ABSTRACT

Anaphors refer to expressions that are not capable of independent reference or meaning and cannot be used deictically. The Binding theory (BT), a sub-theory of the Government and Binding (GB) theory states that Condition A requires that an anaphor should find an antecedent in a local domain, while Condition B requires that a pronominal should be free within the same clause. Long-distance anaphors (LDAs) are found outside the local domain, where they are ambiguous and therefore, difficult to interpret. This study undertook a research into Dholuo syntactic structure with a view to examining the conditions which result in the ambivalence of LDAs and how to attain their interpretation. The study was guided by the following objectives: first, to analyze the syntactic domains in which LDAs occur in Dholuo; second, to determine the syntactic domains in which LDAs are ambiguous in Dholuo; and finally, to discuss the strategies which aid in the unambiguous interpretation of Dholuo LDAs. Ambiguity distorts meaning. It is therefore in this regard that this study set out to find out more on how the ambiguous anaphors could be interpreted. The study was guided by the Government and Binding Theory (GB). The analysis employed four modules of the GB Theory: the Government theory, the Binding theory, the Control theory and the Case theory. The study employed an analytic study design whereby eighty (80) sentences were collected from ten native speakers of Dholuo. Purposive and snow ball sampling techniques were used in the study. The respondents were informed the purpose of the research so as to gain trust from the researcher. A standard questionnaire was also used for data collection. The collected data was analyzed using content analysis. It was established that LDAs in Dholuo occur in clauses embedded to the matrix clause. The clauses in which the LDAs occur in Dholuo included the non-finite clause, the subjunctive clause, the adjunct clause, the causative clause, the tensed clausal complement, the applicative clause, the small clause, the relative clause, the adverbial clause and the locative prepositional clause. The study however noted that it was in the same clauses that the LDAs are ambiguous. The strategies used for interpreting ambiguous LDAs in Dholuo included: obligatory co-reference, Control theory, subject-orientation, emphatic pronoun and R-expression. A successful completion of this study would make a significant contribution by providing new insights into the study of long-distance anaphor of other Nilotic languages. The data provided would be important for further linguistic inquiry into Dholuo and other African languages.