society, any insult in which parents are mentioned is not only humiliating but also disrespectful.

Insults are also used to express humour. In this way positive emotions such as happiness and excitement are expressed. Examples of such insults are mbura (cat); Wiyi oyugno ka nyar jakech (your hair is shaggy like a famished person's pubis); Wiye opamore ka tend cholo mon (his/her head is as flat as the traditional stool used when aiding women give birth); Piere tar ka tandarua (his/her buttocks are ashy like plain canvas); Ong'iya gi wang' mokunyore ka bur bala. (He/she is looking at me with eyes as deep as the hole of a salty mineral called bala); Siandane oyuyore kamar jago nyatiti (he/she has worn out buttocks like a Nyatiti player); tiende chuoyo piny ka ondhuch kwesi (his/her tiny legs prick the ground like the stem of the smoking pipe) among others.

Dholuo insults are also used for the purposes of building intimacy, strengthening bonds and showing solidarity among friends.
The insult mbura (cat) could be used as a pet name by friends to refer to each other. Ochot (prostitute), raura (the foolish one), raracha (the ugly one) could be used as a form of address among friends. Ochot (prostitute) for instance, could be used as a form of address by female friends. It could be used in a context where a friend informs the other about a new relationship that she has ventured into after the collapse of another that did not last long. The speed with which the friend terminates a relationship and enters into another could make the speaker refer the addressee as ochot (prostitute) in this instance, this insult has minimal face threatening potency. In the Luo society, the word ochot is (prostitute) associated more with women than men. This function of insults is corroborated by Yaw (2019) who opines that in many instances insults were a way of showing solidarity between a group of abusers, and between the abuser and the abused. Insults also showed social cohesion for example, insults featured in phatic communion as address forms or greetings among such friends. Friends would even display their dissatisfaction, anger or pain if they did not trade some insults upon meeting. Through insults, friends displayed a level of informality or intimacy. In such instances, deference and politeness were replaced by acceptable insults which had little or no face-threatening potency.

5. CONCLUSION

Insults, which are culture and context based, are an integral part of language; as a form of verbal art, they provide a unique avenue in which linguistic analysis is made possible. Insults, an aspect of language whose delivery is done with shrewdness and stylishness, is a threat to one's face. Insults take various forms and play diverse roles moreover, they are used in daily interactions by both men and women. Through them, varied images which enrich a language are brought to perspective as such, the study of insults in different languages and contexts is critical.

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