

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS

**THE NATURE OF HOMONYMOUS AND POLYSEMOUS RELATIONS IN
EKEGUSII**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts of Kenyatta University.**

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DECLARATION

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

Solomon Onchoke Aunga

Signature.....  Date .. 13/10/2011

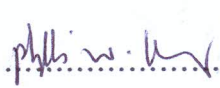
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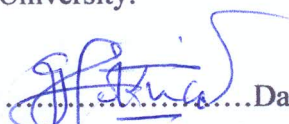
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze homonymous and polysemous sense relations in Ekegusii. The two sense relations are problematic and confusing as seen from the studies conducted in the Indo-European family of languages like English. The study is based on the premise that the two sense relations are also problematic in Ekegusii, an African Bantu language spoken in Kenya. The research objectives are: to identify and explain Ekegusii words that have more than one meaning; to determine the extent to which polysemous words can be distinguished from homonymous ones in Ekegusii and lastly, to establish the extent to which polysemy and homonymy in Ekegusii can be accounted for within the Sense Relations Theory. The literature review provides insights from related studies on meaning, sense relations and in particular on homonymy and polysemy. The Sense Relations Theory forms the theoretical framework used to account for the data. In methodology, the study adopted a qualitative research design which outlines how the research was conducted. The study was carried out in Nyamira County in Kenya where there are Ekegusii native speakers. An interview schedule was used to collect information from 20 elderly native Ekegusii speakers of between 50 and 70 years of age who were chosen using judgemental sampling technique. Their intuitions about the relatedness or otherwise of words with more than one meaning were captured and analyzed within the Sense Relations Theory. The study findings revealed that there are Ekegusii words with multiple meanings; some of these words are as a result of the process of borrowing. Drawing a distinction between homonymous and polysemous words, sometimes, can be very difficult. The study, therefore, concluded that the two terms are confusing and ambiguous. The study contributes to the field of lexical semantics and so related studies may find the information it provides relevant for reference. The information gathered could also enrich Ekegusii semantics and make a contribution to the teaching of the language in rural primary schools where the language is used for instruction.