Linguistic insights into patterns of inanimate metonymy in the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect of Dholuo, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the linguistic insight into patterns of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo based on 'how' and 'where' questions as the guiding principles. The Kisumu–South Nyanza dialect of Dholuo is used in the investigation because it is considered a standard variety. This study focuses on inanimate metonymies used as reference points for inanimate objects in Dholuo to describe their nature, which would add value to the knowledge base. This study is anchored on the Causal Theory of Reference and the Refining Causal Theory of Reference for Natural Kind Terms. The study adopts a descriptive research design. This research was conducted in Homa Bay County, Kenya, where the researcher reached out to mourners, traders, sportsmen and sportswomen, musicians, and travellers as the target population of interest. A sample of five respondents from each of the five identified groups was selected using purposive sampling because of their observable recurrent use of metonymic expressions. This study therefore uses a total sample size of 25 respondents because rich and detailed interviews may achieve saturation with fewer participants. Data for this study were qualitative in nature and comprised actual metonymies collected using focus group discussions and interviews. Data were analysed using integrated approaches: thematic, cognitive, pragmatic, and referential analyses, where both linguistic and content elements were examined and explained. Presentation of the analysed data was done using narrative, thematic, and verbatim methods suitable for this study. The findings of this study illustrate that inanimate metonymies are patterned and therefore add to the knowledge base of metonymic expressions in the field of academic research. This study recommends the use of inanimate metonymy in Dholuo not only in literary works to enrich expressions and linguistic ornamentation but also in radio and television broadcasting, among others.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Dholuo, Inanimate, Metonymy, Pattern

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of metonymic expressions in Dholuo is a common linguistic phenomenon experienced in Dholuo speaking regions (Siaya, Kisumu Homa Bay, and Migori counties). The earlier researches were based on animate metonymic expressions. For instance, de Mendoza Ibáñez (1997) who focused on pragmatic interpretations of metonymy gives an example; '*Have you done your Chomsky?*' to refer a book authored by Chomsky; Gwarzo (2024) focuses on conceptual shift involving body parts gives the example in the 'Hand based metonymic pattern': Hand for control; *He has no control over us*. This study however, focuses on Dholuo inanimate metonymic expressions to explain their patterns.

The metonymic references involve the use of part/part relation, part/whole relation, adjacency relation, constitution relation, and containment relation. This study describes the patterns of Dholuo inanimate metonymies in Homa Bay county where the Kisumu-south Nyanza dialect of Dholuo is spoken.

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It is considered a standard dialect among Boro-ukwala dialect and Trans-Yala dialect speakers because it is spoken in a comparatively wider geographical region that encompasses Kisumu, Homa Bay, and Migori counties (Atoh, 2001). Therefore, it is spoken by majority of the Luo people discussed in the following section. The Luo people: The Luo people are generally called Joluo and they occupy Siaya, Kisumu, Migori and Homa Bay counties. Their neighbors include the Luhyia to the north, the Kalenjin to the east, Gusii, Kuria and Masai to the south-east and south. Joluo belong to the Nilotic group of languages (Ogutu, 1975), and their language is Dholuo which comprises different dialects as explained in this study.

Dholuo: Dholuo is characterized by three main dialects spoken in different regions. They are; 1) Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect spoken in Kisumu, Homa Bay, and Migori counties (Scotton, 1981). It is considered a standard dialect because it is spoken in a wider geographical area (Atoh, 2001). The Boro-Ukwala dialect is spoken in a smaller region because it is considered less prestigious. These regions are: Ugunja, Ukwala, and Alego-usonga (Atoh, 2001; Scotton, 1981) The Trans-Yala dialect is spoken in Ugenya, Alego, Imbo and parts of Gem (Scotton, 1981). Although mutually intelligible, these dialects are varied enough to identify the speakers with specific regions (Atoh, 2001). This is because: 1) has a wider geographical range, 2) and 3) have smaller regions. This study therefore, focuses on the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect because it is the standard variety and the variety spoken in the area of the study. In the following section, this study strives to identify the patterns of metonymy that are rampant in Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect of Dholuo discourses.

Metonymies in Dholuo: Languages are naturally metonymic (Zheng, 2014). Therefore, Dholuo being a natural language is naturally metonymic on the basis of the foregoing argument. Metonymies are frequently used in discourses in Dholuo because metonymic concepts are naturally grounded in the people's experience and language. Metonymic use enables Dholuo speakers to express their thoughts concisely and can achieve certain patterning effects of metonymy in communication. These are; 1. Metonymy as part for whole pattern. A part of an object is used as the reference point for the object. This metonymic pattern is widely used in Dholuo discourses. It is also experienced in its reverse role constellation i.e. whole for part pattern, 2. Metonymy as container for contained pattern. The container is fronted as the metonymic reference for what it contains. It also exhibits reverse role constellation in which the contained is the metonymic reference for what contains it. It is an everyday metonymic experience encountered in Dholuo discourses, 3. Metonymy as material for object. A substance or material an object is made of is effectively used as a metonymy to refer to the object the substance or the material is used in making. A reverse role constellation of the pattern is also experienced in Dholuo discourses, 4. Metonymy as producer for product pattern. Producers receive metonymic attention and are used as reference points for their products, 5. Metonymy as location for product pattern. The place where a certain product originates from stands for the product itself, 6. Metonymy as instrument for result pattern. The instrument of an action enters into a metonymic relation with the result of this action, 7. Metonymy as possessed for possessor pattern. The possessed entity is used in Dholuo discourses to refer to the entity that possesses it, 8. Metonymy as characteristic for entity. The metonymic relation relies on a typical characteristic as the basis for identifying the referent. These metonymic patterns are constantly encountered in Dholuo discourses. This study identifies all these patterns and analyzes them all. The following literature review gives an insight into earlier metonymic usages to which this study links the findings and discussions.

1.2 Research Objective

To describe the patterns of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the Causal Theory of Reference (CTR) advanced by Kripke (1980), and Refining Causal Theory of Reference for Natural Kind Terms (RCTR) advanced by Kitcher and Stanford (2000). Kripke (1980) authored the Causal Theory of Reference. Kripke argues that a reference is fixed on an object by virtue of causal-historical chain that originates in a naming ceremony or "baptism". The initial event fixes the reference by associating a name with an object in a given social context. Once this referential link is established, it is transmitted along a communicative chain, establishing subsequent users to refer to the same entity without complete knowledge of its defining features. Kripke's theory extends beyond names to a broad range of linguistic phenomena, including metonymy.

Kripke's insight that names function through causal anchoring rather than semantic mediation provides a powerful explanatory model for metonymic terms that become conventional through shared use rather than intrinsic descriptive precision. Kitcher and Stanford (2000) proposed two refined models—CTR1 and CTR2—that seek to integrate causal and descriptive elements in a more nuanced manner. These models recognize the need to accommodate perceptual conceptual features of referents while retaining the causal-historical continuity emphasized by Kripke (1980).

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CTR1 incorporates the observable characteristics of the referent, linking the perceptual predicates with the causal chain of the reference. It mediates between perceptual experience and linguistic fixation. CTR2 introduces four parameters:

A set of representative samples of the kind (e.g., various types of cameras).

A set of foils—objects that are clearly not of that kind (e.g., binoculars, eyeglasses).

A defining predicate ϕ [x] which captures the semantic profile of the referent (e.g., an instrument used to record a moving image).

A speech community capable of applying the predicate meaningfully.)

2.1.1 Application of the Theory to the Present Study

The application of the theories to the present study is based on the benefits of the inanimate metonymy from the integration of philosophical and cognitive theories. These expressions often originate from embodied experience, metonymic projections or pragmatic necessity and subsequently undergo a process of conventionalization and stabilization. Overtime what began as an intuition becomes lexically entrenched, with users employing the term without invoking its figurative background (Kripke, 1980). This semantic abstraction is characteristic of conventional metonymy as supported by the reference mechanism.

The philosophical foundation of naming reveals the interplay between individual innovation and collective semantic ratification. That is, an individual's metonymic insight grounded in perceptual analogy is socially ratified and linguistically stabilized through the operation of reference mechanisms that combine causality, description and communal practice (Kitcher and Stanford, 2000). These theories demonstrate that inanimate metonymies are not arbitrary substitution but systematic referential processes grounded in causal relationships, social knowledge and shared communicative conventions. They also offer value tools for understanding how inanimate metonymies in Dholuo are successfully used as references in daily social discourses in Dholuo.

Metonymy: Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word is substituted for another on the basis of some material, causal or conceptual relations (Preminger and Brogan, 1993). For proper substitution, however, it requires some form of description as suggested by Fauconnier (1994). Papafragou (1996) says that metonymy is 'figure of speech' that is a departure from the linguistic norm, and it demands suitable training for its successful use and comprehension. The forgoing argument contravenes Zheng (2014) input that metonymy is grounded in people's experience. This argument demonstrates that language is naturally metonymic. Fauconnier (1994) views metonymy as case of 'deferred reference' in which a speaker uses a description of 'A' and succeeds in referring to 'B'. There is, however, not enough description to lead to the intended referent as Kripke (1980) puts it. Therefore, a causal link is necessary for accurate referring. Thomasson (1994) notes that metonymy involves 'naming by association', a metonymic process of linking two concepts or persons together in such a way as to tell us more about the latter by means of what we already know about the former. This argument by extension, is causal which in line with Kripke's argument. However, Otieno (2014) asserts that metonymy is a figure of speech functioning as a linguistic strategy in communication but does not explain the process of its functionality.

Metonymic patterns: Lenard and Ćosić (2017) proposed typologies based on the structural and conceptual relationships that link a metonymic expression (the vehicle) to its intended referent (the target). The following classifications provide a systematic basis for identifying and interpreting the diverse forms of metonymy observed in natural language use: Part for whole metonymy: This form of metonymy involves using a part of a component of an entity to stand in for the whole. It is often rooted in perceptual salience or functional relevance, making it cognitively accessible. For example, referring to a nation's government or political institution as "England" in the sentence

"England congratulated Kenya,"

does not invoke the country as a geographical space, but rather its representative officials.

Lenard and Ćosić (2017) focused on rhetorical strategy in political speeches and public discourse, and found that metonymy establish ideological positions and persuade audience. The present study focuses on the pattern of Dholuo inanimate metonymies. However, Lenard and Ćosić' finding enlightens the present study on the application of discourse analysis to naturally occurring Dholuo interactions involving inanimate metonymic expressions in Dholuo.

Mbara et al., (2026) who focused on referential metonymy notes that this form of metonymy is especially effective when the selected part carries high symbolic or operational relevance within the communicative setting. In Dholuo, such associations often derive from daily life and communal experiences, making them powerful conveyors of meaning.

Whole for part metonymy: Conversely whole for part metonymy entails referencing the entirety of an entity when only a specific aspect or subset is meant. This type relies on the assumption that the audience can infer he specific reference through context.

For instance, Markert (2002)

"Messi is the new Maradona"

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The name "Maradona" does not refer to the individual in totality, but rather his footballing prowess or iconic status. This kind of relation is key in Dholuo where names or clan identifiers may be used in his manner to invoke a particular role or social function. For instance, referring to a clan or lineage name may indirectly highlight its senior members or ritual specialists. Part for part metonymy: This more specialized form of metonymy involves one part of an entity being used to represent another part within the same domain (Zheng, 2014). Though less common than the other types, it plays a meaning role in domains where certain components carry representative significance. For example,

"Aspirin treats headache"

Where "aspirin" may be interpreted as a stand in for a broader category of pain relievers. Tools or ceremonial items may function in a similar fashion, where an object like *"the stool"* used in ancestral rituals may stand for the ritual voice or authority of the elder seated upon it. Zheng (2014) studied how metonymic expressions are handled in translation and established that metonymy relies on cultural schemas and cognitive mapping both of which affect how meaning is transferred between languages. Zheng's findings relate to the present study based on the cognitive mappings for meaning transfer despite differing on linguistic areas of study. Zheng (2014) notes that this form of metonymy is particularly common in highly conventionalized or domain specific language, including medicine, agriculture, or ritual discourse—domain which are prominent in linguistic practice.

Container for contained metonymy: This metonymic pattern is closely related to part for whole pattern based on the 'strength of contact'. This is an intuitive that refers to the strength of the relation between the two entities involved (e.g., England cannot be physically separated from the UK, but water can be separated from the glass (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). For example,

"I drink a glass too many"

The container is picked to stand in for what it contains. Peirsman and Geeraerts(2006) focused on metonymy as a prototypical category and proposed that metonymy be understood as prototypical category instead of a phenomenon defined by rigid boundaries. Peirsman and Geeraerts further classified metonymy into patterns based on conceptual contiguity (e.g. part-for- whole, producer-for-product) using animate-inanimate metonymies. Despite Peirsman and Geeraerts' proposal, the foregoing examples, are relevant to this study based on the patterns of inanimate metonymies this study anchors on. This study, by extension applies this pattern in the discussion of inanimate metonymy in Dholuo in findings and discussion section. Other examples of types of pattern of metonymy cited by Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006) and which the current study uses by extension in discussing patterns of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo include: container-for-contained, material-for-object, object-for-material, producer-for-product, and location-for-product.

Contained for container pattern: The metonymic structure illustrates a reversal in the typical container-content relationship. Instead of the container serving as the referent, the contained becomes the metonymic stand-in for the container itself. In this case, the more cognitively salient entity—what is normally considered the content—is used to evoke the less prominent, though contextually inferred, entity: the container. Such linguistic constructions rely on the listener's ability to discern meaning through cultural knowledge and inferential reasoning. For example,

"The water has burst"

Material for object pattern: The metonymic configuration is that of unboundedness between entities. A substance is not really a part of a material entity because the object may be completely made of this substance (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). The material is used as the reference point for the object of the material. Example,

"The skin sounds musical"

Where *"the skin"*refers to an object made of skin.

Object for material pattern: This is a reverse role constellation of material for object metonymic pattern. The object is used metonymically as the reference point for the material used in making the object. Example,

"Scorpions are a killer animal"

Where *"scorpions"* refer to the poison they produce when they sting.

Producer for product pattern: Producers (typically a human agent such as an artist, author or scientist) of highly outstanding products receive particular metonymic attention in referring to the products they create. This metonymical relation however, is irreversible (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). Example,

"I'm reading Shakespeare"

referring to the literary works of William Shakespeare.

This type of metonymy also reflects to a cultural valuation, where the producer's name becomes a synecdoche for their contribution to society.

Location for product pattern: The place from where a certain product originates or is produced comes to stand for the product itself. The location becomes indexical for material products with which it is associated (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). Location also represents the people within it. Example,

"The whole village rejoiced"

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implying the people of the village. Such expressions utilize spatial contexts as shorthand for what resides or occurs within them. Grounding on this insight, despite the usage of animate metonymy in the argument, the current study endeavors to investigate inanimate metonymies in Dholuo to explain the location/product pattern.

Instrument for result pattern: The instrument of an action can enter into a metonymic relation with the result of this action. Mbara et al., (2026) studied referential metonymy to establish how one entity is used to refer to another entity on close association. Mbara found that successful metonymic reference depends on contiguity relationships, shared background knowledge, and contextual information. Warren's findings are relevant to the present study owing to the use of one salient entity as a reference point for the other entity as illustrated in the findings and discussion section later in this study. Mbara argues that the result is a low-level, but nevertheless is generalized as a productive pattern within its own specifications and restrictions, a relationship which represents the idiomatic way within a language community to express certain notions.

For example,

"It is the horn that woke us up" (Otieno, 2014:56)

Where the horn as an instrument is used to refer to sound it produces as it is played. The foregoing example is picked from Otieno (2014) study to underpin Mbara's establishment even though Otieno (2014) focused on semantic properties and conceptual mechanisms underlying metonymic expressions in Dholuo. Otieno established that Dholuo contains rich and productive metonymic structures motivated by cultural practices, shared knowledge, and conceptual contiguity using cognitive semantic theory for data analysis. This study, however, extends this insightful argument by using causal theory of reference and refined causal theory of reference for natural kind terms to analyze the inanimate metonymies in the findings and discussions section.

Possessed for possessor pattern: This metonymic pattern is based on the adjacency relation between alienable and inalienable objects (Mbara et al., 2026). It is a reverse constellation of possessor for possessed metonymic pattern. The possessed is used as a reference point for the possessor.

For example,

He married money — Interpreted as "he married someone who has money".

Mbara's argument is apparently grounded on socio-cultural set up and uses inanimate as stand-in for animate metonymy in providing the example. It provides for an opportunity to extend such relevant arguments on the usage of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo in a business set up the current study endeavors to explore.

Characteristic for entity pattern: In this type of metonymic pattern, a distinguishing feature of an entity—often visual, functional, or conceptual—stands in for the entire entity. Radden and Kovecses (1999) describe this relation as being governed by a cognitive process called *individuation,* which allows language users to identify and refer to unbounded wholes through their salient features. In other words, a defining property of an entity serves as a cognitive shortcut to reference the entity itself. Relationship between terms might be descriptive; representing in virtue of truth conditions (de Mendoza Ibáñez, 1997). By examining problems associated with interpreting metonymy, de Mendoza Ibáñez (1997) explains that an account of creative metonymies and the underlying principles common to them must include both descriptive and analytical consideration based on relevance-theoretic framework. According to de Mendoza Ibáñez's explanation touching descriptive element in analysis has a bearing on the present study on the basis of RCTRNKT theoretical framework authored by Stanford and Kitcher (2000). The following example maps on the foregoing arguments.

Comfort — Referenced as "Sedan chair".

The reviewed literature on metonymic pattern demonstrate a varying theoretical frameworks employed by different scholars in their analysis processes which forms the basis for discussing a suitable theory for this study as shown in the next section.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study focused on the qualitative approach to research. That is, methods are more descriptive and narrative in nature. This section comprises the area of study, research design, data collection, analysis procedure, and ethical considerations. The study was conducted in Homa Bay County because it is the home to the Kisumu-South Nyanza dialect of Dholuo, which is considered a standard variety. Further, the region is rich in oral traditions and active participation in communal events, which enhance observing and recording inanimate metonymic expressions.

The study was anchored on descriptive research design suited for determining the 'how', and 'where' aspects of a research phenomenon. This research approach facilitates an understanding of the pattern of inanimate metonymies in society; it is therefore, the most appropriate design in examining metonymic forms and their patterns on everyday communication among Dholuo speakers. The population of the study comprised adult native speakers of Dholuo aged 18 years and above. These were residents of Homa Bay county at the time of study. Particularly, they were drawn from

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sub-counties: Homa Bay, Rangwe, Ndhiwa, Rachuonyo North, and Rachuonyo South because the population are engaged in varied social and economic activities such as funeral ceremonies, open-air markets, live music events, sports competitions and public transportation. Besides, it minimizes the interference of dialectal variation in ensuring homogenous and representative linguistic data collection. The adults were selected because of their conversance with cultural expressions and traditional modes of metonymic usage. From the population, five groups were identified: mourners, travelers, sportsmen/women, traders, and musicians.

Each identified group was represented by 5 purposively sampled respondents. Therefore, 25 native speakers of Dholuo constituted the sample. The total sample of 25 respondents conforms with Hennink and Kaiser (2022) who argue that rich and detailed interviews may achieve saturation with fewer participants. The fieldwork was done between January, 2021 and May, 2021. The 5 right identified respondents in every 5 target groups in each of the 5 sub-counties in Homa Bay county were interviewed at different times, in different venues in an interval of one month to accommodate both interview and FGDs sessions. Thus: Homa Bay, in January at the bus terminus; Rachuonyo South, in February at funeral ceremonies; Rangwe, in March at sports ground; Rachuonyo North, in April in live music halls; and Ndhiwa, in May at market places. Interview with each respondent took an average of 8 minutes translating into a 40-minute interview with every 5 respondents in every target group.

The study focused on qualitative data drawn from natural conversations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to ensure in-depth and appropriate triangulation in the process of collecting inanimate metonymic expressions in Dholuo. Five FGDs were instituted; one in each of the 5 sub-counties of Homa Bay County, purposively sampled. Each FGD comprised 5 respondents selected through purposive sampling—an optimal size for interaction without overcrowding (Krueger and Casy, 2015). This enriched the qualitative data through meaning-making and debate around shared metonymic expressions. Discussions took place in different designated venues in each of the 5 sub-counties. These were: Church hall in Rachuonyo South, County hall in Homa Bay, Fish banda in Rachuonyo North, School hall in Rangwe and Chiefs' camp in Ndhiwa sub counties. The researcher guided the session open-ended and culturally appropriate prompts. The responses were audio recorded and noted down. The process lasted for approximately 60-90 minutes.

This study transcribed data using orthographic-verbatim transcription system. Dholuo utterances were first transcribed in their original form and subsequently translated into English. The transcription retained lexical items and discourse markers relevant to the interpretation of metonymic expressions classified thematically into: part/whole, whole/part, part/part, container/contained, contained/container, material/object, object/material, producer/product, location/product, instrument/result, possessed/possessor, and characteristic/entity for data analysis, as informed by the Causal Theory of Reference by Kripke (1980) and Refining Causal Theory of Reference for Natural Kind Terms by Stanford and Kitcher (2000).

Each participant signed a consent Form in which he/she agreed to take part in the research. The participants were encouraged to exercise their free will in deliberating on the topic of discussion. Further, they were informed that they were free to discontinue at any point. Participants' confidentiality was paramount. They were assured that the information they were to give was to be secured and used only for the purpose of the study. Where the information was to be shared in conferences and publications, the consent of the respondents was sought. The researcher, therefore, ensured that any data given by the respondents was kept confidential.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The study presents, discusses and analyzes the following patterns of Dholuo inanimate metonymic expressions based on CTR and RCTRNKT as theoretical frameworks: Metonymy as part for whole pattern: Physical objects are typically perceived of as forming a gestalt with well delineated boundaries and composed of various parts (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). A part of an object is used as the reference point for the object.

An example in this category is:

Gamna nyaite marateng'

'Get the black one with ears'

A speaker in an open-air market made the utterance as she was pointing at a collection of basins to pass a message. She was specific with a basin with projected handles on both sides. The handles are referred to as ears because of their positions on the basin in relation to the position of human or other animals' ears on the head. *Nyaite* is the metonymy in the utterance arising from a baptism event. Kripke (1980) argues that a reference is grounded on an object by virtue of causal link in a social context. Further, Kitcher and Stanford (2000) explain that descriptive and causal elements are integrated in name grounding. *Nyaite* satisfies the descriptive content of 'being part of'. The physical feature analysis underpins the contiguity relatedness, which is regarded as the causal link between the two entities.

The ears which are actually the handles, are part of the plastic basin. They are used as metonymy to refer to the basin. This study uses this metonymic shift as a demonstration that inanimate metonymies in Dholuo identify a

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distinctive part of an object and uses it as reference point to ease identification of the referent. Therefore, Dholuo speakers use part of whole metonymy in referring to whole referents. Metonymy as whole for part: The whole for part metonymic pattern is a reverse role constellation of part for whole metonymic pattern. Whole is used as the metonymic reference for the part. An example under this type of metonymy is:

Ndika otuch

'My bicycle is punctured'

A *bodaboda* cyclist mending a puncture in the tube made the utterance. *Ndiga* is the metonymy in the utterance. The selection and usage of this metonymy confirms that whole/part metonymic pattern is rampant in Dholuo discourse, being that bicycle is an object most relevant to transportation. It is a vehicle that has two wheels, one behind the other, a steering handle, and a saddle seat. It is propelled by the action of the rider's feet upon pedals. A tube is a hollow and cylindrical in shape object which is put in a tyre round a metal rim and contains pumped air. Both the descriptive contents and causal link formed by the contiguity between the two entities give rise to name grounding in a social context as outlined by Kitcher and Stanford (2000), and Kripke (1980). In Dholuo speaking community, bicycle is a common means of transport. The riders usually have the technic of mending the puncture when it is developed. So, in referring to the punctured part, the bicycle as 'whole' is used as the reference point.

Metonymy as part for part pattern: The part for part metonymic pattern basically delineates a cognitive mechanism in which one part of an entity is used to refer to another part within the same whole, often predicated on functional salience (Otieno, 2014). This form of metonymy arises not merely from contiguity but from a conceptual association wherein specific components are foregrounded to represent a broader category or other components, within a shared domain. In the context of Dholuo, this pattern of metonymic representation is observable in various everyday interactions that demonstrate the speaker's reliance on salient parts to evoke meaning efficiently. The following is an example in this category:

KIMBO ok poti e kado

'*KIMBO* does not cuddle up in the soup'

This utterance was recorded from a vender managing a small kiosk stocked with a variety of cooking oils. The metonymic shift is *KIMBO*. This study, in demonstrating the rampant usage of part/part metonymy in conversational contexts selects *KIMBO* as the metonymic shift. It refers not just to a specific brand of cooking oil manufactured by the KIMBO Company, but also functions metonymically to represent cooking oil in general. This brand substitution reveals a part-for-part metonymy: one part of oil (KIMBO) is used to refer to the broader category of oils, particularly within conversations centered on culinary quality or suitability. The part-part-relation develops a causal link between KIMBO and other cooking oils.

Kripke (1980) explains that grounding a name on an object is by virtue of causal link and associating the name with the object in a social context. Causal chain extends from one part to another through their shared membership in common whole. Further, the reference is grounded on the knowledge of the structural relations among parts (Kitcher and Stanford, 2000). The cognitive mapping from "KIMBO" to cooking oil is informed by the product's market prominence, associating the brand with the general utility of cooking oil. Furthermore, since cooking oil is derived from various plant sources (e.g., palm, sunflower, or corn), it carries with it additional layers of partitive relationships—linking plant components, processed oil, and the brand product. Thus the utterance reveals a rich interplay between product identity, commercial branding, and functional utility, where a brand element represents the wider category it inhibits. In such contexts, brand names achieve symbolic status, acquiring a metonymic function that facilitates efficient and contextually rich communication.

Metonymy as container for contained pattern: The concept for container is perceived as a complete entity, while the contained is viewed merely as a component part. Nevertheless, the connection between these two elements exhibits a relatively weaker degree of interaction (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006:281). The container emerges as an important aspect of the overall unit; consequently, it serves as a metonymic reference point for what it holds within.

For instance:

Yao oduono te

'The dam is completely dry'

The statement originated from a water vender during a community meeting to address water scarcity. In this statement, *yao* serves as the metonymic shift for the water it once contained. As pointed out by Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006), this study selects this metonymic shift to reveal the prominence of container over the contained metonymic relationship in socio-cultural set ups among Dholuo speakers. The container–contained relatedness is considered as causal link between *yao* (dam) and the water. Kripke (1980) argues that a reference is grounded on an object through association, and by virtue of a causal link in a social context. Container and its content are causally linked through physical containment, and therefore, the reference shifts from container to the contained. The shared knowledge of containment relation allows for the identification of the intended referent as explained by Kitcher and Stanford (2000).

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The drying of the dam signifies not merely a physical depletion, but also a socio-economic crisis, given the local livelihood depend on water accessibility. The statement reflects a shared concern about diminishing natural resources and their impact on daily life. Here, the dam is used metonymically to denote the absence of water, with its emptiness symbolizing the urgency of infrastructural intervention. The expression highlights the vital role of environmental features in the community's socio-economic fabric.

This utterance encapsulates the broader discourse on sustainability, resource management, and collective responsibility. It serves not only as a factual update but also as a call to action, evoking communal awareness and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

Metonymy as contained for container pattern: The metonymic structure illustrates a reversal in the typical container-content relationship. Instead of the container serving as the referent, the contained becomes the metonymic stand-in for the container itself. In this case, the more cognitively salient entity—what is normally considered the content—is used to evoke the less prominent, though contextually inferred, entity: the container. Such linguistic constructions rely on the listener's ability to discern meaning through cultural knowledge and inferential reasoning. An example in this category is:

Chak ogore piny
'Milk tipped over'

This utterance was made by a child who informed her mother about a packet of milk that had fallen among other milk packets on the shelf of a milk kiosk. The use of *chak* 'milk' as a metonymy in this context refers not to the substance itself, but rather to the container holding the milk. This study therefore, uses this inanimate metonymic shift in Dholuo to assert that the reverse constellation of container for contained metonymic pattern exists in Dholuo discourses for ease of identification. Here *chak* denotes the white liquid produced by the mammary glands of mammals, typically processed and packaged in factories into containers for sale.

Despite the conceptual difference between the milk and its packaging, the two are physically contiguous and contextually inseparable within the setting of a kiosk. Both descriptive contents and causal link formed by the contiguity relationship between the content and what contains it give rise to name grounding in a social context as outlined by Kitcher and Stanford (2000) and Kripke (1980). Therefore, the contained as the salient entity in context, is used as the reference point for the container.

Metonymy as material for object pattern: The metonymic configuration is that of unboundedness between entities. A substance is not really a part of a material entity because the object may be completely made of this substance (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). The material is used as the reference point for the object of the material.

Ka atalo to chuma diyo lweta
'If I dare say, then the metal presses on my hand'

Songs are a way of expressing feelings of the composer depending on the type of song. The example above was explicitly expressed in a politically motivated composition during a one-party rule in Kenya. The composer felt denied freedom of expression by threats of arrest and charges of incitement against the ruling government. *Chuma* 'metal' is the metonymic shift in the expression which the composer used in that political context to refer to handcuff and to communicate political injustices in the society. This inanimate metonymic use in Dholuo, fulfills the assertion by Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006), that material composition as a binding relationship is used as a metonymic shift by Dholuo speakers in relevant social contexts. It is a chemical element that forms a metallic bond with other metal atoms and is generally hard, and handcuff is a metallic ring of a locking fetter for the hand. The descriptive contents integrate with the causal link between the two entities are grounds for reference assigning in a social context.

The metonymy—*chuma* arises from a baptism event where a name is associated with the object by virtue of causal link (Kripke, 1980). The object originates from the material from which it is made. The material, therefore, maintains a causal link with the finished object. Based on the knowledge of substance-object relation and the integration of descriptive and causal elements guide the interpretation (Kitcher and Stanford, 2000). Metal as a material, constitutes the handcuff and so the two are in the domain of constitution. Therefore, constitution relation is considered as developing a kind of relationship between the metal and the handcuff. A salient and easily coded entity in the context is explicitly expressed metonymically to mean the implicit target. Therefore, *chuma* was the salient entity in that political context to refer to handcuff.

Metonymy as object for material pattern: This is a reverse role constellation of material for object metonymic pattern. The object is used metonymically as the reference point for the material used in making the object. For example,

Sitima oringo achadha e gweng'ni
'There is a heavy network of electricity in this area'

'The Last Mile Electricity Program' had opened up most rural areas in Kenya in terms of lighting system. The speaker, a traveler who happened to have traversed such an area made the proposition having seen a heavy network of electric cables crisscrossing. Sitima 'electricity' is the metonymy in the proposition the speaker used to mean the

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lighting systems in homes—an implication of development. This study uses this metonymic shift to demonstrate that the reverse constellation of material for object metonymic pattern is rich in inanimate metonymies in Dholuo discourses.

Electricity is a phenomenon caused by the distribution and movement of charged subatomic particles and their interaction with the electromagnetic field. It produces energy used in lighting and running machines in industries. The cables carry electricity in them and are therefore, constitutionally related—a relationship that considered a causal link.

Sitima as the metonymy arises from a baptism ceremony where the descriptive content as Kitcher and Stanford (2000) explain that, the descriptive contents integrate with causal element in reference grounding. Further, Kripke (1980) argues that reference is fixed on an object by virtue of causal link and associating it with the object in a social context. The speaker, therefore, used *sitima* to refer to lighting because it was the salient and easily coded entity in that context.

Metonymy as producer for the product pattern: Producers of highly outstanding products receive particular metonymic attention. This metonymical relation however, is irreversible (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006).

An example in this category is:

Kok opukore mokalo tong'
'Coke flows past forecast'

The proposition might sound more of metaphoric. However, in context the proposition is metonymic because the speaker used the name of the producer to refer to the product which are in the domain of production (Mbara et al., 2026). A lorry carrying coke branded bottles of soda overturned along the Kisii-Kisumu highway. Coke bottles of soda were broken making a stream of liquid flowing along the roadside. A trader in soft drink of different brands: fanta, sprite, coke, and bitter lemon made the proposition. The metonymy in the proposition is *kok* 'coke'—a proposition implying overstatement. The metonymic use in this study is to demonstrate that the product name stands for the business performance among the business persons in conversational contexts.

Coke is an alternative form of coco-cola, which is a registered company name manufacturing flavored drinks. The producer-product relationship is regarded as the causal link between the producer and the product for reference grounding. Kripke (1980) argues that a reference is fixed on an object by virtue of causal link and by associating the name with the object in a social context. The integration of descriptive elements and the causal link forms the background knowledge of the producer and the product and leads to the identification of the intended referent (Kitcher and Stanford, 2000). The company and the product are unbounded entities, and so the strength of contact is weak (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). However, the salient entity in context is used for referencing. So the speaker used *kok* (producer) as the salient entity to refer to the drink (product).

Metonymy as location for product pattern: The place from where a certain product originates or is produced comes to stand for the product itself. The location becomes indexical for material products with which it is associated (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006). For example,

Gem Asumbi ywayo wang'
'The Gem Asumbi are attractive'

Constructing a house using bricks gives a fine and attractive finish. However, it depends on the source and workmanship of the producer. A businessman dealing in the sale of bricks made the statement to a prospective customer from whom he expected a contract of a supply of bricks to construct a residential house. *Gem Asumbi* is the metonymy in the statement referring to bricks—a metonymy of qualitative implication. The *Gem Asumbi* are red in color and are comparatively more appealing to the sight than the ones from other areas dealing in brick production. The metonymic shift is a manifest of the use of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo in demonstrating that place names commonly identify associated entities.

Bricks are hardened rectangular blocks of mud or clay used for building. They come in different shades; red, beige, and grey depending on the source of mud or clay. The location-product relation and the descriptive contents are a rich ground for fixing a name on an object in a social context. Kripke (1980) explains that a name is fixed on an object by virtue of causal link and association between the name and the object. Location *(Asumbi)* serves as a causal source of the product's (bricks) identity. Kitcher and Stanford (2000) further argue that descriptive elements integrate with causal elements in name grounding. The knowledge of the geographical origin associates products with places that produce them. So Gem Asumbi arose as a metonymy resulting from the foregoing arguments.

Metonymy as instrument for result pattern: The instrument of an action can enter into a metonymic relation with the result of this action. Mbara et al., (2026), argues that the result is a low-level, but nevertheless is generalized as a productive pattern within its own specifications and restrictions, a relationship which represents the idiomatic way within a language community to express certain notions. An example of inanimate metonymic expression in this category is:

Ji ne omielo orutu chieng kido gi timbe joluo
'People danced to *orutu* on the Luo cultural day'

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Orutu music fans made this statement in a conversation about activities in an annual Luo Cultural Events organized at a county level. *Orutu* is the metonymy in the statement the speaker used to refer to musical sound—an entertainment, and a tool in fostering the cultural heritage metonymic implication. This inanimate metonymic expression in Dholuo, is selected as an extension of Mbara's argument of focusing on the instrument rather than the result it produces, to form a pattern. It is considered an appropriate musical instrument for the cultural activities, apart from *nyatiti* and other traditional music instruments because it is played in different traditional styles to go with the traditional dances suited for the day.

Fiddle (*orutu*) is a bowed string musical instrument used for playing traditional music. The rubbing of a single-stringed bow against a single string along the arm of the fiddle, and the alternate touch of the string by the four fingers cause a desired lyric. The fiddle as an instrument and the sound as the result enter into metonymic relation based on the instrument-result relationship—the basis of causal link, required in name fixing on an object. Kripke (1980), and Kitcher and Stanford (2000) have clear explanation on a name that is fixed; that a causal link coupled with association, and descriptive contents integrate with causal elements are requisite conditions in name fixing in a social context. This explains the metonymic use of *orutu* for musical sound. The instrument (*orutu*) is causally responsible for the outcome, and the knowledge of the instrument's function and its role in producing result.

On the other hand, de Mendoza Ibáñez (1997) who studied problems associated with interpreting metonymy, used a similar example; the string played superbly to mean music. Therefore, the speaker foregrounded *orutu* as the salient entity to refer to the backgrounded entity—the musical sound. Metonymy as possessed for possessor pattern: This metonymic pattern is based on the adjacency relation between alienable and inalienable objects (Mbara et al., 2026). The possessed is used as a reference point for the possessor.

An example is:

In e jaloch mar kis ni

'You are the winner of this key'

In a business promotion program during an exhibition of automobiles, a participant won a car as one of the prizes to be won. The promotion manager dangled a bunch of two keys at a participant in the gamble, as he was making the statement in the example. *Kis* is the metonymy in the statement which the speaker used in reference to the car and an implication of a win. This study uses this inanimate metonymic shift in its endeavors to demonstrate the existence of possessed for possessor pattern in Dholuo.

A key is an object designed to open and close a lock, and a car is a four-wheeled vehicle that moves independently, powered mechanically and mostly for personal transportation. The possessed-possessor as adjacency relation which is regarded as the causal link, and the descriptive contents of the two entities form the basis for fixing a reference on a referent. Kripke (1980) argues that by virtue of causal link between a name and an object, a name is fixed in a social context. Further, Kitcher and Stanford (2000), argue that descriptive elements integrate with causal elements for name grounding. Possessed is causally linked to its owner through ownership and habitual association. Further, reference is recovered through the knowledge of the social relationship between the object and the owner. Therefore, the metonymy—*kis* arose as a result of the foregoing arguments. Based on saliency principle—that an easily coded part is picked for use in context, the speaker picked *kis* to refer to the car.

Metonymy as characteristic for entity pattern: This type of metonymy relies on the type of contiguity called individuation, that is, it involves unbounded entities. One typical characteristic is selected as the basis for identifying the individual (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006).

An entity is defined through valued traits anchored on conceptual prominence (Panther and Radden, 1999). The relationship between terms might be descriptive; representing in virtue of truth conditions (de Mendoza Ibáñez, 1997). For example,

Nwang'wa e mbui

'Get us on the web'

The utterance came from a businessman dealing in woodwork commodities, in a conversation between him and a prospective customer during the second worst wave of the COVID19 in Kenya when human movement was restricted to minimize the spread of the deadly disease. Business transactions such as advertisement, payments were encouraged to be done online. *Mbui* is the metonymy in the utterance the speaker used to refer to internet. The use of the metonymy implies modernity brought about by the invention and use of computer in reaching out to the world. Further, the inanimate metonymy in Dholuo is used to ascertain the argument of Peirsman and Geeraerts (2006) that, one characteristic is selected as the basis of identifying the individual entity in a business context.

Mbui is a common heavy mesh of silky substance produced by spider purposefully to trap preys. It is a metonymic reference for the internet which is a set of computer networks that communicate using the internet protocol. The diagrammatic representation of the internet web is adjacent to the spider's web hence considered as a causal link between the two entities.

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Mbui as the metonymy, arises from a baptism event involving causal linkage and descriptive contents as explained by Kripke (1980) and Kitcher and Stanford (2000). They argue that a reference is grounded on an object by virtue of causal link by associating the name and the object, and descriptive contents integrate with causal elements in a social context. So, this metonymic construction satisfies the causal link and the descriptive contents attached to it to be baptized so. Therefore, the speaker picked *mbui* as the salient entity in context to mean internet based on the socially recognized attributes.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Metonymic expressions originate from embodied experience and subsequently undergo a process of conventionalization. Causal Theory of Reference, authored by Kripke (1980), and Refining Causal Theory of Reference for Natural Kind Terms, authored by Kitcher and Stanford (2000), are used in the analysis and understanding of the data. Reference is fixed on an object by virtue of causal-historical chain (Kripke, 1980). Additionally, causal and descriptive elements are integrated in reference grounding (Kitcher and Stanford, 2000). Over time, what began as an intuition, becomes lexically entrenched, with users employing the term without evoking its figurative background. The foregoing arguments form the basis of explaining the linguistic insight into the patterns of inanimate metonymies in Dholuo in the findings and discussion section. Therefore, as a pattern strategy, metonymy allows speakers to evoke one part to represent another concept for communicative purposes in socio-contextual situations.

5.2 Recommendations

This study recommends the use of inanimate metonymy in Dholuo not only in literary works to enrich expressions and linguistic ornamentation, but also in radio and television broadcasting, among others. This will create an enhancement in reservation and enrichment of Dholuo inanimate metonymy as a means of cultural preservation and eventual documentation for future academic reference.

Declaration of Interest

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