SEXUAL DYSPEHISMS AND EUPHEMISMS IN SOUTH NYANZA DHOLUO:
A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC APPROACH

BY

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DECLARATION

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

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ABSTRACT

The study examined sexual dysphemisms and euphemisms in the Kenyan Dholuo using Cognitive Linguistics which is based on the experiences of the world and the way people perceive and conceptualize them. This study had three objectives: to identify and explain the sex-related dysphemistic words and phrases in Dholuo; to account for the cognitive processes in the creation of sex-related euphemisms and to discuss the relationship between age and gender in the usage of euphemisms. To achieve the objectives of the study, this research used a descriptive design in which the researcher identified the sex-related dysphemisms by asking the respondents to name the male and female sexual organs, sex-related physiological processes associated with both males and females as well as to describe the instances in which sexual intercourse was performed in the Luo set-up. In addition, the respondents were asked to give the alternative terms that were used to refer to the sex-related dysphemistic terms mentioned. The researcher used both purposive and simple random techniques to obtain a sample of eighteen native Dholuo speakers for the study (nine were males and the other nine females). The researcher used an interview schedule and a tape recorder to collect data which was transcribed, categorized, quantified and then processed after which suitable methods of statistical representations were used to display the emergent patterns. The euphemisms collected were analyzed using Conceptual Integration Theory of Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1978). Those that were analyzed using the Conceptual Integration Theory were mapped into the different kinds of conceptual mappings also known as the mental spaces. The others were analyzed using the positive politeness strategy, initiated by the proponents of the Politeness Theory. The conceptual mappings were used to discuss the relationship between gender and age in the usage of euphemisms in Dholuo. The study found out that the Conceptual Integration Theory though more advanced than the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), was not able to analyze all the sex-related euphemisms collected in the study. Those that it could not cater for were euphemisms unique to the customs and beliefs of the Luo especially those that dealt with ritual sex in this community. From the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that an extensive study be carried out on Dholuo euphemisms in order to come up with a comprehensive data base from which a dictionary of Dholuo euphemisms which will act as a reference material can be drafted.