

Dholuo Translations and the Complexity of Ambiguity: A Case of Tone in Dholuo Verbal System

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Abstract

The translation of texts from the other languages of the world into Dholuo presents both translators and their audiences/readers with a myriad of complexities in the comprehension of the intended messages. Of notable causes are the availability of multiple options in the translation of particular lexical items in the language(s) of the source text(s) (ST) and those of the target text(s) (TT). This is, notably, caused by the elements of borrowing from the languages of the ST even in instances where there already exist well-grounded lexical items that can serve as equivalents in the languages of the TT. While translators may find this communicatively appropriate, the unconventionality of the usage of such terminologies may actually render the comprehension of the TT difficult to the audience, especially, considering the similarities possibly expressed between the expressions of the ST and those of the TT. The motivation behind such usages of terminologies may imply, though not always, the inadequacy in the TT language usage on the part of the translator and must be of great interest to explore especially to those in the practice and their audiences. The perceived difficulties are furthered by the autosegmental mounting of tone in Dholuo expressions without any orthographic equivalents, making the translators' work rather difficult and their audiences/readers, sometimes, struggling with the comprehension of the translated texts.

This study relies on the contrastive analysis of particular excerpts in English and their translations into Dholuo. It, particularly, explores the place of tone in Dholuo grammar.

Key Words: Tone, Text, Source Text, Target Text, Comprehension, Translation, Equivalents

1.1 Introduction

Translation is generally defined as the orthographical relaying of information and/or messages from one language (source) to another (target) with maximum accuracy. Though translation is considered to be a very significant factor in bilingual communication processes, seemingly exact equivalence is somehow impossible because in some instances no translator could provide a translation that is of perfect parallel to the source text (Okal, Indede & Muhochi, 2013). Regrettably, this results in the loss of information as translators are, sometimes, left struggling with a number of challenges including cultural differences between the source and the target languages. The relevance of tone in English - Dholuo translations cannot be overemphasized. Although not totally and adequately explored, the relevance of tone in Dholuo is, simply put, unavoidable. Tone, in its strict sense, remains a key contributor to meaning in so many other languages of the world and in different kinds of writing. Writing about literary translation, Landers (2001) notes that one of the most useful tools a translator can possess is the perception of tone. Assignment of high priority to tone enables the translator to avoid traps

brought about by loyalty to literal meaning that may sometimes, and it mostly does, distort the author's intent. Tone also helps in dealing with puns, indirect allusions, solecisms and slang. It also provides an important clue to register as well.

As a language, Dholuo belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family of languages. There are six branches of the Nilo-Saharan, Chari-Nile being one of them. The Eastern Sudanic, a branch of Chari-Nile is further subdivided into ten sub-groups. The Nilotic group of languages is one of the ten groups. The Nilotic languages are further classified into three main branches namely; the Southern Nilotic, the Eastern Nilotic and the Western Nilotic. Dholuo is classified as a member of the Western Nilotic. Some of her sister languages are Acholi, Lang'o, Alur, Padhola, Shilluk, Dinka, Nuer and Pãri.

The 1989 national census conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) indicates that Dholuo speakers were approximately 2.6 Million. Most of the Luos live in Nyanza Province, spread in Bondo, Siaya, Rarieda, Kisumu, Nyando, Homabay, Migori and Suba Districts, currently found in Homabay, Kisumu, Migori and Siaya counties. Some Luos are also found in Northern Tanzania. Others are spread all over Kenya, especially in urban areas.

A study of Dholuo dialects by Oduol (1990) reveals that there are two mutually intelligible dialects based on vocabulary and pronunciation. These are the Kisumu-South Nyanza (KSN) and Boro-Ukwala (BU) dialects. KSN is spoken in a wider area and is considered the standard form. It is used in print and is a medium of instruction i.e. in lower primary school, in broadcast media and in the Bible. BU is spoken in Yimbo location of Bondo District and in the larger Boro, Ukwala and Yala Divisions of Siaya District. It is considered less prestigious. Oduol (1990) also notes that the speakers of BU use KSN features depending on their degree of exposure to it and/or their willingness to accommodate it. She also notes that most speakers operate within a wide range of dialect continuum and flexibly choose from it in their use of the language.

This study uses data that is collected from the KSN dialect.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although translation is generally acknowledged as a conscious effort on the part of the translator to facilitate the communication between an author and his/her audience(s) with maximum efficiency and effectiveness, the translation of texts from the other languages of the world into Dholuo has consistently presented both translators and their audiences/readers with a myriad of challenges especially those related to comprehension. Generally, the availability of multiple options in the translation of particular lexical items in the language(s) of the source text(s) (ST) and those of the target text (TT) and, sometimes, lack of equivalents between the ST and TT are usually some of the major causes of these challenges. Elements of borrowing from the languages of the ST even in instances where there already exist well-grounded lexical items that can serve as equivalents in the languages of the TT further complicate this scenario. While translators may find this communicatively appropriate, the unconventionality of the usage of such terminologies sometimes renders the comprehension of the TT difficult to the audience. Though not always, motivation behind such usage of terminologies may imply the inadequacy in the TT language usage on the part of the translator and must be of great interest to explore especially to those in the practice and their audiences. The perceived difficulties are furthered by the autosegmental mounting of tone

in Dholuo expressions, without any orthographic equivalents, making the translators' work rather difficult and their audiences/readers, sometimes, struggling with the comprehension of the translated texts. It is against this background that this study is motivated with the main concern of testing the relevance of tone in Dholuo translations so as to suggest ways in which communication can be effectively facilitated between translators and their audiences with regard to the application of tone in translation.

This study sets out to determine the functions and relevance of tone in translation in Dholuo verbal system. Clark and Yallop (1990) posit that speakers of tone languages can be expected to regard tone as a very significant part of the syllable, morpheme or word. Further, Rensch (1991) notes that tone phonemes are subject to distributional limitations and to morphophonemic variations occurring when morphemes combine just like any other phoneme, and that there is a very strong tendency for tones to change in context. Odero (2008) observes that in Dholuo grammar, tone differences in minimal pairs actually result in grammatical distinctions, for example,

- (1) (a) /kɔðɔ/ H,H (noun) thorn
L, L (verb) to blow, e.g. fire.
- (b) /lɛp/ H (noun) heart burn
L (verb) to melt

This study shall therefore strive to establish if there is an effect in comprehension of translated work as shown in the above examples. The study relies on the contrastive analysis of particular excerpts in English and their translations into Dholuo. It, particularly, emphasizes the place of tone in Dholuo grammar and specifically in Dholuo translations.

1.3 Research Questions

Basically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the effects in the comprehension of translated English verbs and their translations into Dholuo?
2. Is the orthographic representation of tone in Dholuo adequate for accurate translation exercises? If yes, how? If no, what next? (Is the orthographic representation in Dholuo adequate for accurate translation exercises? If yes, how? If no, what next?)

1.4 Scope

Although the relevance of tone in translation in Dholuo, and in other languages of the world, may be far reaching, this study was restricted to the relevance of tone in the determination of the accuracy of messages in Dholuo translations. It only addresses the orthographic representation of Dholuo and further, provides a possible roadmap that will facilitate the delivery of accurate information in translation works from English into Dholuo. English has been used as the source language of the texts translated into Dholuo.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study employs an eclectic approach. It uses the elements of the Translation Theory of translation to unearth the motivation of the translators as they undertake their translation tasks. It also employs the Autosegmental phonology as a theoretical approach to the understanding of the place of tone in Dholuo translations.

1.5.1 The Translation Theory

This study employs the theoretical approach of Communicative and Semantic Translation developed by Newmark (1981) as subcomponents of the Translation theory. Newmark (1981) asserts that talking of a translation theory is, actually, a misnomer and, instead, prefers to refer to such a “theory” as a body of knowledge about the process of translation. This study applies this approach as a theory to the extent that it provides the basis and terminology of analysis to the data used in it. In this study, Newmark’s approaches are observed to have both descriptive and explanatory adequacy of any linguistic theory. Indeed, it is important to note that Newmark, himself, does not actually believe that there can ever be a universal theory on the subject of translation and observes that any attempts to develop theories around translation have only ended up offering possible processes of translation (Warambo & Odero, 2015). In trying to bridge the gap that existed as scholars argued about where the emphasis should fall in a theory of translation between the target language and the source language, Newmark ended up with the communicative and semantic approaches to translation.

This research was guided by the general Translation Theory which gives strategies that can be used to translate a variety of texts. It provides a style with rules, pillars, variables of translation, analysis and a background on how to solve translation problems (Okal et al., 2013). The theory indicates the relationship between the thought, meaning and language in translation. Generally, it considers four things: The intention of the text; the purpose/intention of the translator (whether the translator wants to show original text as it is in the translation to affect the reader or add his/her feelings and words which may not agree with those of the original text; the reader and the layout or setting of the text concerned; and the quality of writing and the authority of the original text.

Okal et al. (2013) further posit that there are various approaches of translation theory which are caused by stylistic forms, author’s intent, language diversity, different cultures of the languages involved, interpersonal communication, changes as witnessed in literary fashion, distinct contents and also circumstances involved. Other factors that are challenges to the translation theory are syntactic variations of languages, variations in the morphology of words and the assumed total numbers of the lexicon of the languages under study. Okal et al. (2013) further posit that the Translation theory involves perspectives or sub theories namely the philological, linguistic, communicative and sociosemiotic. The philological perspective considers translation that is faithful in context, language form and the style typically applicable in the Bible and constitutional translations. In such translations, the fidelity to the original text is a key concern. The linguistic perspective of the Translation theory involves translation by studying issues of the distinctive linguistic features of both SL and the TL whereas the communicative perspective relies generally on the aspects of communication theory such as sender, message, receiver, noise, feedback, medium and the milieu (Okal et al., 2013). The sociosemiotic perspective, on the other hand, involves both the translation of words and the interpretation of paralinguistic features.

Okal et al. (2013), however, observe that the four perspectives can be merged into two broad approaches referred to as the communicative and the semantic approaches with the communicative approach being primarily concerned with the use of a language in such a way that communicative meaning in a context is realized both in the monolingual and bilingual communication processes. In the communicative approach, the translator is both an active communicator and interpreter who takes into consideration both the normal monolingual and bilingual communication processes. Newmark (1981) observes that the communicative translation approach primarily

addresses the second reader who, arguably, does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities and would expect generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary. Communicative translation therefore produces on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the source text. On the contrary, semantic translation primarily renders as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the TL allow the contextual meaning of the ST. This kind of translation, however, remains within the original culture and assists the reader only in its connotations if they constitute the essential human (non-ethnic) message of the text (Warambo & Otero, 2015). One basic feature between these two coexisting approaches is that, where there is a conflict, the communicative approach must emphasize the “force” rather than the content of the message as exemplified below.

‘Malaria kills’ can be translated into Dholuo as;

- (2) (i) Maleria neko. “Malaria kills.” (Communicative)
- (ii) Maleria en tuo ma neko. “Malaria is a disease that kills.” (Semantic)

From the examples above, it can be noted that example (i) is more direct than (ii). The communicative translation in (i) is more effective and direct, compared to the semantic translation in (ii) which is considered to be more informative but less effective on the audience. The explanation here is that the communicative translation is simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, and conforming to a particular register and it tends to under-translate (Warambo & Otero, 2015). The provided semantic translation in (ii), however, is more complex and more detailed but pursues the thought process rather than the intention of the text. It tends to over-translate and, consequently, provides more information than the ST.

Semantic translation is primarily concerned with language rules so as to give the true meaning in a given context (Okal et al., 2013). The general translation theory focusing on semantic translation involves a variety of techniques namely: the adaptation technique, the word for word, literal, free, pragmatic, aesthetic, ethnographic, faithful, semantic, idiomatic and information translation among others (Okal et al., 2013). Word for word translation involves giving a one to one provision of an equivalent of the SL in the TL by referring to each and every word. Literal translation includes word for word translation but at the same time considering structural composition of the sentences in both languages. Free translation occurs when a translator tends to avoid the linguistic structural composition of the SL and instead uses other structures in the TL. Pragmatic translation involves giving meaning of the SL in the TL by considering context to simplify the intended meaning. Aesthetic translation is generally involved in the literary works whereby structure and form of the text in the SL is followed so as to uphold the stylistic appearance of the text in the TL (Ibid).

Newmark (1991) observes that a Semantic translation differs in a number of ways from the communicative translation. First, a semantic translation is generally out of time and space where a communicative translation is closely attached to its context. The semantic translation, therefore, preserves the author’s idiolect, peculiar form of expression in preference to the spirit of the TL (Warambo & Otero, 2015). In the words of Newmark (1981), a semantic translation is wide and universal.

1.5.2 Autosegmental Phonology (AP)

According to Goldsmith (1979)¹, the Autosegmental Phonology (AP) approach arose out of “certain inadequacies that were brought to light explicitly and implicitly by William’s and Leben’s work. The main glaring problem was the nature of contour-toned vowels.” To Goldsmith, it was important to explain how a single segment bears two tonal specifications in sequence. Another problem was that of tone stability, i.e. how tones remain even when the TBU e.g. syllable has been deleted. There was also a necessity to explain tonal assimilation, i.e. “it seemed there was a left-to-right ordering inside segments” (ibid: 205).

The major weaknesses of linear model and Sound Pattern of English (SPE), was that in generative phonology, a set of rules is used in the underlying forms to give the surface phonetic representation (Clark & Yallop, 1995)². Both underlying and the surface forms were represented in the features. The rules therefore, and often, changed the feature specifications.

Phonological representations consisted of segmental and suprasegmental representations. Segmental representations were assumed to be made up of consonants and vowels, together with syllables, morphemes, and word and phrase boundaries. In SPE, it was assumed that tone, stress, and vowel harmony were super-imposed on the segmental layer. Both segmental and suprasegmental elements were taken, for granted, as existing in a row of one after the other. Linguists asked if the tonal properties such as +/- High could be regarded as properties of vowels, or as different segment representation from vowels; and if it was right to assume, as postulated by SPE, that phonological representations are linear, with segments, some bearing suprasegmental properties, arranged in a neat sequence (Katamba, 1989).

In his dissertation titled ‘Autosegmental Phonology’ to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1976, Goldsmith proposed some answers. His concern was with the segmental organization, particularly the phenomena that had evaded segmental classification. In his thesis, he questioned the validity of geometry of phonetic representation (the absolute slicing hypothesis). His stand was that: “Speech, observed as articulatory activity, consists of gestures-such as tongue movement, lip movement and laryngeal activity-which are coordinated, but which by no means start and finish all at the same instant,” (Clark & Yallop, 1995:406). In other words, the division of the speech continuum into segments differs from one language to another. For example, even though place and manner of articulation are treated as segmental properties of some specific consonants, some languages may have these properties extend over several segments. For instance, nasalization is a property of the nasal consonants only, but in some languages, it can be a property of a syllable, or even a word.

Goldsmith mainly claims that various articulatory parameters, such as nasalization, voicing and tone are autonomous – and their resultant articulations are in principle independent hence Autosegmental Phonology. “The theory is called Autosegmental since it regards tones as autonomous segments,” (Hulst & Smith 1982:8; also see Gussenhoven, 2004; and Gussenhoven & Jacobs, 1998).

¹ Goldsmith is quoted from Dinnsen, D.A.(Ed.) 1979:204-205 in a chapter written by Goldsmith titled: “The Aims of Autosegmental Phonology”

² See also Gussenhoven, 2004, Hulst & Smith, 1982 and Gussenhoven & Jacobs, 1998

In summary, AP refutes the claim that segments are unordered sets of specified features. Rather, its major claim is that features such as tone should be allowed to spread over domains of varying sizes e.g. parts of a syllable, whole syllables, feet etc. Each feature is also placed on its own level of representation. For that reason, the scope of a specified feature can occur in more than one segment.

Goldsmith outlines two main factors that distinguish autosegmental phonology thus:

1. It marks “the development of multi-linear phonological analysis in which different features may be placed on separate tiers and which the various tiers are organized by “association” lines and well-formed conditions.
2. Analysis of phonological phonemes less in terms of feature changing rules as such, and more in terms of rules that delete and re-organize the various autosegments, through the re-adjustment of the association lines.” (Dinnsen, 1979:202).

As stated by Katamba (1989), this theory was designed to deal with tonal phenomenon such as we have in Dholuo.

1.5.2.1 Autosegmental Representation

According to Goldsmith (1990), and as stated above, autosegmental representation has two or more parallel tiers of phonological segments, for instance, it consists of a string of segments. The segment on each tier differ with regard to what features are specified in them. In Dholuo, for instance, we can have a tier of tones only, and on each tonal tier each segment is specified for a tone and for nothing else (ibid: 8). Here is an example.

(3) Phonemic tier	ɔ	s	ɔ	g	ɔ
C.V tier	v	c	v	c	v
Tonal tier	L	L	L	L	L

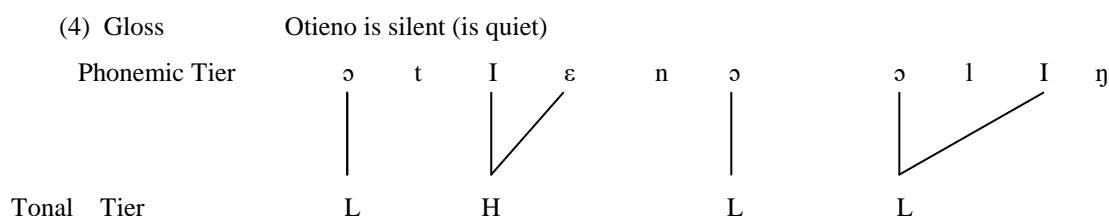
Gloss: weaver bird. (Odero, 2008:9)

We can see that features such as +/- High are also considered as segments. Segments on separate tiers are joined by association lines. The association lines allow for the fact that there may not be always a neat one-to-one mapping between tiers as was suggested by SPE (early structuralists). A set of tiers and association lines make a chart.

Phonetically, association lines represent a co-registration, that is to say, that the articulation of a sound such as /ɔ/ above is co-registered with a feature, for example, Low.

1.5.2.2 Principles of Autosegmental Phonology

Two principles of Autosegmental Phonology are discussed by Goldsmith, namely Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP) and Left-to-Right Mapping Principle. The OCP states that identical adjacent autosegments should have the same value unless they are separated by word boundary. For example, a sequence of similar tones will not be allowed to exist; they shall be collapsed. Collapsing identical autosegments is important because it reduces the complexity of representation as shown below.



(Odero, 2008:10)

The Left-to-Right Mapping principle is important because it takes care of the short vowels and contour tones. Mapping principle uses lines. To ensure that there is a well formed relation between the tonal tier and TBUs, well formedness conditions (WFC) are proposed as follows:

1. All TBUs are associated to at least one tone.
2. All tones are associated to at least one TBU
3. Association proceeds one-to-one, left to right.
4. Association lines do not cross i.e. No X-ing.

(Yip 2002:76)

Goldsmith (1990:11ff) explains three basic association conventions (ACs) i.e. explaining how the relationship between tonal tier and TBUs comes into being.

- a. Mapping: Association lines are inserted between tones and TBUs in one-to-one fashion from left to right.
- b. Dumping: Left over tones are linked to the last vowel to the right.
- c. Spreading: All left over vowels are linked to the last tone to the right.

It is stated that vowels and tones associate by means of association conventions (ibid: 15).

1.6 Literature Review

The concept of equivalence seems to have been a major concern to the scholars in the subject of translation in the 20th and 21st centuries. In handling it, Jakobson (1959), in what may appear as a misnomer, introduced the concept of 'equivalence in difference'. In reference to this, he handled three kinds of translation which were not

the focus of this study. It is worth noting, however, that Jakobson (*ibid*) agrees that there is no full equivalence between code units in interlingual translation. That is why this study alludes to this particular work when handling translation into Dholuo with a particular focus on tone as an autosegmental feature that affects meaning. We agree with his remark that given the fact that languages differ in grammatical units, it does not therefore mean that translation across languages is impossible. He further proposes ways of dealing with this lack of equivalence as: loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and circumlocutions.

Nida is one of the credited scholars in the area of translation and the concept of equivalence. Nida (1982) talks extensively on two different types of equivalence – “the formal equivalence” which was later changed to “formal correspondence”; and “dynamic equivalence”. Although the concept of equivalence is not the major concern of this study, it cannot be wished away. Nida distinguishes these two types of equivalence by observing that formal equivalence refers to finding reasonably equivalent words and phrases while following the forms of the source as closely as possible. Nida’s view here seems to suggest some sort of slavery to the ST, although he seems to favor dynamic equivalence due to contextual issues between the ST and the TT.

On the other hand, Catford (1965), cited in Warambo and Odero (2015), takes a different approach to translation. He discusses four different shifts in translation. To him, these are departures from the formal translation. These shifts are; ‘Structure-shifts’, which involve a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT; ‘Class-shifts’, when an SL item is translated with a TL item which belongs to, what he calls, a different grammatical class (although we prefer to refer to them as parts of speech), i.e. a verb may be translated with a noun; ‘Unit-shifts’, which involve changes in rank; ‘Intra-system shifts’, which occur when the SL and the TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system, for example when the SL singular becomes a TL plural. In a translation process, indeed such shifts may be inevitable. This theory has been adversely criticized. Snell-Hornby (1988) challenges Catford's definition of textual equivalence calling it ‘circular’ and, on bilingual formats, inadequate and simplistic in nature. Although the approaches advanced by Newmark upon which our analysis of data is based can be loosely referred to have borrowed from various branches of linguistics, our treatment of data is different. Cartford’s overreliance on linguistics leaves out very important aspects of translation such as culture and paralinguistic features.

Odero (2008) analyzes the grammatical tones in Dholuo using Goldsmith’s Autosegmental Phonology theory. He concludes that: tone is a grammatical feature in Dholuo without which the grammar of Dholuo would be inadequate; and that Dholuo uses tone as a morpheme for both verbal inflection and noun declension. Significantly, he notes that different tonal patterns are assigned to different types of word and sentences in Dholuo. He summarizes that the function of tone in Dholuo is both lexical and grammatical. Under grammatical function of tone, he analyzed tonal patterns in passive (antipassive) constructions, use of tone in tense, aspect and sentences (imperative, interrogative and declarative). He shows that major grammatical functions of tone are: to distinguish grammatical categories (mark word typology) and participate in morphotonemic alternations.

Odero's work offers this study a reference on function of tones in Dholuo. This study also uses data e.g. words and sentences used by Odero (2008) within the framework of autosegmental phonology.

1.7 Methodology

This research relied on secondary data. It used purposive data sampling techniques. Particular texts that were initially presented in English and later translated into Dholuo were identified on purpose and used. Specifically, excerpts from the Bible, King James Version, in English and Muma Maler³ were identified and were put in bilingual format and comparisons done against the premises of semantic and communicative approaches to translation with a close consideration of the available tonal variations in the Dholuo translations that were achieved. The chosen text had been translated, edited and proofread and has been in use in Kenya for years. The texts are, therefore, final and have been published and even republished in newer editions. The selected bilingual texts were analyzed by the researcher and further expertise input sought from other professionals in both linguistics and translation. Areas of possible ambiguities and difficulty in relation to tone are identified. On the basis of these observations, an analysis was further made.

1.8 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

We are going to look at the effect of tone in Dholuo sentences. Since Dholuo sentences are made up of obligatory subject and verb, our focus will be on tonal patterns of verbs in sentences. The objective of this study is to analyze Dholuo use of tone as a morpheme for verbal inflection and highlight areas of possible ambiguities and difficulty in relation to tone identified.

1.8.1 Dholuo Verbs

Okoth (1986) sets two criteria for determining verbs in Dholuo. The first is the general idea that cognitively, verbs function as symbols for events, state of affairs, and indicate speakers' intention and attitude. The second criterion is based on Dholuo morphology: verbs in Dholuo typically mark different types of aspects (see Okoth, 1986, Stafford, 1967). Different aspects in Dholuo can be distinguished by either use of tone or using segments. Some examples of common verbs include:

(6) Verb	Gloss
<i>go</i>	- beat
<i>dhi</i>	- go
<i>bi</i>	- come
<i>dar</i>	- leave
<i>chamo</i>	- eating

1.8.2 Dholuo Sentences

Structurally, Dholuo basic sentence structure is made up of a subject, verb and object (SVO). Nouns and pronouns majorly function as subject and object. Sentences are used to perform different communicative functions, such as making an assertion, giving commands and seeking permission. There are, therefore, different types of sentences in Dholuo.

³Holy Bible: This is the translated and revised Bible in Dholuo published in 1976.

1.8.3 Dholuo Tonal Inventory

Odero (2008) notes that Dholuo has the following basic tones: Low (L) which is the lowest possible tone found in Dholuo; High (H) which is the highest possible tone; Down Stepped High (!H) which involves the lowering of the second of two high-tone syllables.

There are also three contour tones namely: Low-Rising (begins with a low tone and ends with a high one); High-Falling (starts with a high tone and ends with a low one); and High Hanging: (H!H) (is as a result of the down stepped-high tone. The high- hanging tone is a three- level contour where although the tone remains high, there is a drop to a low tone and then rise again. However, the drop to low does not get to low that would be considered a low tone.

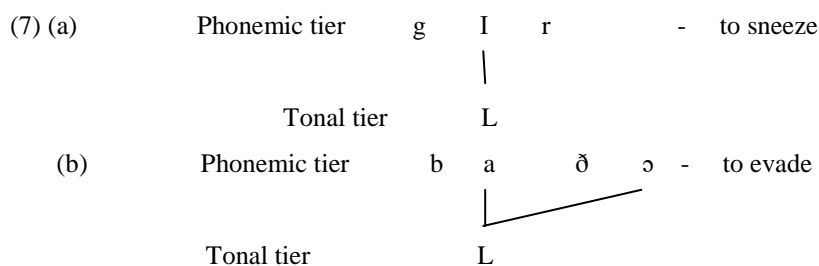
As argued by Tucker (1994), we can find out the basic tone pattern of a word by studying the word in many contexts as well as in isolation. The isolated form is, according to Tucker, the best form. The discussion that follows shows tonal analysis of verbs in isolation.

1.8.4 Dholuo Verb Tonal Patterns

Odero (2008) identified three major underlying tonal patterns in Dholuo verbs as: L, H, \$!H and LH as shown in the examples below:

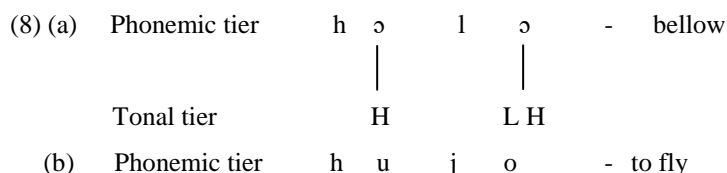
Type I

Type one is typically Low tone verbs. The entire word, whether monosyllabic or bisyllabic, has a low tone. The following are some examples.



Type II

It is composed of High tone followed by Down-stepped high.



Type III

These are basically commands. They are like a whole sentence though the subject is missing.

Table 1: Table showing Dholuo Tenses

Tense	Tone description	Sub-tense	Time frame
{á}	H	General past	Past of today
{nê}	HL	Recent past	Recently/past of today
{né}	H	Remote past	Long ago/non-definable past time.
{nô}	HL	Past of yesterday	Yesterday
{nó cá}	H\$!H	Past of the day before yesterday	Recent past day
{jândè}	HL\$ L	Recent past	Past of a few days ago
{ní}	H	Future	Indefinite time in future.

(Adapted from Odera, 2008:86)

From the foregoing table 1, we can see that the tone marking tense is underlying high on the first syllable. All the particles have an initial high tone. Where the high tone is followed by low i.e. the contoured tones **nê**, **nô** and **jânde**, the effect of syllable weight is envisaged. Our argument is that the vowel in these particles favour a high tone output, but since the syllable is heavy; the floating low tone assimilates the initial high tone. This is clearly seen in the following summary:

- (11) (i) **nê** is a contracted form of **néndè**. Can also be contracted further to **â**
- (ii) **nô** is a contracted form of **nórò**
- (iii) **jânde** has a final low syllable

Notice that the second syllable of (i) and (ii) are down-stepped high (LH) and that the final syllable in (iii) is Low (L). In the case of (i) and (ii), when the last syllable is deleted, the tone remains due to tone stability. The initial syllable is then prolonged to compensate for the lost syllable, and since what follows is a sequence of LH, only the inherent low tone is carried to the first syllable. The initial syllable cannot carry three tonal sequences HLH because these adverbial particles are not characteristically high hanging. High hanging syllables have the tonal sequence HLH, and to distinguish these syllables from the high hanging⁵ tones, there must be a dissimilation. Dissimilation is a natural phonological process. In (iii) however, the final low syllable assimilates the initial high (See Hyman 1975:221ff).

Significantly, Odera (2008) concludes that the tone in the verb is consistently high in marking the imperfect aspect; the tone in the perfect aspect is generally low. Example:

- (12) (i) ó tedó réc - She/he is cooking fish. (Imperfect)
- (ii) gweno okok - The cock has crowed. (Perfect)

⁵ Notice also that high hanging tones were only found with the verbs – not prefixes of tense.

It should be noted that the pronominal subject prefixes are inherently high tone bearers. In the perfect aspect however, they are assimilated to low by the low tone that marks the perfect aspect.

This study is in agreement with Tucker (1994) that the tense particles can be used with the aspect. With verb conjugation, tonal patterns will vary considerably. For illustrations, we shall consider sentences in (13) (14) and (15), all taken from *Muma Maler* (the Dholuo Bible). For ease of identification, we have highlighted the verbs in bold and marched the verbs in ST and those in TT using numbers.

(13) (a) ST: Mathew 10:16 - Behold, I **send** (1)**you**⁶ forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Therefore be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

TT: *Mathayo 10:16 - Winjuru! Aorou* (2) *mana ka rombe madhi* (?) *e dier ondiegi.*

Emomiyo beduru mariek ka thuol, kendo beduru mamuol ka akuru.

(13) (b) i) Phoneme Tier: **a o r o u** ... **ma ð i** - I have sent you ... who are going...



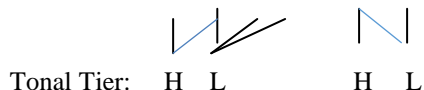
(ii) Phoneme Tier: **a o r o u**...**ma ð i** - I'm sending you (now) ... who are going...



(iii) Phoneme Tier: **a r o u**... **ma ð i** -I sent you (earlier in the day)... who were going...



(iv) Phoneme Tier: **a o r o u**... **ma ð i** - I was sending you (moments ago)...who were going...



The charts above give different tonal representations resulting in different meanings due to variation in tense and aspect. In (13)(b)(i), the L ... L gives us perfect aspect; (b) (ii) H ... H carries the imperfect aspect; (b) (iii) HL H ... HLH carries past tense; and (b) (iv) HL L (in the remaining syllables) ... HL L gives us the past continuous tense. These four examples adequately give us the picture of the charts we can get in other sentences. For economy of analysis, we shall henceforth use tonal diacritic marks.

(14) (a) ST: Mathew 11:10 - For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

⁶ We have marked the object pronoun “you” here because it is suffixed on the verb in TT using the object pronominal “U”. Notice also that some verbs in TT like “madhi” have no equivalents in ST hence the mark (?).

TT: *Mathayo 11:10 - Eri aoro jaotena otel nyimi, mondo olosni yo.*

- (14) (b) (i). **a o r o ... ɔ l ɔ s n i ...** - I have sent ... to make for you ... (perfect aspect)
(ii). **á ó r ó ... ó l ó s n í ...** - I am sending (now) ... to make for you... (Imperfect aspect)
(iii). **â ó r ó ... ô l ó s n í ...** - I sent (earlier on in the day) ... so that they could make
you ... (past tense)
(iv). **â o r o ... ô l o s n i ...** - I was sending (moments ago) ... so that they could make
you... (past continuous)

- (15) (a) ST: Acts 14:24-26: And after they **had passed (1)** throughout Pisidia, they **came (2)** to Pamphylia. And when they **had preached(3)** the word in Perga, they **went (4)** down into Attalia: And thence **sailed (5)** to Antioch, from whence they **had been recommended(6)** to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

TT:Tich Joote 14:24-27: *Bang' mano ne giwuotho (1)epiny Pisidia duto ka gilando (?)Wach Maber, mi gichopo (2)Pamfulia. Eka ne gilando (3) Wach ..., bang'e ne Gidhi(4)Atalia, kendo kane gia (?)kuno, to ne gikwang' (5) mi gidok (?) ..., kuma ne oseketgie (6)... giti tich mane koro gisetieko.*

- (15) (b) (i). ... **nêg i w u o o o ... kâl a n d o... nêg i l a n d o ... nêg i ð i ... k â n e**
g i a ... nêg i k w a ŋ m î g i d o k ... nê o s e k e t g i e ... (Earlier on in the day/ in the recent past, they walked ... when they preached ... they preached ... they went ... when they left ... they sailed and they went back ... they had been put (recommended)
(ii). ...**nê g í w ú ó ó ó ... k á l á n d ó ...nê g í l á n d ó ... nê g í ð í ...k á n e g í á**
...nê g í k w á ŋ m í g í d ó k ...nê ó s é k é t g í é... (... long time ago/ in the remote past/ in those days, they walked ... when they preached/when they were preaching ... they preached... they went ... when they left ... they sailed and went back ... they had been put/ recommended)

The data above present orthographical representation of sentences in both ST and TT in part (a). Part (b) of each data presents an analysis of tone and the resultant output of meaning. Examples (13) and (14) have a similar case of tense and aspect marking and meaning. Generally, we can clearly see that verb conjugation in Dholuo is entirely a tone affair. With every different tonal assignment on the verb comes a different meaning of the sentence. In looking at (13) (b) for instance, the meaning we get (i) is that in the present time that Jesus is talking, He has completed sending His disciples. We get to understand that He is now giving them a warning (a caution) that they may not take their work lightly, but rather be motivated and psychologically prepared for the challenging task ahead; that they may get to know their audience beforehand and be adequately equipped to handle them when they meet them. Sentence (ii) gives us the meaning that Jesus is still giving His disciples instructions – the sending is not yet completed- but He is giving them a warning concerning the weight of the task in respect to what kind of message and audience the disciples are going to deliver and get respectively. The

main differences between (i) and (ii) can be understood in two ways: one, that in (i), Jesus is giving His final remarks, while in (ii) He is possibly giving opening remarks; and two, that in (i) the content of the message has been given to the disciples while in (ii) the content of the message is yet to be given.

Sentences (iii) and (iv) illustrate the tone of the past tense in Dholuo. The basic understanding is that the sending was done and finished in the past time. Specifically, (iii) carries the meaning that the disciples have come back from the mission (errand) that they were sent on earlier on in the day, and that they are presently sharing their experiences. They have reported back to Jesus about the unpleasant encounter with their audience, and Jesus now let them know the nature of the task He gave them and the reason why He had given them such a task, that is - that their knowledge and character may grow; that they ought to have been “wise as the serpents, and harmless as doves.”

Sentence (iv) is ambiguous. First, we get the meaning that the disciples did not go for the mission because Jesus did not finish giving them instructions since there was another activity going on at the time that Jesus was giving them instructions (and which interfered with Jesus’ speech at that point in time). Jesus now resumes, and the meaning contained in the phrase “As I was saying/ telling you ...” is envisaged. Second, we get meaning that the disciples did not do what they were instructed to do; maybe they got scared by the reception; maybe they did not deliver the message as was expected. Jesus now tells them that He knows the disciples have not done the right thing.

The discussion on (13) above show that the meaning in Dholuo translated work (such as the Biblical ones) will vary according to the tonal assignment that the reader will give each verbal element in any given sentence. Often, most of the meanings, which are grammatically correct, do not carry the same message as is in ST. In (13) above, for instance, the verb in the ST is in simple present tense. The meaning we get from “I send you” is that Jesus has done the sending for some time now, and that He will continue to do so; that it is a habit or routine, like a duty roster. The same analysis can be made of (14).

In (15) we present a case of longer text. Our focus is also on the lexical (and morphological) tense marking. We argue that tone operates above the lexical tense markers to complete meaning; that lexical items alone would not be adequate to mark tense. As shown in table (1), Dholuo tense marker [ne] is assigned tone as **nê** and **né** to mark recent past and remote past respectively. The meaning we get in (15) (b) (i) is that earlier on in the day, the apostles **walked** throughout Pisidia, and that at that time they **came** to Pamphylia; and that when they **had preached** the word in Perga, they **went** down into Attalia: And thence **sailed** to Antioch, from whence they **had been recommended** (earlier on in the day) to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. Emphasis is on the time when all these activities took place – earlier on in the day. The case in (15) (b) (ii) gives us the meaning that all these activities were carried out in the remote past/ long time ago. Significantly, we notice that ST is in the past perfect tense while the TT (specifically (b) (ii)) is in the simple past tense.

Table (1) also shows that the future tense is formed by adding a prefix [ní] to the subjunctive. It can also be marked by the auxiliary [bíró]. Both will refer to indefinite time in the future, for example.

- (16) (i) jésúbíró dúogo - Jesus will come back
(ii) jésúnódúogí

According to Odero (2008), the future tense can occur with verbs, objects, adjectives and pronominal complements. He also points out that the future tense is inherently high and that it can be co-joined with the pronouns and that the future tense tone is always followed by a rising-fall tone in the verb. However, when the tense is followed by a different word, for example an adverb, the subsequent tone changes i.e. to high. He argues that the inherent high tone of the tense spreads to the verb and that therefore, any other tone following the future tense marker will not give us a future tense. Now let us consider the following:

(18) (a) ST: Luke 4:23 And he said unto them, **Ye will** surely **say (1)** unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

TT: Luka4:23 .Nowachoneginiya, “Ang’eyoni **ubirogoyona ngero (1)** ni, ‘In jathieth, thiedhri ane iwuon.’ To **bendeubirowachona (?)**ni, ‘Wasewinjo gik mane itimo Kapernaum, to koro timgiane e pinyu ka!’ ”

(18) (b) (i). ... **û b i r o g o j o n a ... û b i r o w a c o n a...**” - you came (earlier on in the day)

to challenge me ... you came (earlier on in the day) to tell me ...”

(ii). ...**û b i r o g o j o n a ... û b i r o w a c o n a...**” - you were going to challenge

me (just as you have done now) ... you were going to tell me (just as you have done now) ...”

(iii). ...**û b i r ó g ó j ó n á ... ú b i r ó w á c ó n á...**” – you are going to challenge me

(in future) ... you are going to tell me (in future) ...”

The problem with the orthographic word **biro** is that it operates both as a verb and as a lexical future tense marker. As a verb, it conjugates for tense and aspect as shown in (18) (b) (i) and (ii). As a future tense marker, it has an underlying high tone as shown in (iii). Therefore, any of the three illustrations would be grammatically correct whereas the intended meaning is represented in (iii) only.

1.9 Conclusion

The data analysed in this study and the discussions that have been held herein indicate that the importance of tone in Dholuo cannot be overemphasized. Dholuo, generally, is a tonal language and tone contributes greatly in the delivery of the intended meanings in Dholuo expressions. It has also been noted that the variation of tones in an orthographic unit resulted in very notable semantic variations. The fact that tone is not orthographically represented in Dholuo was actually observed to lead to multiple cases of miscommunication due to the misplacement of certain tones where they ought not to appear. This study, therefore, strongly recommends the orthographic representation of tone in Dholuo as a measure to ensuring accurate communication in Dholuo verbal discourse.

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